

Pheasey Park Farm Primary School and Early Years Centre

Hedgehogs Policy

Introduction

Hedgehogs has been running since 2007 and was initially set up to support children and families. The name 'Hedgehogs' represents the prickly issues in life, that may sometimes be difficult to talk about. We have recently added 'The Nest' as part of the name for our pastoral space, therefore it is often referred to as *Hedgehogs - The Nest*. The Hedgehogs Room is a calm, colourful and private space. Children's work is displayed and the room is a safe and accessible environment for pupils. Hedgehogs is a place that children can come if they are having any problems at school or home, or if they want to talk about their feelings/worries. These may involve family, friendships, managing emotions, behaviour, transition, bereavement etc. The role of Hedgehogs is very broad; it requires flexibility to respond to a variety of children, needs and situations. This provision is extremely valuable in supporting the mental health of our pupils at Pheasey Park Farm.

Hedgehogs is currently managed by two members of staff, who work as Learning Mentors within school. The first Learning Mentor was appointed in January 2015 and is a Qualified Teacher. The second Learning Mentor began the role in September 2023 and had previous experience working as a Teaching Assistant. Appropriate training has been completed, and additional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are provided.

CPD that has been undertaken in relation to the role of Hedgehogs includes:

- A range of Safeguarding Training, including Prevent Training
- Anti-Bullying Training
- Let's Talk PANTS (NSPCC Campaign)
- Relationships Education and Health Education Training
- Courses in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Supporting Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Promoting Resilience and Well-Being
- Behaviour Management
- Training for Intervention groups
- Attachment and Trauma Training

Aims

At Pheasey Park Farm Primary School, we want to provide all children with a facility to access additional support, advice and guidance, or if they choose to receive help. We strongly encourage our pupils to report issues, share their feelings, seek help when needed, take part in opportunities to build confidence, and develop resilience.

As part of Hedgehogs support, our Learning Mentors will:

- Provide support and guidance to individuals and groups of children, particularly those who may be vulnerable or have additional needs
- Work with a range of identified children in various year groups including: Pupil Premium (PP), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), EAL (English as an Additional Language) and pupils with behavioural, social or emotional difficulties
- Encourage children to take care of their mental health and well-being
- Promote positive attitudes and encourage children to raise their aspirations and achieve their potential
- Support effective transition at various stages of school life for children, including helping prepare pupils for Secondary transition
- Develop and maintain professional relationships and contact with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies
- Work collaboratively with staff across the school, particularly the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Class Teachers
- Provide a safe environment for pupils to talk openly, sharing worries/concerns
- Help to remove barriers to learning
- Improve social skills and emotional development
- Support children to develop confidence, independence and responsibility
- Promote resilience and positive self-esteem
- Contribute to the work of the school in relation to safeguarding children, supporting their personal development and promoting a positive ethos

Barriers to Learning

Barriers to learning can affect children's work, attainment, friendships, self-esteem, school-life or home-life. Barriers to learning can include:

- Displaying poor behaviour/being at risk of exclusion
- Pupils experiencing difficulty within aspects of their learning
- Additional social and/or emotional needs
- Pupils experiencing mental health issues
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of confidence
- Underachievement in lessons
- Poor attendance and punctuality

- Difficulties coping with periods of transition
- Lack of parental involvement/engagement
- Challenging home lives
- Changes in home circumstances e.g. divorce, separation, bereavement
- Pupils experiencing anxieties and/or stress
- Those who have been bullied, or those who have bullied others

At Pheasey Park Farm Primary School, we aim to identify barriers to learning and provide appropriate support to work towards overcoming them. Hedgehogs is designed to work with pupils, in order to help lift or remove barriers to learning, encouraging children to enjoy school, develop positive relationships with staff, engage in learning and to reach their full potential.

This can be achieved by:

- Establishing effective and supportive relationships with pupils, colleagues, and parents/carers
- Deciding upon and implementing tailored support for individual pupils or groups, based on their specific needs
- Staff working collaboratively to maintain trust and share up-to-date information on children/families
- Liaising regularly with relevant staff in school, to provide and receive feedback on the monitoring, progress and well-being of pupils
- Creating and maintaining an atmosphere of trust, by providing opportunities where pupils feel able to discuss progress, thoughts, feelings and challenges
- Encouraging pupils to access Hedgehogs for drop-in sessions
- Providing opportunities to liaise with parents/carers to keep them informed and involved with the support that school puts into place
- Liaising with appropriate external agencies to arrange additional support for individuals or groups of pupils
- Establishing and maintaining effective links with relevant community and voluntary organisations/charities, that could offer further support
- Facilitating effective communication between class teachers, parents/carers, and other relevant adults

