


Pupil Mental Health and Wellbeing

THE
C  **MPASS**
PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Key Staff	
School's mental health lead:	Jennifer Penney
Qualified mental health first aiders:	Lisa Wilson
Inclusion lead:	Vicky Childs
Designated safeguarding leads:	Jennifer Penney and Vicky Childs Deputy DSL: Lisa Wilson

Policy Statement

Schools within the Compass Partnership promote a caring, supportive environment in which each individual is valued and respected. We have high expectations for all and aspire to achieve excellence. We recognise that all children and young people need the foundation of positive mental health to benefit fully from all of the opportunities available to them. Everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and may need additional support to maintain or develop good mental health and well-being.

1 in 8 children and young people aged between 5 – 19 years have a clinically recognisable mental health disorder (Mental Health of children and young people in England 2017, NHS Digital). The mental health of children and young people, adults in schools, parents and carers and the wider whole school community will impact on all areas of development, learning, achievement and experiences.

All children and young people have the right to be educated in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody. All adults have the right to work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody.

Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all children and staff
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide the right support to children with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support
- Develop resilience amongst children and raise awareness of resilience building techniques
- Raise awareness that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing and mental health issues that may present within their own family
- Raise awareness about the higher prevalence of mental health issues amongst people with SEND and the fact that it can present as part of or in addition to their condition

- Develop the school's capacity to have an informed and responsive approach to mental health issues related to individuals or the community as a whole

Legal basis

This policy was written with regard to:

- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- Articles 3 and 23 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

8 principles for effective Whole School approach to mental health



Mentally healthy environments

All schools should offer a learning environment that promotes and enhances positive mental health. A consistent approach means that the school environment and school ethos all promote the mental health of the whole school community. Healthy relationships underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact.

A mentally healthy environment has:

- A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all
- A commitment to being responsive to children and young people's needs
- Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
- A named lead for mental health promotion with the expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's responsibility'

A mentally healthy environment is a place where children and young people have opportunities to:

- Participate in activities that encourage belonging
- Participate in decision making
- Celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed
- Develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Reflect
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs
- Be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for
- Be surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times

A mentally healthy environment is a place where staff:

- Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way
- Have a range of strategies that support their mental health, eg a named person to speak to, signposting
- Have recognition of their work-life balance
- Have the mental health and well-being of the staff reviewed regularly
- Feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes
- Celebrate and recognise success
- Are able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively
- Are provided with opportunities for CPD
- Have time to reflect
- Can access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional need in both the short term and the long term

A mentally healthy environment is a place where parents/carers:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people's mental health
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies

- Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support
- Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with schools
- Opinions are sought and valued and responded to
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately
- Can express how they are feeling so that their own mental health and well-being can be taken into account and they are able to take care of themselves so that they can care for their child

Teaching about mental health

Our school values are the foundations on which all learning takes place and further support the development of positive mental health and well-being. The skills, knowledge and understanding that children need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy are taught across the curriculum. We follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively. Further opportunities to support the development of good mental health and well-being come through the wealth of experiences beyond the curriculum.

Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a child is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek advice from the school's mental health first aider.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Changes in mood or energy level
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Changes in attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Changes in level of personal hygiene
- Social isolation
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted
- Talking or joking about self harm or suicide

In addition to this we are aware of the link between substance misuse and mental health issues and are vigilant for these signs.

Managing disclosures

If a pupil makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the pupil's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow the school's safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the DSL and or mental health lead. All disclosures are recorded and stored in line with child protection procedures

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- The full name of the member of staff who is making the record
- The full name of the pupil(s) involved
- The date, time and location of the disclosure
- The context in which the disclosure was made
- Any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff

Confidentiality

Staff should not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret, instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a pupil's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing
- The support put in place for the pupil will be dependent on the member of staff being at school
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the pupil in question

Staff should always share disclosures with at least one appropriate colleague. This will usually be the DSL and/or mental health lead. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Before sharing information disclosed by a pupil with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the pupil and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the pupil to share their information, but the safety of the pupil comes first.

Parents will be informed unless there is a child protection concern and in consultation with social care it is felt to be in the child's best interests not to.

