**Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy**

**Purpose of Policy**

At Rainbow Nursery, we aim to provide positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children’s mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement.

This policy sets out:

* How we promote positive mental health
* How we prevent mental health problems
* How we identify and support children with mental health needs
* How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health problems
* Key information about some common mental health problems
* Where to go for further advice and support

Rainbow Nursery 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. For some it will be a respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children’s wellbeing and can help create a sense of belonging and community. Our role is to also 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 is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a nursery where:

* All children are valued
* Children have a sense of belonging and feel safe
* Children feel able to talk with trusted adults about their feelings
* Positive mental health is promoted and valued In addition to children’s wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing.

**Definition of mental health and wellbeing**

The World Health Organisation describes mental health as "a state of wellbeing” in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Mental health and wellbeing are not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/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

**Promoting Positive Mental Health**

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. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

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.

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. 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 and loss and family breakdown. They 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 (see appendix 1 on risk and protective factors). Our Lead for Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs is responsible for:

* Leads and works with other staff to coordinate whole nursery activities to promote positive mental health and well-being.
* Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
* Is the first point of contact with mental health services and makes individual referrals to them.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the nursery environment, or with advice from external professionals. 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 and their families.

**Supporting Children’s Positive Mental Health**

We believe that the nursery has a key role in promoting children’s mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. We have developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

Campaigns to raise awareness of mental health

* 1:1 time with keyworker
* Emotional wellbeing charts where children can register how they are feeling
* Resources to help children to talk/share their worries or concerns
* Staff mental health notice board
* Staff training

**Teaching About Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing**

We teach children about health, safety and wellbeing through our practices, policies and procedures. We endeavour to minimise hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment. 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.

**Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs.**

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.

**Early identification**

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:

* Observing and analysing behaviour and development
* Monitoring attendance
* Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
* Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns
* A parental information and health declaration on starting at the nursery (registration forms)
* Parental meetings
* Gathering information from any previous setting attended
* Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff
* Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any members of staff

**Disclosures by Children and Confidentiality**

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount, and staff listen rather than advice. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared and cannot be kept as a secret. All disclosures are recorded on a green form and held on the child’s confidential file.

**Providing Support to our Staff**

The organisation will provide knowledge and skills training to help management, supervisors and staff support their own mental health and wellbeing and that of others. This training will be designed to address the following:

* The promotion of understanding of the importance of mental wellbeing to all employees, including best practice.
* How to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively.
* Ensure that any employee suffering from mental illness is treated fairly, with respect and confidentiality and without discrimination.
* Where appropriate, the organisation will train Mental Health First Aiders to support the goals and implementation of this policy.

Rainbow Nursery undertakes to provide the following measures and ways of working to promote mental health and wellbeing:

* Offering flexible working arrangements where practicable.
* Working with employees to create a culture where bullying, harassment, discrimination and racism is not accepted.
* Providing training for all employees to raise awareness of everyday contributory factors, such as stress and excessive workload that undermine mental health.
* Ensuring that managers and supervisory staff are aware of their obligations to promote a good working environment for their staff and colleagues as defined within this policy.
* Implementing training and awareness programmes to create a culture where staff are able to talk openly about mental health problems and disclose difficulties without fear of discrimination or reprisal.
* Providing proactive support for individual staff who are experiencing mental health problems, inside and outside the workplace, in a positive manner.

Where an employee is experiencing mental health issues, The Organisation will provide support in the following ways:

* Proactively making employees aware of third-party organisations that might be able to provide information, advice and support in these situations, offering continued employment where practicable subject to appropriate adaptions to the role.
* In situations where the staff member experiences a period of absence from work due to mental ill-health, working with the employee to develop a “Return to Work Plan” that provides the best opportunity for the employee to return to work as soon as is reasonably practicable.
* Ensuring that the employee is treated fairly and without discrimination
* Encouraging staff to seek the appropriate help through the NHS or a mental health support organisation
* Identifying and remediating any factors within the workplace that are contributing to the negative mental health issues.
* Dealing with the mental health related issues in a sensitive manner, respecting the employee as an individual and acknowledging their right to confidentiality.
* Being mindful of the organisation’s responsibilities under The Equality Act 2010.

This policy recognises that reducing stress in the workplace is a key component of supporting mental health and wellbeing. Our organisation shall promote the principles and activities below through workforce training and ongoing staff communication.

* Workload demands and expectations placed on employees should be effectively communicated, be achievable and accepted by all parties.
* We will promote an environment where staff are encouraged to feedback to their line management about factors in their job roles that may induce stress, such as excessive workload or overly stretching performance targets.
* Provide adequate support and training to enable the employee to meet the requirements of their role.
* Provide sufficient communication to keep employees adequately informed about any information that may impact the organisation and their roles.
* Ensure that managers and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities towards their staff, including setting and managing performance in a manner that is consistent with this policy.

**Date Completed: October 2023**

**Review Date: October 2024**

*This policy will be monitored in line with relevant legislation and good practice guidelines*