



School Mental Health Award Final Assessment Validation Report

School: Willingham Primary School

School Lead: Gemma Hassan

Coach/Verifier: Vanessa Wears

Date: 03/09/2025

Competency	Statements as Assessed by the School
Leadership and Strategy	Embedding
Organisational structure and culture - staff	Embedding
Organisational structure and culture - pupils	Embedding
Support for staff	Embedding
Professional development and learning	Embedding
Support for pupils	Embedding
Working with parents and carers	Embedding
Working with external services	Embedding

Willingham Primary School has presented an incredibly detailed profile of evidence that demonstrates they are embedding across all eight competencies of the School Mental Health Award and meet all criteria for the award. The School Mental Health Award framework has been valuable in raising awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing across the school. By embedding this awareness and encouraging a culture of kindness and understanding, the framework has supported the school in building a strong foundation where mental health and wellbeing are prioritised.



Visitors to the school regularly comment on the calm learning environment, an atmosphere built on high expectations that pupils embrace and thrive in. Feedback from visitors, including interview candidates, frequently highlights how warm, open, and welcoming the staff team is. Overall, people describe gaining a strong “good gut feeling” from the calm, friendly, and supportive atmosphere that has been carefully developed over the past several years.

The changes that have had the greatest impact on staff have come from a combination of wellbeing initiatives and practical workload-reducing strategies. A key change was the introduction of a wellbeing day for all staff, regardless of contracted hours. Alongside this, the Wellbeing Working Party set out to purposefully resolve issues that arose and develop initiatives to promote positive connections. Activities such as staff dodgeball sessions, a “Guardian Angel” scheme of small acts of kindness, and other fun initiatives have boosted morale and been an ongoing support. These efforts have been complemented by concrete measures to reduce workload pressures, such as allocating team planning time during inset days, adjusting schedules to balance commitments like parents’ evenings, and improving communication systems so staff feel supported and informed. Together, these approaches have helped staff feel cared for, connected, and able to manage their responsibilities more effectively.

The highlight of work relating to pupils has been the development of therapeutic support within the school, particularly through the introduction of canine therapy, talk therapy, and play therapy, which have had a profound impact on children’s wellbeing.

Leaders and governors play a vital role in driving the school’s mental health focus by offering strong support and actively engaging with the work being done. Senior leaders collaborate to ensure the focus on mental health is embedded into everyday decision-making and team structures. Governors ask challenging but constructive questions while also supporting the wellbeing of those being challenged.

Future plans focus on maintaining momentum and continuing to embed existing practices while making small but meaningful improvements. The aim is to keep strengthening what is already in place, ironing out any wrinkles, and continually striving for improvement.



The lead is passionate about their work, which has been instrumental in securing positive developments in the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff at the school.

I have no hesitation in concurring with the self-assessment made by the school and recommend that Willingham Primary School is awarded the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools School Mental Health Award at bronze level.

Vanessa Wears

Coach

School Mental Health Award

03/09/2025



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CARNEGIE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS



Competency profiles provided by the school.

Leadership and Strategy	
The school has a named senior lead for mental health of pupils and staff	Y
The school has a named Governor for mental health of pupils and staff	Y
Governors understand, embrace, and lead the ethos and business case for a comprehensive mental health and wellbeing approach within the school	3
Governors hold school leaders to account for the mental health of staff and pupils	3
Senior Leaders develop and implement the strategies and structures needed to improve mental health in the school	3
Staff have mental health as a core part of their job description and role requirements	3
Leaders' performance management includes a focus relating to mental health	3
The school has a range of robust staff-focussed policies that support mental health which were developed in consultation with all staff groups and leaders and approved by Governors	3
The school has pupil-focussed policies that support good mental health that were developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents and approved by governors.	3
Senior leaders use regular reports and updates including data about the mental health of staff and pupils to implement future actions, channel resources and commissioning external agencies	3