Process for managing confidentiality around disclosures

1. Pupil makes a disclosure
2. Member of staff offers support
3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with the DSL and or mental health lead
4. Member of staff will attempt to get the pupil's consent to share – if no consent is given, explain to the pupil who you will share the information with and explain why you need to do this

5. Member of staff will record the disclosure and share the information with the DSL and or Mental Health Lead
6. The DSL and or mental health lead will inform the parent/carer (if appropriate)
7. Any other relevant members of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis

Supporting pupils

Support for all pupils

As part of the school's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils, the school offers support to all pupils by:

- Direct teaching of health and well-being as part of our PHSE curriculum
Pupils will be taught to:
 - Develop healthy coping strategies
 - Challenge misconceptions around mental health
 - Understand their own emotional state
 - Keep themselves safe
- Ensuring all staff understand the importance of developing good relationships with all children.
- Raising awareness of mental health during assemblies and mental health awareness week.
- Having open discussions about mental health
- Having systems to gain pupil voice on all aspects of school life
- Appointing a senior mental health lead with a strategic oversight of our whole school approach to mental health and well-being.

Targeted Support

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the SENCo and Mental Health Lead will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to making providing tailored support, further to the provision of the offer outlined above. Our school's will offer support in cycles. The support on offer will depend on the child's identified need and the resources available, support could include:

- Learning Mentor Sessions
- Drawing and Talking
- Lego Therapy
- Zones of Regulation Intervention
- Personalised Timetables
- Safe Spaces
- Counselling

Signposting/making external referrals

If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer the school provides, the school will make, or encourage parents to make, a referral for external support.

A pupil could be referred to:

- GP or paediatrician

- CAMHS
- Mental health charities (e.g. Samaritans, Mind, Young Minds, Kooth)
- Local counselling services

Supporting and collaborating with parents and carers

We will work with parents and carers to support pupils' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child
- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our school website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent forums)
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be extremely challenging for pupils. Pupils may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all pupils impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- Strategies they can use to support their friends
- Things they should avoid doing/saying
- Warning signs to look out for
- Signposting to sources of external support

CPD

All staff will be offered training so they:

- Have a good understanding of what pupils' mental health needs are
- Know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health
- Know a clear process to follow if they identify a pupil in need of help

Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can be distressing for staff. To combat this we will:

- Take mental health concerns seriously
- Offer staff the opportunity to talk when they are working with vulnerable children
- Support staff with poor mental health themselves – *please see our Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy*

- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Board of Trustees will assess the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all Trust schools.

This Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees on a three-yearly basis.

Adherence to the policy will be monitored by the school's local governing body.

Policy adopted:	Summer 2023
Other related policies:	Anti -Bullying Behaviour and Relationships Inclusion Medical Needs Online Safety Safeguarding including Child Protection
Next Review:	Summer 2026

Appendix 1 - Tips to talk to children about difficult things

Key characteristics of situations that create worry and anxiety are a heightened sense of uncertainty, potential threat, and responsibility, and a reduced sense of control, so it is easy to see why our current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic are fueling anxiety.

In conversations with children it is important to help them to:

- Recognise that it is understandable to feel worried or anxious
- Develop an accurate and realistic understanding of the situation
- Recognise simple, practical things that they can do, but also to be clear about the limits of their responsibility

