



WILLOW DENE

SCHOOL

WELLBEING POLICY

Reviewed policy agreed by GB on:	Summer 2026
Reviewed policy shared with staff on:	Summer 2026
Policy to be reviewed again on:	Summer 2027
Committee responsible for review:	Policy Committee

Policy Statement and Scope

At Willow Dene School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all children and young people (CYP), their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows CYP's voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected directly and indirectly by mental health.

This policy is a guide to all staff including non-teaching and governors which outlines Willow Dene's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing and sets out the systems and processes in place to support all members of Willow Dene's school community.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and CYP
- increase understanding and awareness of common mental health difficulties
- enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in CYP and colleagues
- enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with CYP with mental health difficulties and who to refer on to within school, to ensure the right support is in place
- provide the right support to CYP with mental health difficulties, and know where to signpost them and their families for specific support
- raise awareness amongst staff and ensure all leaders have a clear oversight of mental health and wellbeing difficulties within the workforce at Willow Dene. Leaders ensure that staff are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and CYP welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school
- outline and signpost internal and external support pathways available for staff, CYP, and families.

Key Staff Members and Signposting

The mental health and emotional wellbeing of our school community is extremely important to us at Willow Dene. Working within a special school can bring its own specific challenges which can involve high stress situations, physical and emotional demands as well as bereavement. As such, we strive to ensure that CYP, staff and families have key people within school who can support them both at times of crisis and through ongoing support and signposting. This can be seen in strategic planning and our leadership structure.

There are currently 6 trained mental health first aiders across the school and positioned across school sites, to support both CYP, their families and our staff. Our Mental Health First Aiders hold a range of roles within the school, including the leadership team, support staff and specialist teams. To access this support, either during the school day or outside of working hours, staff members can self-refer

informally or follow formal processes during wellbeing check's, return to work meetings or general conversations with their line manager.

There is a leadership role with specific responsibility for the behaviour and wellbeing needs of our CYP at Willow Dene. This role includes strategic oversight of behaviour, mental health, and wellbeing, ensuring appropriate signposting, referral and internal support mechanisms are in place to support these CYP.

There is also a dedicated Pastoral Lead within the Leadership structure, which ensures that the mental health and wellbeing of staff is promoted and kept at the forefront of policy and practice.

See Appendix 1 for named designated members of staff.

The school Wellbeing Committee is made up of key members of staff from across the school. The Wellbeing Committee supports the development of wellbeing policy and practice throughout the school. We also hold an annual wellbeing inset for our staff.

Line Managers

School leaders, in their role as class or team managers, play a key role in monitoring and supporting the wellbeing of staff. This happens through daily interactions and more formally through return-to-work meetings and wellbeing check-ins as part of the Professional Development Conversation process. We also encourage an open-door policy for staff to approach leaders through staff briefings to discuss, give feedback or raise issues as they need to. Through this process, line leaders can gain an insight into pressures faced by staff members and signpost support both internally and externally as appropriate.

Mental Health in the Curriculum

Our CYP are at the heart of the curriculum at Willow Dene, and it is a curriculum that is engaging and ambitious. Mental health and emotional wellbeing is incorporated throughout the curriculum and provision.

CYP working within the Early Development Curriculum, develop their responses and early communication skills, understanding of themselves and others around them. CYP develop body and environmental awareness and an early understanding of social interaction. They begin to express how they feel consistently and indicate what they like, do not like and their preferences. Staff foster positive relationships and get to know CYP well, therefore they are able to recognise, respond and support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of CYP effectively.

For CYP working within the Concept Curriculum, there are specific units of work within the carefully designed curriculum which cover all aspects of mental health and emotional wellbeing. These are included within strands of Relationship and Health Education in Primary and Relationship, Sex and Health Education in Secondary, Citizenship, Play and Leisure, Learning technologies – online safety, and Physical Education. Such units include work on feelings, self-awareness, healthy bodies, healthy minds, keeping fit and feeling good. CYP also continue to develop communication skills through targeted communication sessions.

There is an individualised approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing for CYP, when appropriate. The curriculum can be used as a vehicle for discussion and support for CYP through use of resources such as social stories, sensory stories and visual supports.

