Somerset Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 3BL.
01722 330382

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Effective from: 1 June 2025
Next Review Due: 1 June 2026

Policy Statement

This policy aims to support the mental health and wellbeing of all staff members at St. Mark's Preschool. We recognise that mental health is just as important as physical health and that a supportive work environment contributes to a positive learning environment for children. This policy outlines how we will promote and maintain staff mental health, and how we will respond when staff members need support.

Commitment to Mental Health

St. Mark's Preschool is committed to:

- Creating a workplace culture that prioritises mental health.
- Promoting a balanced and supportive work environment for all staff.
- Reducing the stigma associated with mental health challenges.
- Offering resources and support to staff members and families in our care who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Staff Mental Health Awareness

- Regular training and workshops on mental health will be provided to all staff members.
- Room Leaders will be trained to recognise signs of stress or mental health struggles in their colleagues and will know how to offer support or escalate concerns.
- Room Leaders will include discussions about mental health challenges as part of their regular team meetings, fostering a supportive atmosphere where staff can openly share and seek advice.
- Mental health resources, including contact details for counsellors or mental health services, will be clearly displayed and available to all staff.
- We will support open communication, ensuring that staff feel comfortable discussing their mental health with their Room Leaders or Manager.

- Mental Health Leads will be given the opportunity to attend updated training courses to ensure they remain informed on best practices and effective strategies to support staff and community mental health.
- Mental Health Leads will be offered time during work hours every other week to further their research, attend training courses, or create or update resources related to mental health.
- The Preschool is committed to continuously upskilling the Mental Health Leads, and every effort will be made to explore opportunities to eventually train them as Mental Health First Aiders.

Access to Support

- A confidential support system will be available for staff members to discuss any mental health concerns.
- If the workload becomes overwhelming or if a staff member needs to offload work-related stress, they are encouraged to request a confidential session with our Mental Health Leads.
- Our three Mental Health Leads are: Kate Coles, Sharon Trim and Megan Clubb.
- The Manager will ensure that appropriate practitioner cover is sought to enable Mental Health Leads to schedule time for confidential sessions with staff when needed, and to meet as a team to discuss how best to continue to promote Mental Health at St Mark's Preschool.

Sick Days and Mental Health Days

- Each staff member is entitled to three, fully paid sick days per school year. These sick days can be used for physical illness or, if necessary, for mental health reasons.
- If staff members feel stressed, overwhelmed, or in need of a mental health break, they are welcome to use their sick days as mental health days.
- Staff members have the option to choose whether they disclose the reason for taking a sick day. If the day is taken for mental health reasons, they may choose to share this information with the Room Leader or the Mental Health Leads, but this is not a requirement.
- The goal is to create an environment where staff feel empowered to prioritise their mental health without fear of stigma or discrimination.

Confidentiality

- All mental health discussions and requests for support will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Any staff member seeking help will not face discrimination, unfair treatment, or negative repercussions as a result of discussing mental health.
- Staff members are expected to maintain confidentiality about work issues and mental health concerns within the Preschool. To ensure a supportive work environment, personal or sensitive discussions about work challenges, whether this pertains to themselves or other colleagues, should not be shared outside the Preschool.
- If a staff member needs to discuss work-related stress or concerns, they are encouraged to schedule a time with our designated Mental Health Leads, who will offer a safe and confidential space to talk.

Return to Work

- If a staff member takes time off due to mental health reasons, a clear and supportive return-to-work process will be in place.
- The staff member will have the option to work with their Room Leader to create a gradual return plan, which will follow the same procedure as it would for physical health leave. This will ensure a smooth transition back to full duties.

Encouraging a Healthy Work Environment

- Efforts will be made to reduce workplace stressors, such as unrealistic expectations or excessive workload.
- Positive workplace interactions and collaborative support among colleagues will be encouraged.
- We will foster an environment where kindness, empathy, and understanding are integral to our daily work culture.

Parental Mental Health Needs

- We recognise that parents and caregivers may occasionally disclose their own mental health struggles to us, and we approach this with understanding, respect, and empathy. We greatly value the trust our parent community places in us when sharing these personal challenges.
- As a Preschool, we are committed to supporting our parent community and ensuring that they feel heard and valued. When parents or caregivers disclose mental health concerns, we will listen with compassion and offer guidance on the support available, such as signposting to relevant services and resources.
- Parents are also welcome to book confidential time to speak with our Mental Health Leads if they feel that discussing their mental health would help them provide better support for their children at home.
- We believe that our duty of care extends to the whole family, and we are proud of the holistic support we provide to both the children and their families. Supporting parents through challenging times ultimately benefits the children in our care, helping them to thrive in an environment where their emotional and mental wellbeing is prioritised.

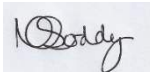
Children's Mental Health

- We recognise that children are growing up in an ever-changing world, and that their emotional and mental needs are just as important as their physical needs. At St. Mark's Preschool, we aim to create an environment that nurtures both aspects of their development.
- We will use our knowledge of each child and our communication skills within the practitioner team to ensure that we are addressing children's emotional and mental needs, as well as their physical development. Staff will actively observe and assess children's emotional wellbeing, providing early intervention where necessary.

- If any concerns are raised regarding a child's mental health or emotional wellbeing, we will document these using the usual safeguarding concern forms. This will ensure that we are consistent in reporting and addressing any issues.
- Any mental health disclosures made by children or observed concerns will be discussed with parents in line with our safeguarding policy. We will work together with parents to ensure the best possible support for the child's mental and emotional health.

Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to the needs of staff.
- Feedback from staff will be gathered periodically to identify areas of improvement.
- The Preschool Committee will also regularly review this policy, alongside other policies, to ensure alignment with best practices and to address any evolving needs.

Signed:  (Manager, St Mark's Preschool)

Date: 1/6/25