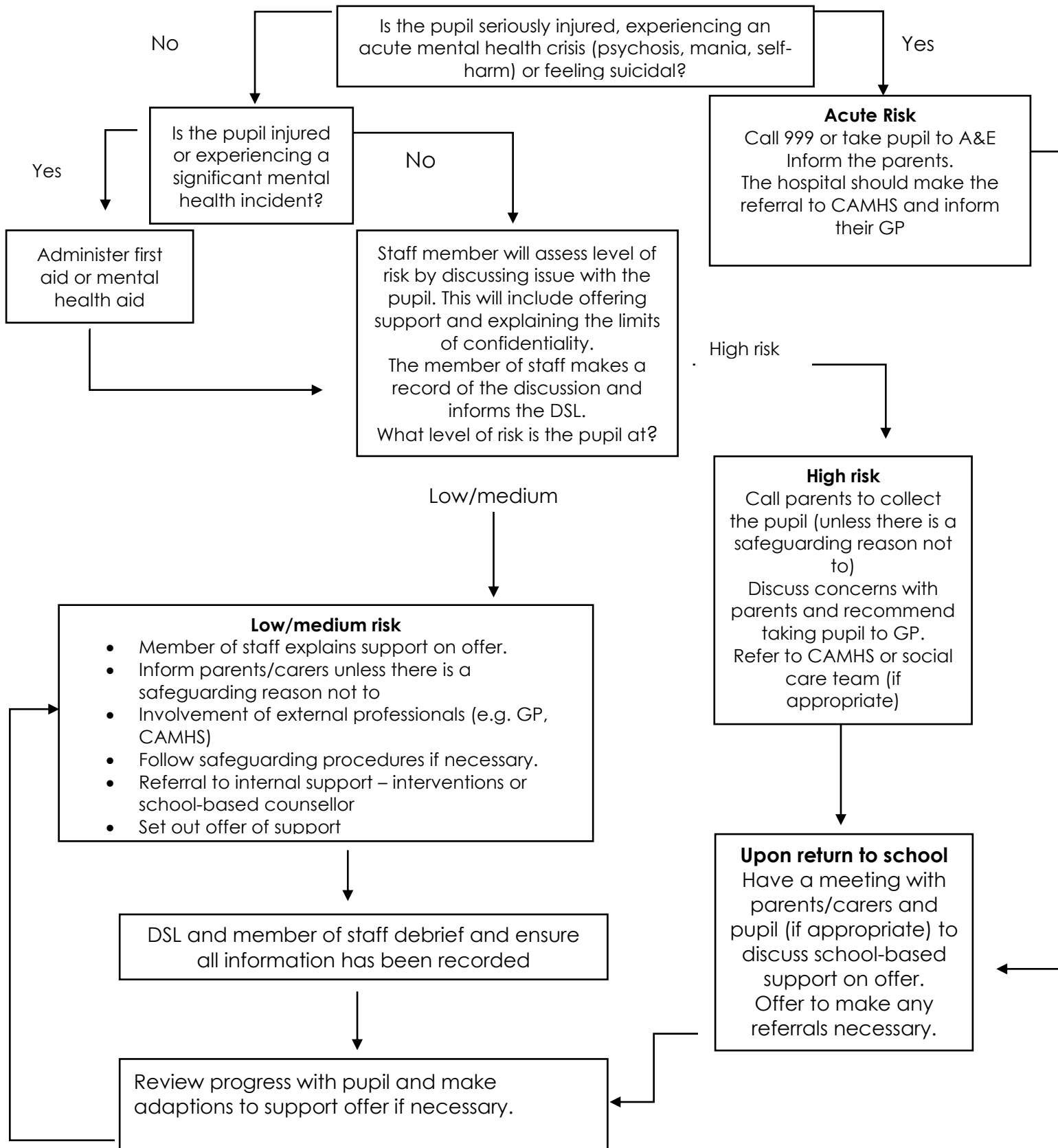
Here are some steps that may be helpful:

- Be curious and acknowledge their fears and worries
- Start with 'open questions'. These are questions that can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' (e.g. "What makes you feel that way?"; "What have you heard about the virus?", "What are your worries about this"?). Older children may have picked up information online or through friends, so do explore what sorts of things they have been hearing. This will all help you to understand any fears and worries that they have.
- Acknowledge how their thoughts must be making them feel. Try not to minimise or dismiss worries (e.g. "It will be fine!", "Don't be silly"), as this can lead to young people feeling that their concerns are not being taken seriously which may make them reluctant to talk about rather than feel able to come back and share thoughts or ask questions in the future (however silly they may seem).
- It is also hard to control what thoughts pop into our heads, so rather than saying "Don't think about it", encourage them to notice the thought but try not to engage in it (e.g., "There's the annoying worry thought again, what can you think about instead?")
- Help them to feel understood and that their worries are normal. Acknowledge that it is an anxiety-provoking time for everyone and that it is normal to feel worried. For example, if a child is worried about their grandparents you might say "I can see that you are worried about your Grandma and Grandpa, I am a bit worried about them too" and then follow with points 3, 4 & 5.
- Recognise that things will be different for a while and that this might mean they feel disappointed as things they are looking forward to or enjoy doing are cancelled. This disappointment is understandable and ok.