Organisational Structure & Culture – Staff	
The school is a positive working environment where staff feel safe and supported to be and do their best and to share concerns which affect their mental health	3
Leaders regularly consult with a range of employees from across the school to gain informal and formal feedback on stress-related issues and how to improve and support mental health and wellbeing	3
Communication protocols are well established and adhered to e.g., restrictions on unnecessary emailing in evenings, overnight and weekends	3
Workload expectations are made explicit and are well managed, such as marking & assessment, hours in school, working at home	3
Staff self-care is encouraged	3
Senior leaders model the expectations they have of all staff to promote good mental health	3
All staff in school are responsible for the health and wellbeing of themselves and promoting that of others	3
The norms of professional dialogue are developed, and positive language is modelled and used by all staff	3
A culture of tolerance, trust and openness is developed	3
Stigma regarding mental health and support for individuals and groups is challenged	3
Job flexibility is supported where possible within a secure business case	3



Organisational Structure & Culture – Pupils	
The school values, acknowledges and utilises knowledge and expertise of staff, parents and professionals working with the school with regards to mental health and wellbeing	3
Strategies that promote and develop mental health and wellbeing are embedded in the curriculum and is designed to meet the needs of the pupils specific to their social and emotional needs and developmental age	3
The school has clear strategies which are understood by pupils, school staff and parents to support pupils whose mental health is a cause for concern	3
The school has clear strategies on how to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils with special educational needs, disabilities, disadvantaged and vulnerable children	3
The school ensures that pupils expressing concerns are listened to	3
The school has clear pathways and provisions available to discuss mental health concerns, managing student difficulties and create strategies with follow ups	3
Talk about mental health is normalised, any stigma is challenged by creating a culture of empathy and openness through an ongoing forum of discussion and exploration	3
The school promotes positive and healthy relationships amongst pupils, staff and with parents	3
Pupils are engaged through encouraging pupil voice, authentic involvement in learning, decision making and peer-led approaches.	3

Support for Staff	
A comprehensive staff health and wellbeing offering supports staff mental health	3
The school consistently works towards reducing the stressors that affect staff mental health	3
School has clear pathways to staff support which are understood by all colleagues	3
Access to coaching and counselling is available and encouraged where deemed helpful	3
Staff are encouraged and supported to establish and participate in activities that foster good mental health and wellbeing, based on sound evidence of their impact	3
Successes are regularly acknowledged and celebrated	3



Professional Development & Learning	
The school has a proportion of staff trained in Mental Health First Aid for adults appropriate to the size of the staff cohort	3
The school lead for mental health and other key staff are trained in evidence-based, and preferably professionally accredited mental health and wellbeing training, appropriate to the age group of the pupils in their school	3
The school's named Governor for mental health has training which develops understanding of mental health and wellbeing in schools for pupils and staff and the role of the Governing Body in supporting good mental health	3
All Governors access professional development opportunities to develop their understanding skills in mental health linked to the role of the Governing Body	3
Staff CPD relating to pupil and staff mental health is aligned to clearly defined, expected outcomes which set out the mental health requirements for their role	3
All staff access professional development opportunities to develop their skills in pupil mental health and wellbeing	3
Staff are able to develop their understanding and practice in adult mental health, wellbeing, and self-care through effective CPD opportunities and act as role models for pupils	3
Staff have access to information and have the opportunities to develop their practice in relation to new challenges posed by information technology and social media such as cyber bullying	3
All teaching and associate staff have been trained and have a broad understanding of mental health issues and promoting wellbeing in pupils appropriate to the age of the children in the school	3
ECTs and all new staff complete an induction programme which ensures they have the understanding and skills expected of all staff in the school with regards to mental health	3
All staff mental health CPD is underpinned by evidence and expertise, aligned to DfE CPD standards	3
Staff feel supported to take forward any new learning from training into their practice	3