There are opportunities for all CYP each day to have time for reflection and to celebrate successes through collective worship.

See also – Curriculum Offer & Collective Worship Policy

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing for Children and Young People

Recognising Mental Health for Children and Young People

What does mental health mean?

Mental health is an individual's cognitive, behavioural and emotional wellbeing (Mind, 2020). It's something we all have - including every CYP.

We use the term "mental health issues" to refer to mental health problems, conditions and mental illnesses. These issues may or may not be medically diagnosed.

Due to the complex nature of our CYP's needs and the challenges around unpicking these difficulties into what is part of their profile, behavioural and or possible mental health concerns. Any change in a CYP's presentation at school should always be raised with a line manager or member of the senior leadership team so the relevant support can be identified.

Any change in a CYP's presentation is worth a further discussion with those that know them well to try and problem solve underlying issues which could explain the changes. CYP with additional needs often require extra thought with parents, professionals and those most involved with them.

Possible signs that a CYP may be struggling with their mental wellbeing could be from the following list which not exhaustive.

- Decline in school performance
- poor attainment despite strong efforts
- constant worry or anxiety
- repeated refusal to go to school or to take part in normal activities
- hyperactivity or fidgeting
- persistent nightmares
- persistent disobedience or aggression
- mood swings
- depression, sadness, or irritability
- environmental factors
- internal/physical factors.

Sources of support at school and in the local community

At Willow Dene we offer an eclectic approach to our CYP's learning, and it is no different when supporting their mental health needs. We recognise that CYP need to be in a 'ready state to learn' and that CYP need to have their emotional, physical, and mental health needs met if they are to flourish and learn. Willow Dene offers the following support systems within school. These links enable fast tracking of

issues which may affect mental health and wellbeing. We also RAG rate our CYP's health and wellbeing on a termly basis as a prerequisite to learning as part of our assessment process.

CAMHS in reach clinic – That offers consultations, joined up appointments intervention support and if needed treatment.

Paediatrician appointments - Both parents and school staff can request a referral to community paediatrics for a medical concern.

In house Epilepsy clinic – Offers appointments and a link between school, home and hospital clinics.

Links with Neurology and Orthopaedic Consultants – Offers consultations/discussions with staff and parents and provides a link between school, home and hospital clinics.

Art/Play and Music Therapy – Art, Play and Music Therapy helps CYP to explore their feelings, to express themselves and to make sense of their life.

Physical/Fitness/Swim/Sensory input - We have a wealth of specialist support at school to aid our CYP in developing their physical, fitness and sensory processing needs which can be focussed on individual or class-based support and can be requested via a referral.

Nursing Team - Support in the upkeep and writing of care plans as well as charting medication. They also liaise with other health services to ensure a joined up approach to our CYP's health needs.

Dietitian - Explores with school and parents CYP's diet at home and school ensuring they have a well-balanced, nutritional and healthy diet. The dietitian liaises with our sensory team and tertiary services as well as paediatrics to ensure CYP's dietary needs are met.

External Sign Posting

There are a number of organisations that nationally support CYP who are struggling with their mental health or are presenting challenging behaviour because they are not coping. See Appendix 2 for a list of the organisations that offer guidance/support and advise for CYP with additional needs and mental health challenges.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding for families

We will always deal with any concern around a CYP or family members mental health and wellbeing with the upmost sensitivity and confidentiality, involving only those it is relevant and appropriate to have involved.

At school we treat any concern relating to a CYP and their safety as a priority and with seriousness. Any safeguarding concern should always be discussed with a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) so it can be dealt with in line with policy and practice. DSLs will always take parental mental health into consideration in all safeguarding matters.

Training

Induction and continued professional development (CPD) are important in ensuring our staff are well trained and up to date with the latest strategies, interventions, and research to enable them to support our CYP.

Within school we provide staff with comprehensive and continuous CPD which meets the needs of the CYP they work with whether that is medical training or physical intervention training.

We use some of our annual inset and staff meeting time as well as our Professional Development Meeting (PDM) time to ensure staff can keep abreast of relevant research and information and we will also invite outside agencies in to deliver training/workshops. These include services such as CAMHS, Social Care, Short Breaks as well as our therapy teams and health staff, who deliver training on issues such as anxiety, sleep, constipation, communication, and sensory processing.