- Gently correct any misunderstandings that they may have. After noting their worries and showing that you understand, you can gently share facts to correct any misunderstandings (e.g. a child may think that because the virus is in their town everyone is going to die, you can respond by saying “I can see you’re scared that someone down the road has the virus, and it isn’t very nice knowing someone who lives near us is ill, but that doesn’t mean that we’re going to die and, in fact, most people who get it just get a fever and a cough”). Keep the conversation fact-based where you can (e.g., that most people get mild symptoms and recover within a few weeks; that pets are not affected).
- Draw on information from recommended, reliable sources that are appropriate to your child’s age group and research the news together (see links below). If you don’t know or can’t find the answer, then it is fine to say that you don’t know. There is a lot of uncertainty at the moment and it is impossible to answer some of the questions that young people will ask. Rather than trying to remove all the uncertainty for them and find answers to all of their questions, it can be helpful to explain that there are things we don’t know and that it is ok to not know. You can then reassure children by explaining that the adults around them will take care of them and that scientists and doctors are working hard to find out how best to help.

Appendix 2 – Response chart

Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis



Appendix 3 - ideas for well-being activities

- Breathing exercises that can help individuals or the whole class relax. It's important to do these regularly so children are familiar with them in times of need.
- Regular Brain Breaks in between lessons, or during them, as needed. These could be simple yoga stretches or a burst of star jumps; and we also regularly use the guided dances and relaxation activities on www.GoNoodle.com.
- Make time for 'What Went Well' moments. Fostering positive emotion helps to rewire our brains away from negative thoughts. This is particularly important at a time when pupils could have been over-exposed to the news or dealing with difficult family situations such as bereavement or job losses.
- Teach children to name and label their feelings. As psychologist Suzy Reading says "...people who could label their feelings using rich vocabulary were found to be 40% less verbally and physically aggressive than those who had a tough time working out how they felt."
- Allow pupils time to choose independent Healthy Minds activities – reading, mindfulness, colouring, relaxing music, drawing etc. This can be whole class for a short period of time and be up to individuals to identify when they need it.

Appendix 4 - Do's and Don'ts of class and group emotional health teaching

Activities that focus on emotions can increase our sense of awareness of our thoughts and feelings, so it is important to remind children of the support systems that are available, in and out of school, if they need to speak about something.

- Always establish ground rules around respectful listening and confidentiality, prior to delivering the activity. It is useful to think about how to support children who may not wish to participate in the activity. Should any concerns arise during the activity about a pupil's safety or wellbeing, please ensure that you follow safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Encourage the child to share as much as feels OK. We never force a child to take part in an activity, close their eyes or speak about an activity if it does not feel emotionally safe to do so.
- Make sure that there is enough time allocated to completing the activity and a space for discussion around this, in case the child would like to speak about what came up for them.
- Model speaking about your emotions in a positive way. This can help you keep the process fun and will also help you to put yourself in the child's place and feel compassion for them.
- Help children to begin to name and recognise their emotions, both within the activities and around it. Think about when the activities are delivered and how this fits with the rest of the school curriculum and wider processing of mental health and emotions.
- Be aware of more vulnerable children in your class who may need to be observed more closely during the activities.
- Tone and pace of your voice is important. A calm and soft manner, this makes a difference to engagement.
- Remind children that there is no "wrong" or "right" way to feel and that some of the activities may take time and practice. It is not about getting the activities right, but about immersing themselves into the experience.

Don'ts

- Activities should be framed in a positive and destigmatising way to help normalise that we all have mental health and emotions. The activities should not be used as a reaction or consequence of an incident
- You don't need to continue the activity if the child/children is/are agitated, disengaged or not responding calmly. It's normal that different children will like different activities.
- Do not force a child to take part in the activity if this causes them too much anxiety – we do not want to do more emotional harm than good. They may have their defenses in place for a reason. You may encourage them to observe rather than take part or take part "as much as is possible" for them.

Additional resources

[Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Mental health resources for teachers and teaching staff \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[mh_symptom_and_services_guide_final_1.pdf \(openobjects.com\)](https://openobjects.com)

[Support for children and young people | Mental health services | Royal Borough of Greenwich \(royalgreenwich.gov.uk\)](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/social_emotional_mental_health_portal_for_schools/Pages/teaching_resources_semh.aspx