



## **What we already do to support mental health in our school**

### **Our school values and ethos**

Our school Aims are:

To provide a challenging, creative and rich curriculum which will develop curiosity, confidence and independence.

To provide an inclusive, safe, secure, healthy and happy environment.

To encourage a caring and positive attitude amongst the children towards all others and their environment.

Our Core/Golden Values are:

“We aim to be the best we can be.”

“We ask questions and discover.”

“We value everyone.”

“We enjoy our learning.”

Through our school Aims and Core Values, we continually strive to ensure that children in our school are safe, secure, healthy and happy. This is achieved through our school policies, the curriculum we deliver and the pastoral care which we offer to our pupils.

### **School Policies**

All of our school policies are written and demonstrated by our staff as part of achieving our Aims and Core Values. The following policies relate more closely to protecting the mental health of everyone in our School Community:

Behaviour, Inclusion, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Equal Opportunities, Equality, Health and Safety, Online Safety, Positive Handling, Sex and Relationship Education.

We ensure that we approach the mental health of children in an inclusive way. We adapt our approaches to pupils based on their social and emotional stage of development and their personal/home circumstances and any barriers to learning which may affect their mental health. We approach children as the individuals which they are and support them as individuals.



## **Curriculum**

Our PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) lessons help to give children the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy and independent lives. It aims to help them understand how they are developing personally and socially, tackling many of the moral, social and cultural issues that are part of growing up. It teaches children about healthy choices and a healthy lifestyle.

Children are taught skills and rules for staying healthy and safe and for behaving well. They are given opportunities to show they can take some responsibility for themselves and their environment. They begin to learn about their own and other people's feelings and become aware of the views, needs and rights of others. They learn social skills such as how to share, take turns, play, help others, resolve simple arguments and resist bullying. As a key part of PSHE lessons, children enjoy games and activities to promote calm and mindfulness.

In R.E. (Religious Education) lessons, children will gain and develop an understanding of the different religions found in their community, linking them to their own experiences and ideas. They will be encouraged to think critically about quite deep religious concepts: good vs evil; right and wrong; the importance of being sorry and forgiveness.

In our Assemblies, as well as celebrating our pupils' achievement in school, we also listen to stories linked to themes e.g. sharing and friendship, anti-bullying, concentration, resilience, staying safe. We also discuss national or world events e.g. environmental issues, the general election; learn about different religions and cultural events.

## **Interventions**

Teaching Assistants in our school are trained in delivering various interventions which help to promote pupils' mental health and happiness. Some examples of the interventions which we run are (see next page):



## Theraplay

From the Theraplay website:

“Theraplay uses practitioner guidance to create playful and caring child-adult interactions that foster joyful shared experiences. These activities build attunement and understanding of each other – replicating early relationship experiences that are proven to lead to secure attachment. The interactions are personal, physical and fun – a natural way for everyone to experience the healing power of being together.

Theraplay interactions focus on four essential qualities found in healthy parent-child relationships:

**Structure:** The adult, the leader in the relationship, creates organization and predictability for the child which communicates safety

**Nurture:** The adult provides caring that can calm and soothe the child in a manner that makes them feel good physically and emotionally

**Engagement:** The adult is present in a manner that the child experiences being seen, heard, felt, and accepted

**Challenge:** The adult supports the child in the acquisition and mastery of new skills, enhancing the child’s sense of competence and confidence.”

We have three teaching assistants in school who are trained in and who have delivered Theraplay interventions. This intervention is for a very small number of children, who need the most support.

## Speech and Language support

Several of our teaching assistants are trained in Speech and Language courses and generally support children in class with their understanding and communication. This is both in terms of their learning and their emotional health.

Various interventions are run throughout school, most often these are LEAP (Language Enrichment Activity Programme) primarily aimed at children in Foundation Stage and VIP (Vocabulary Improvement Programme). The primary aim of the interventions is to improve children’s ability to store, organise, locate and retrieve a wider range of vocabulary. However, we have found that by improving pupils’ communication and teamwork skills, this



has also improved their confidence and self-esteem and has benefited them both in lessons and socially.

### Nurture Provision

Our school has recently begun running a nurture group in the afternoons, as part of the school's Inclusion provision.

Its purpose is to offer children opportunities to re-visit early learning skills and promote and support their social and emotional development.

Our Nurture group is a short-term, focused intervention for children with particular social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which are creating a barrier to learning within a mainstream class.

The relationship between our staff and children is always nurturing and supportive, providing a role model for children.

We provide a structured routine with clear boundaries so the children feel safe and secure

### Life Skills

Some of our teaching assistants have been teaching life schools to a small number of pupils over the last couple of years. This includes learning how to dress yourself, basic food preparation, hygiene, safety and other new skills.

As well as teaching the children independence, the sessions have also helped our children to engage, listen, concentrate, share and take turns, accept losing at a game and to build friendship with their classmates.

### Happy To Be Me

Happy to be Me is a specific programme aimed at school children experiencing low self-esteem, lack of confidence, attachment problems and/or feeling insecure. It can also be valuable for children with healthy self-esteem to learn essential "self-esteem maintenance" tools that they will be able to use for their lifetime. The programme runs for six weeks and is a group of 4 children working with 1 adult in a familiar and comfortable room. We have been running Happy To Be Me for several years.



### Wise Behaviours

Wise Behaviours follows completion of the Happy to be Me programme. It is an 8-week programme aimed at children experiencing difficulty with emotional intelligence skills. These may include feelings of frustration, "pushing back" against authority, avoiding new or challenging experiences and unable to cope with mistake making and disappointment. This programme can also be helpful for children who have secure emotional intelligence skills.

