NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Focus · Learn · Achieve

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Status	**Non-Statutory**
Responsible Governors' Committee	**Full Governing Body**
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Responsible Person	**Co-Headteachers**
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Contents

1.0 Policy Statement

2.0 Scope

3.0 Policy Aims

4.0 Key Staff Members

5.0 Teaching about Mental Health

6.0 Signposting

7.0 Sources or support at school and in the local community

8.0 Warning signs

9.0 Targeted support

10.0 Managing disclosures

11.0 Confidentiality

12.0 Whole School Approach – Supporting Families

- 12.1 Working with Families
- 12.2 Supporting Families

13.0 Whole School Approach – Supporting Staff

- 13.1 Training
- 13.2 Topic Champions – LSA Initiative
- 13.3 Trauma Informed Schools UK

14.0 Policy Review

APPENDIX

Student voice – informing our Mental Health Policy and approach (KS3)

1.0 Policy statement

At New Heights School, we are committed to supporting and promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all our students, their families, members of staff and governors. Our school has a trauma informed approach which is respectful, mindful, empathetic and creates a safe, secure and equal school environment. At our school we know that experiences in our children's lives can add challenges and barriers to learning, this means emotional support is essential for our children's wellbeing, growth and future success. Our approach allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

At our school 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.
- Support children to reach out of their comfort zones to achieve more.

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining New Heights School's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.
It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

3.0 Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students as a priority.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Provide the right support to staff with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them for specific support
- Develop resilience amongst students and staff, and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

4.0 Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Designated Safeguarding Leads
- SENDCos
- Designated Mental Health Leads
- Intervention Practitioner (Key Stage 3)
- Behaviour and Emotional Support Team (BEST) (Key Stage 3)
- Mental Health Facilitators (ROAR) (Key Stage 2)
- Family Engagement Manager (Key Stage 4)
- Trauma Informed Practitioners (Key Stage 4)
- Head of PSHE & Pastoral Care (Key Stage 4)
- Mental Health First Aid Champions (for staff and students) (Key Stage 3)

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student, in the first instance they should speak to the Mental Health First Aid Champions/Safeguarding Lead.

If there is a concern that the student is at high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed, and contact with the Safeguarding Team should be made.

If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary. In all cases, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the team should be contacted.

5.0 Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

6.0 Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves, and others, physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and Trauma Informed Culture of Care which is embedded throughout our school environment. Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

We will also follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance - preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and emotional wellbeing

7.0 Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, classrooms, staff rooms, offices, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites, Family Engagement coffee mornings), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

8.0 Sources or support at school and in the local community

Our school is invested in supporting our students through targeted approaches either for individual children or groups of children which may include:

- One on one counselling support
- Targeted use of interventions
- Therapeutic group and one to one activities including art, creative classes, relaxation and mindfulness techniques

We do this by following a Trauma Informed model of care where our educational practices are embedded in the processes of Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect (Px3Rs). This approach integrates the latest in neuroscience research and psychological theory.

Protect

- Increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school day; 'meet and greet' at the beginning of the school day and an open-door policy for informal discussions with parents/ carers.
- Staff trained in 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015); being warm, emphatic, playful and curious (proven to shift children out of flight/fright/freeze positions).

- Staff ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, to decrease likelihood of children relating defensively (flight/fright/freeze).
- A whole school commitment to move away from the use of harsh voices, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).
- Staff 'interactively repair' occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness.
- Pedagogic interventions that help staff to get to know children better on an individual basis e.g. 'I wish my teacher knew'. (What matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). This is key to enabling children to feel safe enough to talk, if they wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.
- Vulnerable children have easy and daily access to at least one named, emotionally available adult, and know when and where to find that adult. If the child does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative adult is found.
- School staff adjust expectations around vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This includes removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well (e.g. children who are continually triggered into alarm states in the main environment can access a calmer, smaller area with emotionally regulating adults).

