



Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

6th -12th February 2023

This week is the UK's Mental Health Awareness week for Children and this year's theme is '**Let's Connect**' – which is about how making 'meaningful connections' with others helps support good mental health. This dedicated week was first established in 2015 to shine a spotlight on the importance of children's mental health.



We thought we would use this 'awareness' week as an opportunity to share some of the good work we are doing across the Pear Tree Federation to support and develop the mental wellbeing of all our children.

What do we mean by mental wellbeing?

Well, our mental wellbeing includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act. It will determine how well we handle stress; relate to others; behave in different situations, and our ability to make good choices.

So, how are children affected?

Around 5 children in a classroom of 30, between the ages of 5 and 16 are likely to have a mental health issue and more still, will have behavioural issues. Approximately 50% of people with enduring mental health problems will have had symptoms by the time they are 14, and many at much younger age.

We also know that these figures do not reflect the true scale of poor mental wellbeing among children in school and that most of the emotional issues our children encounter are not 'clinical' in nature and will not require medical or specialist treatment.

In school, we recognise the importance of building children's coping strategies and resilience, helping to develop their understanding that there are always people they can trust and talk to in school.

How we support wellbeing in school

We understand that not all parents and carers realise what we can offer to help and support children and families when things are maybe difficult, with in-house support and also signposting families to wider support.

We are very proud of our well-trained and experienced emotional literacy support assistants (ELSA's) who work with individual children and small groups.

The work of our **ELSA's** is invaluable to the very many children who receive support when they are experiencing situations that might feel overwhelming or frightening, or are struggling with their thoughts and emotions, including for example: bereavement;



family break-ups; low self-confidence or friendship difficulties. Our Elsa's are trusted adults, a 'go-to' for children when things are tricky or tough for them.



In school, we also have specialised **Thrive Approach** trained practitioners. They aim to understand, identify and tackle the root causes of children's behaviour. Again, this is not just for individual pupils and on a termly basis, all teachers will 'profile' all the children in their class. They will then deliver wellbeing sessions that address the identified, wider emotional needs of the class as a 'group'.

We also offer **Skodel** which is a digital platform for personal wellbeing check-in's. Any flags in the check-in immediately alert staff to any child who might be struggling with any aspect of their emotional and social wellbeing so support can be offered.



And, for our older pupils, who are experiencing more complex emotional problems, we can also request the services of a local authority professional children's counsellor to come to school to work with children on a 1:1 basis.

We also work closely with the local authority's Emotional Health and Wellbeing team who work in school with pupils and their families. The local authority also provide our school staff with support and professional training in understanding the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences on children's wellbeing, again key factors that can and do impact on children's mental wellbeing.

Safe and happy childhood

Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.



New Initiatives for 22-23

We have also started working with **Action for Children** and have some big new projects in the pipeline. All our Year 4-6 children will be having '**Bounce-Back**' sessions in the next few weeks delivered by Action for Children workers.

Action for Children will also be providing wellbeing support sessions and resources for parents and carers, as well as professional training for all staff.

Restorative Practice All staff will be shortly refreshing, or beginning, their professional understanding of what is meant by Restorative Approaches. This approach prioritises relationships between children and children; children and adults, and adults and adults above all else in the school community. Knowing the important part that strong relationships play in good mental wellbeing, and will play a big role in enabling our core wellbeing values of ensuring a sense of belonging; of feeling valued; and having a voice that matters and is heard.

**We are also in the process of publishing a useful Parental Guide to help families who need support and guidance around parenting and helping to improving children's wellbeing.*