Supporting with Behaviour

All children, irrespective of behaviour, age or ability have the potential to go through periods of poor or inappropriate behaviour. To really make an impact on learning and behaviour, our school aims to deal with such issues in a more systematic and professional manner, seeking to trace issues back to their root cause. We aim to do this through dialogue and discussion. The Learning Mentors work as part of a pastoral team in school, communicating effectively with key staff to determine the best ways

to support individuals. Issues may be resolved/overcome quickly, or alternatively may require more lengthy intervention and support. This may include working with:

- Pupils at risk of exclusion
- Pupils who are working on a reduced timetable
- Pupils with emotional or social needs/difficulties
- Pupils who face multiple disadvantages and/or appear to underachieve
- Pupils who lack confidence and/or self-esteem
- Pupils identified as being part of a vulnerable group
- Pupils who demonstrate bullying behaviour and those who have been bullied
- Pupils who exhibit racist/sexist/homophobic views
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or who have English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Pupils who experience difficult home lives or a traumatic event, such as bereavement, separation of parents, or who are part of Forces families

In some cases, the Learning Mentors may be asked to attend a classroom or other location in school, to support staff with the behaviour of an individual child. This allows class teachers to continue with the teaching of lessons with decreased disruption, or enables other staff to carry on with their role in school. A pupil may be removed from a situation to a safe and quiet space such as the Hedgehogs room or the Sensory Room. This provides an opportunity for the pupil to calm down, reflect and discuss the reason(s) for their behaviour in a supportive environment. These discussions may sometimes involve more than one child. Decisions will then be made regarding the consequences/sanction following the behaviour, in line with school policies and procedures. Staff will support the re-introduction of the child to the classroom/situation and feedback will be given. Pupils can also be supported with anger management and strategies for staying in control.

Overview of the Hedgehogs Support Process

The following provides a summary of how the Hedgehogs support process operates within Pheasey Park Farm Primary School:

- 1) Referral of an individual or a group of pupils is made to the Learning Mentors, by staff or a parent/carer. Where appropriate, year group staff (Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants) will be directed to provide some low-level pastoral support as the first step. This is part of our whole-school approach to pastoral support. Following this, more formal support through Hedgehogs can be arranged if needed. Pupils can also self-refer and request support from Hedgehogs themselves by speaking to staff or accessing pastoral drop-in sessions during break/lunch times.

- 2) Conversations/sessions are organised between the pupil(s) and one of the Learning Mentors to discuss initial concerns and provide low-level support. Depending on the capacity/commitments of Learning Mentors, sometimes children may have to wait a day or two before having a more formal Hedgehogs session, however KS2 pupils can access drop-in sessions during break/lunch times. Sessions are prioritised by need as required - for example if a child came into school particularly upset one morning, opportunity for them to discuss this would be facilitated the same day.
- 3) Establish whether further support will be required, for example: additional Hedgehogs sessions, tailored individual/paired/group activities, or more formal interventions where appropriate. Sometimes, one or two opportunities for conversations or completing activities will be sufficient enough to provide support to individual children. Agreed timescales are usually set in relation to this.
- 4) Feedback is provided to class teachers/staff involved, and to parents/carers if relevant.
- 5) The impact of the support is discussed between the Learning Mentors and school staff, and is verbally evaluated. It may be appropriate to continue providing support for the child(ren), or to phase it out at this stage. Pupils are encouraged to maintain contact with Hedgehogs, as a way of sustaining positive support. It will always be possible to re-refer pupils to Hedgehogs, for additional or a different kind of support.

Where appropriate, referrals are discussed with class teachers, Senior Leadership Team and other relevant staff. Referrals may also be discussed as part of updates at Safeguarding meetings. Following a referral, Learning Mentors will gain insight into a pupil through talking to staff and parents/carers. This may also involve observation or assessment of the individual. Learning Mentors organise their own caseloads, working in conjunction with each other, and with Senior Staff. It will be established which support may be the most beneficial to the pupil and this will be shared with relevant adults. Appropriate feedback to key members of staff and parents/carers will be an important part of this process, within the boundaries of confidentiality. Any safeguarding concerns that arise during conversations will be referred to either the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or one of the Deputy DSLs in line with school's policies and procedures.

