Redbridge Preschool Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Definition of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. The World Health Organisation states that ‘’Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own abilities, are resilient and cope well with the usual stresses of life, can work productively and are able to make a contribution to the community.

Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. On this basis, the promotion, protection and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern of individuals, communities and societies throughout the world.

Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out:

- Why mental health is important for children, staff and families.
- How we demonstrate our commitment to actively promoting positive mental health and wellness.
- Who are Mental Health and Wellbeing lead is and staffs roles and responsibilities
- How we identify factors that factors that may pose a risk to a child’s social & emotional well-being
- How we support children, families and staff positive mental health

Why is mental health and wellbeing important

Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of diseases and disabilities within our society, which can then affect every aspect of peoples lives. Promoting mental wellbeing is paramount for the prevention of the adverse effects on individuals’ physical health, social wellbeing, ability to do well and thrive. All our staff, children and their families mental health and wellbeing is key for our community to be happy, work well together and to keep progressing.

Well-being links in with and is closely related to our basic needs as human beings. These are:

- Physical needs (need to eat, drink, move and sleep)
- The need for affection, warmth and tenderness (being hugged, receiving and giving love and emotional warmth)
- The need for safety, clarity and continuity (knowing the rules, being able to predict what comes next, counting on others)
- The need for recognition and affirmation (feeling accepted and appreciated by others, being part of a group and having a sense of belonging)
- The need to feel capable (feeling that you are good at something, to experience success)

Everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing.

Our commitment to promoting mental health and awareness throughout our provision

At Redbridge Preschool, we aim to provide positive mental health and well-being for our whole community (staff, children and parents and carers). We recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health.

We recognise that staff mental health and wellbeing is crucial for a happy workforce. Without content and resilient staff the preschool would not be able to support parents to support their children.

Staff need to be able to guide and support parents needs so parents and staff can work together to help promote the children's welfare and development.

We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. Redbridge Preschool is a place for children to experience a nurturing and supporting environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience.

We offer positive role models and key people who build relationships with the families and children, to create a sense of belonging and community. Our role is to ensure that children can manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health and who they can talk to for help and support.

Our Aim

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a preschool where:

- All staff, families and children are valued
- Staff, families and children have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- Staff, families and children feel able to talk with trusted adults about their feelings
- Positive mental health and wellbeing is promoted and valued for our whole community from children, their families and staff.

We want all children, families and adults to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve
- To be Happy

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills to support children and families and their own resilience.

2. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.

3. Effectively working with parents and carers.

4. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.

5. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.

6. Helping children to be resilient learners.

7. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health

Staff roles and responsibilities

The named person as our Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead is – **Joanna Watson-Gray.**

The role includes**:**

- Provides advice and support to staff's own mental health and wellbeing
- Organises training and updates for staff to be able to support children and families
- Organises working with other staff to coordinate the preschool activities to promote positive mental health and well-being.
- Monitoring and assessing children's, families and staff wellbeing.
- Is the first point of contact with mental health services and makes individual referrals to signpost them to support networks.

We believe that **all** staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health.

Staff have training to make sure that they can meet the need of all our children, families and to protect themselves.

Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death, loss or family breakdown.

Staff should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging, and emotional literacy.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the preschool environment. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children

with mental health needs which their families can be sign posted to. Staff can support parents with filling out an online Early Help form to ask for help through the Children and Families First, which is Southampton's resource service.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

How early years practitioners will identify factors that may pose a risk to children.

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

1 • Parental information regarding health when starting at the preschool (registration forms)

2 • Gathering information from any previous setting attended

3 • Parental catch ups at drop off and pick up, as well as more formal parents meetings

4 • Observing and analysing behaviour and development of the children

5 • Monitoring attendance patterns

6 • Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff

7 • Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any members of staff

8 • Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.

9 • Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns

Our approach:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

Supporting children's, families and staffs positive mental health

We have developed a range of strategies and approaches to support mental wellbeing including:

- Matrix audit of children's potential ACE's to highlight children who will be more at risk of emotional health concerns

- Monthly audit to assess the children's wellbeing and involvement based on the Leuven scale
- Emotional wellbeing charts where children can register if they are happy or sad.
- Discussions about emotions at Meet and Greet Time and how we can help someone if they are sad.
- Key person system who will bond with, nurture their children and be an advocate for the child
- Resources to help children to talk/share their worries or concerns
- 1:1 time with keyperson
- Student council – to encourage the children to reflect and help the children to feel empowered and valued, based around the Mosaic Approach theory to analyse the children's view of the preschool.
- Keypeople and children conduct a '2 stars and a wish' discussion so the children can understand their achievements and progress, whilst also having a say in what they would like to achieve.
- We teach children about health, safety and wellbeing through our practices, policies and procedures.

In addition to the above we help the children learn:

- To recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings.
- Simple strategies for managing feelings.
- How their behaviour affects other people.
- About empathy and understanding other people's feelings.
- To cooperate and problem solve.
- To motivate themselves and persevere.
- About change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing family, pets or toys).
- Who to go to if they are worried.
- About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.
- How to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help.

To help families

- We like to be a close knit community, so we work on the first name basis to get to know our parents.
- We build a rapport with the parents at drop off and pick up times to check in with how our families are doing.
- We have an open door policy so parents are welcome to come in discuss their concerns about their children and families welfare as well as the setting.
- We send out parent questionnaires to gain their views of the setting and give them the chance to offer opinions.
- We signpost parents to outside agencies for extra support
- We send out information and have a mental health notice board with information explaining how they can help their own mental health and wellbeing.

To help staff

- We discuss our mental health and wellbeing in staff meeting
- We have a staff mental health notice board
- Staff training about mental health and emotional well-being.
- Termly team building activities
- To support and signposting to agencies

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the Mental Health Lead and recorded. We then implement our assessment system, which is based on levels of need to ensure that children get the support the need, either from within the preschool or from an external specialist service.

Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

If necessary an early help referral to a specialist service is made with the parent/carer to help the family(unless child protection issues are identified).

Links to other policies

This policy links to many of our other policies for example Child Protection and Safeguarding, SEND, and Equalities and Inclusion policy. The behaviour policies are especially important because behaviour may be related to an unmet mental health need.

This policy was adopted in May 2025 and will be reviewed annually with staff and committee members.

Mental health resources and services for adults