Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Hillborough Infant and Nursery School

Owned and Written by: K. Wallace – Mental Health Lead	**Date:** May 2026
Approved by: Full Governing Body	**Date:** May 2026
Next Review:	**Date:** May 2027
This policy has been updated to reflect the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, and it supersedes the HM Government Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners and Managers published in March 2015.	

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This policy was written in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and professionals involved in mental health and wellbeing.

Policy Statement

At Hillborough Infant and Nursery School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.

We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

Hillborough Infant & Nursery School, our core values are to 'CARE'

- These values are all of equal importance and encompass many things
- **C** – community
- **A** – aspiration
- **R** – respect
- **E** – empowering
- We also have our 'value' of the month, which is a principle that guides all our thinking and behaviour. We are inspired by the principles that are set out in our **Therapeutic Thinking: Behaviour & Relationships** policy

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play

- At our school we:
    - Help children to understand their emotions and feelings better. ○ Help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries.
    - Help children socially to form and maintain relationships. ○ Promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count. ○ Encourage children to be confident and 'dare to be different'. ○ Help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.
    - Our pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep.
      physically and mentally healthy. They have an age appropriate understanding of healthy relationships.

- We promote a mentally healthy environment through:
    - Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging. ○ Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making. ○ Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
    - Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.

- Providing opportunities to reflect. ○ Access to appropriate support that meets their needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch children's talents and interests through extra curricular clubs.

- We pursue our aims through:
  - Universal, whole school approaches. ○ Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
  - Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long term difficulties including attachment disorder.
  - Wellbeing activity days regular throughout the school year.

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Medical policy, and our SEND policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for **Therapeutic Thinking: Behaviour & Relationships**, PSHE, RHE and SMSC policies. It should also sit alongside child protection procedures.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Designated child protection / safeguarding officer - Josie Walter, Headteacher
- Deputy designated child protection / safeguarding officers – ○ Jenny Russell, Assistant Headteacher ○ Sally Barber, Assistant Headteacher ○ Caron Owen, Family Support Worker ○ Vicky Maples – Inclusion Manager
- Designated child protection / safeguarding officer and Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing lead - Josie Walter Headteacher
- Senior Mental health leaders – ○ Josie Walter – Senior lead ○ Kerrie Wallace – Senior lead

Strategic Vision and the Case for Change

The transition from traditional disciplinary models to a therapeutic framework is a strategic imperative for Hillborough Infant and Nursery School. In the modern educational landscape, moving beyond the reductive labelling of children as "troublesome" is essential to foster an environment where every pupil is viewed through the lens of vulnerability and potential. This shift aligns with contemporary standards by prioritizing emotional literacy as the foundational architecture for academic success. By operationalizing empathy, the school secures a nurturing landscape where behaviour is not managed through compliance, but understood as a vital form of communication.

Core Philosophy The "Therapeutic Thinking" methodology at Hillborough synthesises behavioural science with compassionate pedagogy into three core pillars:

- **Behaviour as Communication:** Every action is a reflection of internal thoughts, feelings, and past experiences.
- **Non-Judgmental Curiosity:** Staff are empowered to move beyond reactive stances, utilizing diagnostic curiosity to uncover the "why" behind detrimental actions.
- **Internal Discipline:** The framework prioritizes the development of self-regulation and resilience over external control, moving pupils toward long-term emotional independence.

Strategic Commitment to Exclusion Reduction Permanent exclusions are utilised only as a last resort. Hillborough is dedicated to a robust exclusion reduction strategy that proactively supports vulnerable groups—particularly those navigating attachment difficulties, trauma, or adverse childhood experiences. By analysing outcomes for pupils with protected characteristics, the school ensures that its therapeutic model acts as a critical differentiator from punitive systems, prioritizing equitable inclusion over removal.

This foundational mind-set serves as the non-negotiable prerequisite for the CARE values that drive our daily operations.

Aligning Operations with CARE Values

Strategic institutional values are the engines of daily decision-making. At Hillborough, the CARE acronym is not a passive slogan but a behavioural curriculum designed to reduce power imbalances and foster a sense of belonging from the earliest years.

The CARE Value Matrix: Operationalising Empathy

The following table maps our core values to the specific "Valued Behaviours" identified within our infant and nursery context:

Value	Valued Behaviours: The Hillborough Standard
Community	Safe place for learning and play
Aspiration	Do our best
Respect	Respect – self, others and environment
Empowering	Help ourselves and others

Implementation of the Therapeutic Thinking: Behaviour & Relationships Curriculum

These values are translated into a lived experience through a dual-track delivery system:

- **Weekly Explicit Teaching:** Valued behaviours are taught as essential life skills through both planned curriculum time and incidental learning opportunities.
- **Celebration Assemblies:** Certificates and public recognition reinforce consistent CARE values. These achievements are shared via Class Dojo, ensuring a transparent feedback loop with the wider community.

The CARE framework functions as a toolkit for pupils and staff. By emphasising "making green choices" and "asking for help," the school intentionally shifts the teacher-student

dynamic from one of control to one of partnership. This empowerment fosters a culture of "Aspiration" where even the youngest learners take responsibility for their social and emotional progress.

The Graduated Response: From Universal to Targeted Provision

The "Graduated Response" ensures that resources are allocated with surgical precision, moving away from one-size-fits-all disciplinary reactions to a tiered model of support.

The Three-Tier Support Model

1. **Universal:** Whole-school CARE curriculum and a mentally healthy environment for all.
2. **Recent Difficulties:** Agility-based support for temporary setbacks (e.g., bereavement).
3. **Specialised/Long-term:** Targeted interventions for pupils with complex needs, including attachment disorders and identified SEND.

Diagnostic Intelligence: Identification and Warning Signs

Staff utilise termly wellbeing trackers to monitor "Diagnostic Intelligence" metrics, including:

- **Engagement & Attendance:** Punctuality, approach to learning, and absenteeism.
- **Social & Emotional Patterns:** Relationship difficulties, social withdrawal, or negative behaviour patterns.
- **Physical Indicators:** Changes in eating/sleeping, repeated nausea, or expressions of hopelessness.

The Targeted Support Toolkit

Interventions are evidence-based and age-appropriate, including **Zones of Regulation**, **"Worry Eaters," Lego Therapy**, **Circle of Friends**, and therapeutic **Drawing and Talking** sessions.

Monitoring Effectiveness and Data-Driven Governance

To ensure "Therapeutic Thinking" delivers equitable outcomes, Hillborough employs a rigorous "Equity Audit" approach to data governance.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Class Teachers:** Record incidents via EduKey/CPOMS. They utilise the **Early Prognosis Tool** to analyse the four functions of behaviour: **Sensory, Emotional, Social, and Tangible.**
- **Senior Leadership (SLT):** Conduct termly diagnostic analyses to ensure no group is disadvantaged by policy implementation, specifically monitoring protected characteristics such as race and disability.
- **Governing Body:** Holds the Headteacher to account, reviewing the "Statement of Behaviour Principles" to ensure the strategy remains robust and effective.

Impact Metrics for Success

Success is quantified through:

- A measurable reduction in the frequency and severity of detrimental behaviours.
- Enhanced pupil confidence in co-regulation and self-regulation techniques.
- The continued reduction of suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- Consistent stakeholder feedback from the School Council, parent workshops, and staff supervision.

Hillborough Infant and Nursery School is committed to the CARE framework as a living strategy. By transforming our response to vulnerability, we ensure every child is empowered to transition from the playground to the wider world with resilience, respect, and aspiration