Support for Pupils	
Mental health and wellbeing are embedded in the curriculum with supporting activities including assemblies, focus days, lessons and other events where mental health, wellbeing, social and emotional skills, attitudes, and values are explicitly taught by well trained and enthusiastic teachers using positive, experiential, and interactive methods and resources. This learning is integrated into the mainstream processes of school life	3
Pupil wellbeing is developed through implicit methods of teaching and learning such as: emotional literacy, character strengths, values, virtues, resilience, and self-awareness	3
Relationships within the school are positive providing a nurturing, safe and supportive environment which creates a sense of belonging for pupils	3
Pupils understand and can express a range of emotions and are able to share their emotions and ask for help to support their emotional awareness	3
Pupils feel able to disclose incidence of bullying and any form of discriminatory behaviours, they feel their worries and concerns are heard, respected, and taken seriously by staff	3
Staff respond wisely to 'challenging' behaviour, both responding actively with clear consequences and also understanding its deeper roots, taking opportunities to model and teach positive alternatives	3
Pupils know how to ask for support, and this is followed up by staff	3
There are clear internal referral procedures, understood by all staff, to ensure timely and appropriate support is sourced and accessed for pupils in need	3
Evidence based mental health support services are provided and accessed which draw on a sound understanding of child and adolescent development, such as: drop ins, mentoring, coaching, counselling, pastoral support, mindfulness, self-awareness, empathy, and resilience building interventions and wellbeing skills workshops group, peer support, mindfulness, self-awareness, empathy, and resilience building interventions and wellbeing skills workshops	3
Where pupils experience mental health difficulties, clear plans and pathways to specialist support exist, using a coherent teamwork approach, including in the involvement of outside agencies such as CAMHS, school nurse or GP. Help is rooted within the school environment	3
Displays and posters provide various information on evidence based mental health support and how to improve wellbeing such as self-help booklets, library books and other media resources	3
Effective early intervention support is provided and evaluated	3
Physical activity and relaxation activities are on offer that improve wellbeing	3
If peer mentoring is used, those who serve as peer mentors have training and a support structure which they can use if needed	3
Pupils are involved in the design of mental health and wellbeing initiatives and are encouraged to give feedback and provide new ideas	3
Achievements and successes of students are recognised and celebrated	3



Working with Parents and Carers	
The school ensures a non-judgemental, warm, and welcoming environment exists for parents/carers	3
Parents have access to school mental health and wellbeing policies	3
Effective relationships with parents/carers are fostered and maintained	3
The school is committed to continuously improving parental communication	3
Parents have access to staff or mental health professional/s if they have concerns about their child's mental health	3
Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school	3
Parents are involved in interventions that supports their children's mental health and wellbeing	3
Any stigma shown by parents about mental health is handled sensitively yet firmly	3
The school provides learning, guidance, and support for parents to help them:	3
The school has effective strategies in working with all parents/carers	3
Systems are in place that ensures parents/carers are regularly updated on their child's progress as well as any concerns that may exist	3
Parents share their views on how to develop the wellbeing of the school	3
Support, signposting, and referrals are made for parents who require support with their own mental health or support in their relationships with their children	3

Working with External Stakeholders	
Staff understand the clear referral procedures to access timely external services appropriate to the needs of pupils with escalating or long-term mental health difficulties	3
The school has developed strong links with CAMHS and other agencies ensuring regular two-way communication, support, and guidance	3
School leaders are shaping local children's mental health policy and services	3
The school is up to date with new legislation and DfE guidance	3
The school is aware of local agencies and organisations which offer mental health support services	3
Specialist organisations work with the school to develop the mental health and wellbeing of staff, children, and parents	3
The school is aware of and builds relationships with local community projects, voluntary organisations, and networks	3
Due diligence is carried out prior to engaging any external agency / professional providing mental health services to pupils. This involves understanding the evidence base for their proposed work, their qualifications, recent training/CPD, obtaining references, knowledge of their professional body, their supervision structure (including the name and qualifications of their supervisor), who you should complain to regarding any concerns. In addition, the school will carry out their usual safeguarding checks	3
Comprehensive Service Level Agreements are in place which clarify roles and responsibilities and reduce risks. Amongst other things, this will make clear the services being provided, the tools and methods used, issues around confidentiality, how outcome data will be recorded and evaluated and how feedback will take place	3
The school ensures robust quality assurance for all external mental health and wellbeing provision taking place, which is reported and evaluated at senior and governor level	3