Policies that support the wellbeing of a CYP, such as our Child Protection policy, Relationship and Behaviour policy, Positive Handling policy and Sensory Processing policy are reviewed on an annual basis and ratified by our governing body. They are also shared with all staff with time for them to read and feedback.

Supporting Parents, Carers and Families

Ensuring our parents and families are well supported is critical in meeting our CYP's needs.

Family support advisors – support with signposting parents/families to services in the community, help with applying for benefits and housing issues. A point of contact for families to come together and share experiences through coffee mornings/workshops, parent groups and training.

Role of the class teacher – First port of call for parents and daily oversight of the CYP. To educate and support a CYP, to share information regarding their learning/well-being, strengths, and areas of developments with the family and other professionals involved.

Other professionals - A CYP may have a number of professionals involved with their care at home and school from therapists to hospital consultants, to respite and social care workers. Collaborative working and sharing information is crucial in supporting a CYP with complex needs. Multi-disciplinary meetings and clinics such as our CAMHS and SCERTS clinic are a good way of ensuring professionals work together.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing for Staff

Recognising Mental Health for Staff

When referring to Mental Health it is important to understand what we mean and use the appropriate terminology:

Mental health condition – refers to a wide range of mental health problems that affect our mood, thinking and behaviour. A mental health condition will have been diagnosed by a mental health professional.

Mental health episode – typically a one-off period that is triggered by events such as work pressures, bereavement, or family problems for example.

Mental health crisis – when someone feels they are no longer able to cope or be in control of their present situation (NHS, 2019). They may feel they are at breaking point and need urgent help and support with their mental health (Mind, 2018). A crisis can occur as part of ongoing mental health conditions and/or due to a stressful life experience such as a bereavement, employment, or money problems.

Mental health and wellbeing is viewed as a continuum, a scale which we can move back and forth freely on, between positive and negative, depending on what is happening in our lives and the impact this has on us. It is helpful to recognise that when struggling with mental health, we are not stuck, and that our mental health can improve.

Everyone is different and as a result, different individuals will experience different emotional, cognitive, and physical symptoms when experiencing a mental health episode. These can include but are not limited to:

- Arriving late for work frequently
- not eating regularly
- disinterested in the workplace
- not meeting deadlines
- making regular mistakes
- sensitivity to criticism
- rapid weight loss
- acting out of character
- memory and concentration problems
- delusions
- appetite loss
- fatigue
- heart palpitations
- tearfulness
- excessive worrying
- feeling guilty all the time
- excessive anger, hostility or violence
- having thoughts about ending their life.

(The Mental Health Foundation, 2016)

Examples of the signs (something you see) and symptoms (what the person describes) of a mental health crisis:

- Severe emotional distress

- thinking about taking their own life
- self-harming
- hallucinating
- losing touch with reality
- hearing voices
- panic attacks
- going missing
- not acting like themselves.

Sources or support at school and in the local community

At Willow Dene we are committed to supporting and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

We have a number of trained Mental Health First Aiders who are able to support in the following ways:

- Promote awareness of mental health in the workplace
- use active listening skills and be non-judgmental
- be a point of contact for employees in need
- advise on the type of support available
- spot the signs/symptoms of mental health conditions (*note that Mental Health First Aiders **do not** diagnose a mental health condition*)
- provide early intervention at the initial stages of a mental health problem
- respond to a mental health crisis
- maintain confidentiality

Please see Appendix 1 for details of current Mental Health First Aiders.

The role of the link leader is to support staff in the workplace and as a result all link leaders endeavor to be approachable and responsive to the needs of each individual.

Within the local community there are also services available dedicated to supporting the mental health of adults.

Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind provides a range of social groups and drop-in services to support people with mental health needs in Royal Greenwich.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provide a range of adult community mental health services across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich boroughs. Please see Appendix 3 for the most up to date contact details.