- Provision of a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for children's help/talk time. The nurturing of staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally-regulated and in so doing to support them to interact throughout the school day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

Relate

- A whole-school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.
- Vulnerable children are provided with repeated relational opportunities (with emotionally available adults) to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'.

Regulate

- Relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life.
- Evidence-based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating, playful, enriched adult-child interactions.
- The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as a priority to prevent burnout, stress related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed.

Reflect

"***Reflection is more than just noticing what one feels…; it's an effort to make sense out of feelings"*** *(Hauser et al 2008 270)*

- Staff training and development and training in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/ giving lectures).
- Provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaning empathetic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives. This is to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general.
- Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff (working alliance), children are given the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, as a key part of 'working through' these experiences and memory re-consolidation. Means include the provision of different modes of expression, e.g. art/play/drama/ music/sand/emotion worksheets/emotion cards.
- PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and psychoeducation as preventative input, informed by current research psychological and neuroscience) on mental health, , relationships, emotions, social media and resilience. Curricular content enables children to make informed choices about how they relate to others, how they live their lives, and how they treat their brains, bodies and minds.
- Staff development and training to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences, Staff learn to do this through empathetic conversation, addressing children's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives.
- A behaviour policy based not on punishment and sanctions, but resolution and interactive repair (e.g. restorative conversations).

At New Heights School KS3 we offer individualised support for a range of things, including:

- Thrive intervention
- Daily check-ins/triage
- 1-1 sessions
- Feelings thermometer in relationships for learning (revisited through the day)
- 2 staff members in each small class, all with access to our mental health handbook
- Regular CPD sessions which are based on trauma and wellbeing
- Regular SEND focus which includes information specific to mental wellbeing
- Contact with external services when expertise above what we have in school, is required
- Regular staff access to external courses; we presently have 5 staff trained as Mental Health First Aid Champions (student), 2 MHFA Champions (Staff) and ROAR Mental Health Facilitators.
- Sensory circuit training for subject teachers, and sessions for students multiple times throughout the day (based on assessed need)
- External agencies are invited in to deliver assemblies/sessions relating to mental wellbeing and keeping mind and body safe
- Staff and student access to Transcendental Meditation
- Daily access to physical activity for students
- Access to physical activity for staff through staff 'fit club'

At New Heights School KS4 we offer the following:

- Meet and greet
- Daily check ins
- Thrive interventions

- Psychometric testing
- Boxall profiles
- Weekly wellbeing classes
- 1-2-1 and group interventions
- Boxing
- PACE approach
- P & 3 R's
- Trauma team referral for both staff and students

Local Support

In Liverpool, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the **CAMHS partnership**, a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation. You can find out more information here: https://www.liverpoolcamhs.com/

YPAS (Young Person Advisory Service) is also an avenue for support which parents and students can access via the internet. No referral is required. Further information can be found here: https://ypas.org.uk/

9.0 Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student (or themselves) is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert (the MHFA Champions – staff or student).

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretively
- Lateness to, or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

10.0 Targeted support

We recognise some students are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family

and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those students most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems
- Working closely with Liverpool City Council Children's Services, Liverpool CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Family Help Assessment Tool (FHAT - previously EHAT), students who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs

According to the child's needs:

- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Liverpool CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

11.0 Managing disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the student's personal file, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Designated Safeguard Lead, Designated Mental Health Lead, and Mental Health Champions.

12.0 Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague, this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents should always be informed, however if a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

13.0 Whole school approach - Families

13.1 Working with families

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face? Due to Covid-19 restrictions this is more often than not inadvisable. Judgement must be made to minimise risk.
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable on school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate. Covid-19 restrictions must be adhered to.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent/carer, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents/carers to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parent/carers have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agreed are added to the student's record.

Our Family Engagement Workers work closely with our families to ensure a positive relationship, vital for if these situations arise.

13.2 Supporting families

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing student's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, letters, meetings etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing.
- At New Heights School we have Family Engagement Workers who work closely with families to provide them with support as and when required. They are an integral part of our daily working relationships.