### Lego Therapy

Lego Therapy is a popular social skills programme for children with social communication problems and related social competence difficulties. This has been run for many years in our school.

### Bereavement Support

Bereavement support within school can be a huge help to a grieving pupil. Simply by continuing with day to day activities, while acknowledging the bereavement, can be a huge help. The way a school responds during this time can affect the way a child copes with bereavement for the rest of their lives. We have staff trained in bereavement support who regularly support our children.

### Forest Schools

Our Forest School started in September 2010. We have two Teaching Assistants qualified as Forest School practitioners. Each class has a block of 5/6 sessions, Y2 in the Autumn term, Y1 in the Spring term and Foundation Stage in the Summer term. After three years in school all our children will have visited the woodlands in each season.

Forest School evidence has been compiled demonstrating positive outcomes on children relating to an increase in self-esteem, an ability to work with others, learning about the outdoors, developing a sense of ownership of the environment, providing motivation to learn, and increasing knowledge and skills.

Our aims in Forest School are to establish positive relationships with adults and their peers, building trust and understanding; to prepare the children for their experience in the forest and to negotiate rules and boundaries and to have a basic understanding of what happens at Forest School.



### Sports Leaders

Y2 children and staff have received training on lunchtime sport provision. Several times a week, volunteer Y2 children (under the supervision of a teaching assistant) work as a team to encourage children to have a go at various sports/fitness challenges (i.e. 'how many can you do in one minute?') These can be squats, knee highs, lunges etc. The Y2 children actively seek out children from all year groups to become involved. This both supports the physical and emotional health of children at lunchtimes. It gives children a focus, combats loneliness and the Y2 children are fantastic role models of friendship and support for our pupils.

### Pupil Voice

School Council gives our children a voice in the development of Stannington Infant School and the local community. Children are elected annually and the council has two representatives from each Y1 and Y2 class. School Council meetings are held regularly, usually twice each half term with Mrs Everitt.

We believe that the School Council encourages children to understand and value the ideals of democracy and citizenship. Each year our council makes links with other local schools, which can include joint projects, visiting each school and sharing the best ideas. We enjoy working together on group projects each year.

Our pupils are consulted by the School Council on many different issues which affect our school community and often votes take place. For example, 'How should we develop our playground? Which charity events should we support and what will we do?' This gives our pupils ownership of decisions and events in school, which foster a sense of belonging and community.

### **General Pastoral Care**

As part of the ethos of SIS, we regard and treat ourselves as a 'school family'. All staff (including all support staff – teaching assistants, office staff, premises staff, lunchtime staff) work hard to and enjoy building constructive relationships of trust with our pupils.

All staff have an 'open door' to our pupils, including at breaks and lunchtimes. We all support children who are having a difficult time. If a pupil wishes to spend time with another member of staff with whom they have a trusted relationship, this is arranged. In fact, Mrs Binns and Mrs Harris often have 'friends' working alongside them in the office!



Pupils are supported by their teachers and teaching assistants during learning time, and the class teaching assistants will work hard to ensure that pupils are supported when their teacher is busy with whole class teaching.

Staff have weekly meetings where they pass on important information regarding the emotional wellbeing of our pupils and whether they need additional support at playtimes and lunchtimes. Our caring lunchtime supervisory assistants (LSA's) are also briefed on these issues each week by Mrs Harris. In addition, class teachers will brief their allocated LSA's daily on which pupils may need support.

Mrs Harris and Mrs Binns also support pupils' wellbeing during lunchtime, by spending time chatting to pupils during their lunch in the lunch hall.

We also have a 'Worry Box' in our school hall. If pupils would rather write their worries down, then can come in at any time to post a message in the worry box and this will be looked into by our staff and the pupil will be supported.

## **Staff Training**

### Team Teach

From the Team Teach Website:

"Team Teach is an accredited, award-winning provider of positive behavioural management training suitable for use throughout the education sector, from early years upwards. Our strategies equip staff working in primary school environments with the tools they need to understand behaviour, manage challenging situations in the classroom, and minimise serious incidents."

Staff at our school are regularly trained in Team Teach techniques. The courses are aimed at learning how to de-escalate a situation where a child is in crisis and to help the child calm down and feel safe. Once the child is feeling calm and safe, the course teaches us techniques to find out why the child was in crisis – what happened before, the cause, actions of others, what would have helped the child avoid crisis. Central to this process is deciding with the child what things could have been done to avoid the crisis/help them feel safe, and a plan will be put together so that if this situation happens again, everyone knows some strategies to help. This may be formalised as part of a child's behaviour support plan.



### Specialised training

As part of our continuing professional development, staff are regularly trained on matters relating to support children's emotional and mental health. This may be school-wide training or individual staff may be sent on specific courses (which they then disseminate to the rest of our team). Examples are training on autism, demand avoidance, attention deficit disorder, attachment theory, how emotions affect learning.

### **Staff Welfare**

Staff at SIS are very supportive of one another and we share issues of concern at our weekly meetings. In terms of staff work/life balance, Mrs Harris has recently completed a comprehensive project on Staff Workload. This has resulted in training and meetings/discussions and improvements in the way we work have improved staff welfare. Examples of these include new time management strategies, revisions to our planning and marking policy, more even timetabling of each week to ensure that e.g. parent meetings are not run on the same week as other events such as curriculum meetings/training. Staff are encouraged to only read and respond to e mails during their working hours and to schedule e mails to only be sent during working hours.