There is also a wealth of mental health advice and support available online and via the phone. There is tailored support for specific mental health conditions as well as support for experiences which can lead to a mental health episode or crisis. For general support, you can contact:

- **NHS 111:** for urgent advice and support
phone 111 (calls are free and lines open 24/7, 365 days a year)
or visit 111.nhs.uk

- **Samaritans:** for somebody to speak to
phone 116 123 (calls are free and lines open 24/7, 365 days a year)
or visit [samaritans.org/how-we-can-help](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help)
- **Mind:** for mental health information
phone 0300 123 3393 (calls charged at standard rate, open 9am – 6pm
Monday to Friday, except for bank holidays)
or visit [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)

For a list of other services see Appendix 3.

Confidentiality & Safeguarding

If a member of staff speaks to a Mental Health First Aider, all conversations will remain confidential, unless agreed between the individual and the Mental Health First Aider that support from another member of staff within school i.e. a link leader would be beneficial, or if it is deemed that safety of the individual is in immediate danger.

Mental Health First Aiders may record the number of people who have required their assistance, but this will be anonymous data and for the purpose of ensuring we are meeting the needs of the school, for example by providing enough Mental Health First Aiders for the number of staff requiring their assistance. This data would be available to the leadership team and governors.

Training & Wellbeing Offer

Pastoral Lead

The Pastoral lead at Willow Dene will undergo regular training to ensure that knowledge and practice is up to date and relevant to the ever-changing climate of both our school and wider world.

Wellbeing Committee

Willow Dene's wellbeing committee meet on a termly basis. The committee is formed of members from all school teams to ensure good representation of the school's needs. Actions following the wellbeing committee are shared with staff on a regular basis. Staff can raise any concerns, questions, or ideas with a member of the wellbeing committee who will feed this back to all members at the next meeting. All shared personal information will be kept confidential. Key actions from these meetings are shared with staff and help to inform strategic development for example focus for core priorities in the School Development Plan.

Wellbeing Resources

Staff can find useful books and information in the staff rooms at Willow Dene Swingate Lane and Willow Dene Oakmere Road. Notice boards in these areas are used to share relevant resources and information, and the books provided can be loaned out using the booking log located with the resources. The library of books is updated regularly.

Inset Days

Willow Dene recognises mental health and wellbeing as a priority and ensures time is dedicated during an inset day each year in support of this. Wellbeing insets are ever evolving considering staff feedback and the needs of the school and are used to promote positive mental health both in work and outside.

We also raise awareness and recognition considering national campaigns including World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week, which are celebrated across the school.

Employee Assistance Programme

The Employee Assistance Programme is a confidential 24-hour helpline from Care First to support employee's with a range of personal and professional problems that could be affecting home or work life, health and general wellbeing. This includes:

- Stress and anxiety
- bereavement
- relationship advice
- tenancy and housing concerns
- counselling
- financial wellbeing
- legal information
- alcohol and drug issues
- family issues
- childcare support
- medical information
- consumer issues

It is also accessible via the 'CareFirst' app and online portal.

More information, including the employer code required to access this service can be found in '[My Health & Wellbeing Centre](#)' on the Compass Portal.

Appendix 1

Key Staff Members within the Leadership Team:

Kelly Welch – Assistant Headteacher and Pastoral lead, Willow Dene Wellbeing Committee Chair and Compass Trust Wellbeing Committee Vice-Chair and Mental Health First Aider for staff.

Claire Bayfield – Head of Virtual Schools for Learners with Autism, Autism and Behaviour Lead and Mental Health First Aider for CYP and staff.

Joshua Garrett-Smith – Assistant Headteacher, ITT and Community Partnership Lead, Mental Health First Aider for CYP and staff.

Emma Bennett – Deputy Head Teacher, CPD lead and Mental Health First Aider for staff.

Other Key Members of staff:

Vicky House – Family Support Advisor & Mental Health First Aider

Michelle Flower - Health Support Advisor

Janine Stockings – Senior Teaching Assistant & Mental Health First Aider

The contact details for our Mental Health First Aiders can be found on the 'First aid/Team Teach information sheet, located in every classroom and office around the school

Appendix 2 – Children Focused services

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) - Greenwich - Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust](#)

[Mental health \(autism.org.uk\)](https://www.autism.org.uk)

[Homepage for the Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#)

[Child mental health: recognising and responding to issues | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Learning disability support | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

learningdisabilities.org.uk

Appendix 3 – Adult Focused Services

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provides a range of adult community mental health services across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich boroughs.