14.0 Whole school approach - Supporting staff

There will be times when mental wellbeing for some staff is a struggle and at New Heights we aim to support them as and when we can. We will involve staff and student mental health in all SLT meetings, and report to Governors and the management committee the work we will continually do to support the wellbeing of all staff.

In KS3, we offer the following:

- We have adopted the 5 ways to wellbeing approach and regularly provide staff information on how they can help support their own mental wellbeing and resilience.
- We have undertaken to provide staff wellbeing reflective Supervision for some staff and have provided a space in the staffroom for sharing information relating specifically to staff mental wellbeing. We complete staff surveys to gather their views and act upon concerns raised.

- Our Emotionally Friendly Settings Action Group has staff volunteers on it and regularly asks for feedback on how to further promote staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- If staff wish to access external support, we work with CEWB (complete emotional well-being) to provide this.

At KS4, we offer the following:

- Daily debrief
- Staff well-being check-in
- Staff voice
- Staff get togethers - family meal, keep fit class, yoga, arts and crafts, tea and talk, beauty room treatments and construction activities.

All members of SLT have an open door policy and will provide support to those staff who require it, both in their working life and personally - where suitable. This operates throughout the day with no specific timing allocated, simply if the door is open, staff are welcome to come in. Should they wish to arrange a particular time, staff can email SLT who will accommodate this request.

Should staff request mental health support above what can be offered on site, staff have their own Mental Health First Aid Champion who can direct them to areas of support, or refer themselves via the links provided on the staff noticeboard/posters around school.

14.1 Staff Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid Champion training or equivalent. At New Heights Schools we endeavour to provide training to more than 1 person on each site, and will continue to provide training opportunities for staff as and when available through School Improvement Liverpool, CAMHS or YPAS. We believe in the importance of training staff to help support our students and each other.

Relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health, is shared regularly via email/poster/daily briefings. The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. The Open University also provides free online training which staff have been directed to. We have recently signed up to Creative Education who run thousands of courses relating to working with children, and staff now have access to build up their own bespoke training portfolio through dedicated CPD time and resource.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students. Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with SENDCo/Mental Health First Aid Champions, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed. Staff can also raise their interest with members of the EFS Action Group.

14.2 Topic Champions – LSA Initiative (Key Stage 3)

To support staff mental wellbeing we developed a training initiative for our LSA's, providing CPD time to upskill in an area they were interested in (keep learning – part of the 5 ways to wellbeing). This has provided us the opportunity to develop 7 areas of interest for our students and staff, including a champion on mental health and wellbeing: Students and staff can approach different members of staff if they have a particular issue they would like to discuss. This information is displayed in school and on our website.

We now have 6 LSAs who are 'topic champions' in a range of areas to help support our students.

14.3 Trauma Informed Schools UK

To support the process of embedding a trauma informed approach at New Heights, 2 staff have completed a Diploma in Trauma Informed Schools practice offered by TISUK. This was a 10-day course developed to:

- Provide appropriate training for schools, communities and organisations so that

they become trauma informed and mentally healthy places for all, including providing vulnerable children with daily access to at least one named, emotionally available adult, who believes in them, relates to them with compassion, empathy and unconditional positive regard, understands their attachment and mental health needs, knows their life story and offers repeated enriched relational, regulatory and reflective opportunities

- To support schools, communities and organisations in becoming mentally healthy environments for staff by ensuring: the emotional well-being and stress regulating of staff is treated at all times as a priority.

We have worked hard to embed these processes and now offer a 'relationship and resolution' policy, rather than 'behaviour' policy

15.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is November 2026.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.

The promotion of positive mental health for children and young people is everyone's business.

