

## **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy**

### **Introduction**

At Flying Start, we have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued. At our setting 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. 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 Values**

Each month we celebrate a different Value to teach children life-long skills and have 3 main Values which drive our ethos, which are Happiness, Respect and Individuality. At Flying Start Preschool, we understand the responsibility we have as educators to support children in the development of life values. We have recognised that children need to be given the opportunity to understand that they have a choice in the way that they behave. These important values will become a golden thread interwoven amongst our behaviour. We will teach children these important values through stories, music, play, modelling and everyday language. Please support our monthly values at home by talking and modelling.

### **Developing life skills**

We develop life skills such as

- Planning for own learning
- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution
- Caring for others in the community
- Build relationships
- Dealing with emotions
- Divergent thinking skills
- Learning about negotiation and compromise

### **Wellbeing**

For children they need their basic needs met, for example; a home, healthy diet, rest and exercise etc. as well as to feel safe and loved, to feel respected, that their opinions matter.

Maslow showed in his hierarchy of needs that without the basic necessities like; food, rest, water, home, feeling safe, love, belonging and self-esteem people would not have the desire to be the best they can be and it is the same for children.

Education and Health are closely linked. There is evidence to show that a strong focus on wellbeing for children gives increased academic achievement ; “Promoting the health and wellbeing of pupils and students within schools and colleges has the potential to improve their educational outcomes AND their health and wellbeing outcomes”. Public Health England 2014.

The EYFS states, in relation to wellbeing (although strangely not mentioning the term wellbeing), that children need; positive relationships with a key person approach which are loving and foster a sense of belonging, are sensitive and responsive to children’s needs, feelings and interests, support independence, set clear boundaries which will make children feel safe, practitioner to keep them physically safe, value and respect children and help children develop a sense of their culture.

Dr Laever, wellbeing and involvement pioneer beautifully describes wellbeing as “...a beautiful stage in which children can be when they feel OK. They feel at ease. They radiate. They are open to anything that comes in”.

It is not only parents who influence a child’s wellbeing but also other important adults in children’s lives for example their teachers. The EYFS highlights that parents and early years practitioners need to work together to promote children’s wellbeing and emotional development.

We can make a real difference by being nurturing and encouraging to all the young children in our care. If we can increase wellbeing in the early years it will help children carry resilience and happiness going forward and most importantly give them the tools to be the best they can be and reach their full potential.

### **How can we tell if a child has high levels of wellbeing?**

- Children are interested in the environment
- They are flexible and can move on from problems quickly
- They can express themselves and take risks and challenges without effecting their self-worth
- They can stand up for themselves and can ask for things they need
- They are energetic and radiate a ‘zest for life’
- They are relaxed or able to relax at times
- They appear happy
- They are at peace with themselves

### **How do we increase levels of wellbeing?**

- Play play play, play is essential for wellbeing, it is a time to think for themselves and reflect, use their imagination.
- Arrange the classroom into appealing areas that limit noise and have areas to rest. Children need long periods of play outside with access to nature, children have a sense of control outside.
- Improve the quality of interactions
- Identify children with emotional and developmental problems and work out sustaining interventions
- Ensure adults have high levels of wellbeing
- Use mindfulness

- Plan the environment with challenge in mind (see the gap analysis), ensure there are opportunities for sensory and loose part play, ensure activities are not too hard as sometimes low wellbeing can be down to not knowing what to

### **Mental Health**

If we observe any need to gain outside support regarding mental health, we will speak to parents in the first instance and offer support to speak with outside agencies such as NSPCC, place2be, mind, action for children and the NHS and we may refer to our safeguarding policy.

<b>This policy was adopted on</b>	<b>Signed on behalf of the nursery</b>
<i>04/05/22</i>	<i>Sarah Maynard</i>