Bexley Locality Mental Health Service - Erith Centre

01322 356 100

Bromley Locality Mental Health Service -

Carlton Parade (Bromley East)

01689 892 300

Bromley Locality Mental Health Service -

63 Croydon Road (Bromley West)

020 8659 2151

Greenwich Locality Mental Health Service -

Ferryview Health Centre (Greenwich East)

020 8319 5500

Greenwich Locality Mental Health Service -

The Heights (Greenwich West)

020 8269 4110

Mental health advice and support information

NHS 111: for urgent advice and support

phone 111 (calls are free and lines open 24/7, 365 days a year)

visit www.111.nhs.uk

Samaritans: for somebody to speak to

phone 116 123 (calls are free and lines open 24/7, 365 days a year)

visit www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help

Mind: for mental health information

phone 0300 123 3393 (calls charged at standard rate, open 9am – 6pm Monday to Friday, except for bank holidays)

visit www.mind.org.uk

General mental health information

Rethink Advice and Info Service

Phone 0300 5000 927

Crisis and emotional support

SaneLine

Visit www.sane.org.uk

Abuse

NSPCC

Phone 0808 800 5000

Visit www.nspcc.org.uk

NAPAC

Phone 0808 801 0331

Visit www.napac.org.uk

One in Four
Phone 0208 697 2112
Visit www.oneinfour.org.uk

Rape Crisis
Phone 0808 802 9999
Visit www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Refuge
Phone 0808 2000 247
Visit www.refuge.org.uk

Women's Aid
Visit www.womensaid.org.uk

Survivors UK
Phone 0203 598 3898
Visit www.survivorsuk.org

Substance misuse and addiction

Adfam
Visit www.adfam.org.uk

Alcoholic Anonymous
Phone 0800 9177 650
Visit www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Alcohol Concern
Visit www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

Al-Anon
Phone 0800 0086 811
Visit www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Cocaine Anonymous
Phone 0800 612 0225
Visit www.cauk.org.uk

Drink Aware
Visit www.drinkaware.co.uk

Drinkline
Phone 0300 123 1110

Gamblers Anonymous.org
Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Drug Science
Visit www.drugscience.org.uk

Talk to Frank
Phone 0300 123 6600
Visit www.talktofrank.com

UK SMART Recovery
Visit www.smartrecovery.org

We Are With You
Visit www.wearewithyou.org.uk

Anxiety
Anxiety UK
Phone 03444 775 774
Visit www.anxietyuk.org.uk

No Panic
Phone 0300 772 9844
Visit www.nopanic.org.uk

OCD Action
Phone 0845 390 6232
Visit www.ocdaction.org.uk

OCD UK
Phone 0300 636 5478
Visit www.ocduk.org

Triumph over Phobia
Visit www.topuk.org

Bereavement
Bereavement Advice Centre
Phone 0800 634 9494
Visit www.bereavementadvice.org

Child Bereavement UK
Phone 0800 028 8840

Cruse Bereavement Care
Phone 0808 8081677
Visit www.cruse.org.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide
Phone 0300 111 5065
Visit www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Crime Victims
Victims Info Service
Visit www.victimsinformationsservice.org.uk

Victim Support
Phone 0808 1689 111
Visit www.victimsupport.org.uk

Debt

Money Advice Service
Visit www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

National Debtline
Phone 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.org

Depression

Depression UK
Visit www.depressionuk.org

Association for Postnatal Illness
Phone 0207 386 0868
Visit www.apni.org

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
Visit www.charliewaller.org

PANDAS Foundation
Phone 0808 1961 776
Visit www.pandasfoundation.org.uk

Bipolar UK
Visit www.bipolaruk.org

Eating Disorders

ABC
Visit www.anorexiabulimiarecare.org.uk

Beat
Phone 0808 801 6770
Visit www.b-eat.co.uk

Self Harm

Harmless
Visit www.harmless.org.uk

NSHN (forum)
Visit www.nshn.co.uk

SelfHarmUK (Young persons)
Visit www.selfharm.co.uk

Self Injury Support
Phone 0808 800 8088
Visit www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

Suicide

CALM

Phone 0800 585 858

Visit www.thecalmzone.net

Papyrus

Phone 0800 068 4141