**Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Pre-school for Children and Staff**

Well-being is a broad term that covers how you feel about yourself and your life. It encompasses the physical, emotional, mental and social and spiritual areas of a person.

**Children and families**

Under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) this is covered in the children’s personal, social, emotional and physical development. Which are covered under the Prime areas of learning and development.

*Physical well-being covers everything physical to do with the body:*

* Growth and development
* Moving and keeping physically fit
* Caring for your health (e.g. washing, cleaning teeth, etc.)
* Eating a balanced and nutritious diet
* Rest and appropriate sleep patterns

*Mental and emotional well-being includes:*

* Acknowledging, expressing and coping with feelings and emotions
* Thought processes
* Reducing stress and anxiety

*Social well-being includes:*

* Relationships
* Family (close and extended)
* Friends
* The feeling of belonging and acceptance
* Compassion and caring approaches

*Spiritual well-being can cover the following:*

* Value and beliefs held
* Personal identity and self-awareness

Little Oak Pre-school is an inclusive setting and ensure that all children, families, staff and visitors are welcome, and we aim to embrace everyone’s spiritual well-being and to celebrate families and staff important occasions.

Children’s physical and well-being is supported through our carefully planned curriculum programme which supports all types of gross and fine motor play both inside and outside. We encourage nutritionally balanced lunchboxes provided by parents and at snack times we provide fruit and support children to make their own choices.

Personal hygiene is supported in children of all ages, explaining the reasons for hand washing, tooth brushing and other routines.

Children are provided with quiet and calming areas for rest, relaxation and the occasional child that needs to sleep. This enables them to recharge their batteries and supports both their physical and mental well-being. We support children to make strong attachments with their key person and their buddies as well as forging relationships with the children’s peers in order to support their social well-being. We offer opportunities and resources for children to play singly, in pairs, small groups and large groups to support this are of development.

Children’s mental and emotional wellbeing is supported. We provide a safe environment that allows time for the caregiver to take the lead from the child, this consistent practice supports the process of children building the capacity to verbalise how they are feeling, through providing activities in which children are able to recognise and express their emotions, and through emotional literacy which can be found in some story books. This enables us to provide support for children who may be experiencing big emotions they cannot cope with just yet. We support children’s self-adjustment through carefully planned activities and resources, modelling calming strategies and naming and talking about feelings ad by providing opportunities for children to practice their self-regulation skills.

Staff use the promoting positive behaviour policy to ensure a consistent approach.

Staff are able to recognise when a child may need support with their emotions and provide this in one to one or in a small group, whichever is more appropriate for the individual child. Teaching children to recognise and manage their emotions at a young age helps support foundations to do this throughout their life.

*Supporting parents and their children*

Parents with increased stress levels can unintentionally impose their stress upon their children and the practitioners at the pre-school. Little Oak Pre-school will give support and empathy and with this is where an understanding of the child and the family is important. The keyperson will be in a good position to signpost the parent to external support where needed. Where children are affected by stressful home situation’s it is important that practitioners are able to recognises the signs of distress and provide appropriate comfort and support the child and in addition follow the Safeguarding policy, if appropriate.

**Staff**

It is essential that early year’s childcare providers and practitioners work together to help fight workplace stress and low mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. A pro-active approach to raising awareness, building team strength and a compassionate environment will help this.

The impact of work-related stress and low mental health and well-being can have significant costs on an individual’s performance and wellbeing. It can also affect the wellbeing of those around them including the children in their care.

*As a pre-school we will endeavour to:*

* Not over burden our staff with excessive paperwork and administration
* That the managers are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage staff including their workloads
* We will encourage a staff culture where colleagues that are known to have mental health issues are looked at individually the same way as colleagues with physical health issues
* Do our best to encourage an ethos of understanding and a supportive outlook towards ‘healthy mental health and wellbeing’
* Discourage a negative attitude towards mental health
* Encourage staff to disclose to managers and other staff if they are suffering from low wellbeing or mental health issues while still respecting individuals right to privacy
* Identify anyone that looks and sounds if they are suffering with low wellbeing or mental health issues
* Where staff are experiencing mental health issues the managers of Little Oak Pre-school will provide non judgemental and pro-active support to ensure staff are treated fairly and consistently with respect and confidentiality

*Establish effective general workplace practices that can help prevent low mental wellbeing such as:*

* making sure staff receive appropriate training
* adequate resources to do their job
* clearly defined roles
* some degree of control over how their work is organised
* monitoring of their workloads to make sure they do not become overloaded or under utilised

On a positive level we can:

* Acknowledge individual and team efforts often with genuine praise and recognition
* Ensure a comfortable and calm place is available to take a proper break during the day
* Establish a sensible approach to paperwork and supporting colleagues to undertake all work within their normal working hours
* Having efficient, honest and open communication channels where everyone is kept informed and up-to-date about plans for the future
* Adapting an ideas culture where staff are involved in decision making, and their opinions and views are sought, heard and respected
* Establishing a supportive no-blame environment where staff can learn from their mistakes
* By using positive language in the setting
* Have positive, constructive staff meetings where people can speak openly and honestly
* Arrange outside of work social activities for all staff to enjoy, for example meals out, picnics etc.
* Celebrating staff birthdays and special occasions
* In-house events such as picnics in the garden

**It is important that anyone experiencing mental health issues visits their GP to receive medical advice and support**

***Further support***

Health and Safety Executive at: hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm

Time to Change at: [www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk)

Mind at: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

St John Ambulance at: [www.sja.org.uk/sja/training:courses/mental-health-first-aid.aspx](http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training:courses/mental-health-first-aid.aspx)

***Further information***

Building a Resilient Workforce in the Early Years (Early Years Alliance 2019)

Minds Matter: The impact of working in the early years sector on practitioners’ mental health and wellbeing (Pre-school Learning Alliance)

***For further advice***

[info@eyalliance.org.uk](mailto:info@eyalliance.org.uk)

[www.eyalliance.org.uk/information-and-advice](http://www.eyalliance.org.uk/information-and-advice)

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Rosalind Hambidge (Director) Date: 2/3/2023

Signed on behalf of Little Oak Pre-school (Witney) Ltd

Policy review due: November 2023