APPENDIX

Gathering 'student voice' to inform our Policy and practices.
This is updated periodically and includes student voice from those attending at the point of collection. Students have the opportunity to discuss Mental Health and Wellbeing during Relationships For Learning, and feedback to share what they feel is important, and what they feel would support their Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Discussion point: **What does Mental Health mean to you?**
Both positive or negative - can be good or bad

How you feel in your head
Whether I am crazy or not
It's a feeling
It can be happy and positive if you have good mental health
Poor mental health can lead to suicide
You're fit and happy and you're safe
Healthy mind
A lot of thinking
Happiness

It can be good or bad
Less stressed
You can think and react to situations better if your MH is good
Different moods and feelings
Means taking care of your body
Doing things you enjoy such as listening to music, playing with an animal, watching telly, playing games and speaking to a mate
Running, boxing, playing with mates

Our RFL (Relationships For Learning) scheme of work includes opportunities to hear our student voice. It provides opportunities to explore statements such as 'whether I'm crazy or not', and give support/advice if statements like this are raised.
There are always things which cannot be supported for various reasons. We still consider them and reflect, as professionals, on things which we cannot facilitate at present:

- Wear your own top instead of a school shirt
- To be with our right year group
- Non-uniform days
- Extra drink options. Can we have cups of tea every now and again
- Give more free time to students
- Go on school trips

Student voice: what students said, what we did
Discussion point: **What could New Heights School do to support your MH&EWB**

- Make us feel comfortable (cushions, weighted blankets) Classrooms have these in should they be appropriate at the time
- Thrive sessions (Louise and Beau) Sessions regularly take place, and when possible, Beau will come in to see us
- BEST (behaviour and emotional support team) Our student support system during the day
- Support with work/time out. This is our standard practice. If a student requires it, we try and facilitate it, however it isn't always possible
- Onsite therapists/psychologists. YPAS visit weekly and we now have our own ELSA who works with a cohort of our students
- Talking to people counselling. YPAS visits weekly and we now have our own ELSA who works with a cohort of our students. There are a wide range of external agencies who also come into school to work with our students. We also have access to our ELSA who delivers an intervention over 6-12 weeks
- Stay away from me. Staff will let a pupil be alone but let them know they are there for support
- Kinetic sand available in some parts of school – Thrive, SENDCo office
- Fidget toys in every lesson. Each subject has been provided with a set of fidget devices
- More space outside. We now have a 'green space', which students can help support during activities on Friday afternoons
- Let us go home if we are stressed out (we regulate where possible at school. It is important to help students through these moments of 'big feelings' and highlight that things are survivable)
- Longer breaks (breaks are 25 mins and 35 mins long. There is no scope to extend this
- Go outside at break and lunch. Our girls' classes used to have break in their form rooms. We now make provision for them to be outside.
- Give us juice. This was previously in place and was deemed unhealthy. This has been explained to students and is no longer a concern
- Allow pupils to have phones for music to help calm them or help them concentrate. Safeguarding concerns warrant a 'no phone' approach for all students who join New Heights School. Some classes where it is effective have background music on
- Sports. Students have the same amount of lessons in each subject. We know the importance of exercise as a way of wellbeing, and support those students who don't like sport effectively through offering different activities
- Science experiments. We have now hired a Science teacher to add to our Curriculum offer. Practical lessons now take place
- Choose food from the canteen. There is always a hot meal, baked potatoes, quiche, salad items, pudding and the option of fruit which all staff and students have access to
- Let me have a drink in class. Water is provided should it be needed in class
- Seats outside. We now have benches outside and plan to put in more
- Smaller class sizes. Growing numbers mean this is not possible
- Fruit available any time. Fruit is available on entry to school (breakfast options are available for all students), break time and lunch.
- More equipment at break time. We now have a traverse wall, basketball and football. We also have an 'inside' group who have access to games including Dobble, Uno, Cards
- RJ with people to sort out problems. We have a restorative practices approach to address all situations and circumstances
- Just dance in activities/More fun activities on Fridays. Looking at our Activities offer on Friday afternoons to see what additional activities could be included
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How does New Heights School support your mental health and wellbeing

- talk calmly
- get us in touch with people from outside who can help us
- nice food; feed us
- staff are always willing to talk/listen to us
- positive calls home, and messages home
- activities - fidget toys - help with our sensory problems
- Thrive and ELSA activities
- Reflection when we calm down
- listen to us and not shout