Examples of support/strategies that can be offered include:

- 1:1 sessions with the pupil, in the Hedgehogs room setting
- Group work using role play/discussions
- Social skills games/activities within the Hedgehogs room
- The use of Ed Tech

- 'Drop in' sessions in the Hedgehogs room
- Specific Interventions e.g. Pragmatics, Nurture Groups, Lego Therapy
- Behaviour Management/Anxiety/Transition resources
- Meeting at regular intervals for 'daily checks'
- Positive 'Good Day' cards
- The use of Outcomes Star and similar tools
- Providing further support on the playground and/or in the classroom
- Providing further support during less structured times e.g. lunchtimes and facilitating alternative provision for identified children
- Liaising with families to encourage or help to facilitate support at home
- Signposting parents/carers towards additional avenues of support
- Providing opportunities for pupils to talk in confidence (adhering to the school policies and procedures regarding disclosures and child protection)
- Contributing to a wider picture of support, especially for children who might be part of a Child Protection or Child in Need plan, or those at Early Help
- Working with all school staff effectively

The Learning Mentors provides support, guidance, continuity and consistency for children at Pheasey Park Farm Primary School, to facilitate their well-being. The work and dedication of school staff contributes significantly to the pastoral care provided to pupils and families.

Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance and punctuality of all pupils is monitored regularly by the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO), the Head Teacher and the Office staff. Concerns raised regarding attendance of specific pupils may be referred to Hedgehogs, to enable support to be provided for individuals. Pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern are monitored closely.

Transition Support for Pupils

Some children understandably experience anxieties when faced with transition. This could be to a different year group, Key Stage, environment or Secondary school. The Learning Mentors can support pupils with these issues, by focusing on the skills required to manage transitions effectively and facilitating 1:1 or group sessions with children who are particularly anxious. School staff establish positive links with Secondary schools regarding Year 6 Transition. Pheasey Park Farm also has positive links with the School Nursing Service and Reflexions - these agencies are able to provide transition sessions to further support pupils. This support ensures that pupils are provided with sufficient, relevant information, helping them to prepare effectively for the transition to Secondary school.

Additional transition support, particularly for Year 6 pupils, is also covered through PSHE lessons. Previously, transition groups have been effective in supporting pupils with alternative transitions (moving from Year 2 to Year 3). Children can also access 1:1 Hedgehogs sessions, if they would like further support or advice regarding transition.

Home Visiting

Infrequently, it may be appropriate for school staff to visit the home of a pupil, following discussions between Senior Leadership, the Education Welfare Officer, the Learning Mentors and family involved. This must be authorised by SLT and personal safety of staff should be taken into account. The school and the office should be kept in full knowledge of the circumstances, if such a situation arose.

Drop-in sessions for Hedgehogs

The Hedgehogs room is available at break and lunch times for children to access. Pupils sometimes want to 'drop in' to speak with one of the Learning Mentors about something important to them such as: sharing worries, reporting problems inside or outside school, discussing friendships, talking about home situations. Sometimes, pupils may be called to the Hedgehogs room to complete sessions during break or lunch time if they have been identified as likely to benefit from guidance and support. Pupils learn different strategies, with the aim to promote positive changes.

Hedgehogs and PSHE

There are strong links between the Hedgehogs support we offer and our school's embedded PSHE curriculum. PSHE encourages children to play a positive role in contributing to the life of the school ethos and the wider community. This helps to develop pupils' sense of self-worth. Through PSHE, we educate children to:

- Be aware of safety issues
- Understand what makes for healthy relationships with others
- Develop social skills and empathy
- Be thoughtful, respectful, responsible and positive members of society
- Talk about their emotions and manage these in appropriate ways
- Develop confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging
- Resolve conflict and problem-solve in different situations
- Make informed choices regarding personal and social issues
- Develop awareness and understanding of their mental health and well-being

Many of these are interlinked with Hedgehogs work within school, and some form part of the statutory Relationships and Health Education guidance. For further information, please see school policies on *PSHE* and *Relationships & Health Education*.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Our school recognises the paramount importance of positive mental health and well-being. Consequently, we promote this as much as possible as part of a whole-school approach. We recognise that more support is needed in Primary schools and want children to develop healthy coping strategies earlier, and know where to seek help if they need to. Encouraging children to talk openly about their feelings and worries, and promoting positive well-being in our school may enable early identification of signs that could indicate mental ill-health issues. Pupils will then be able to access valuable support sooner. Hedgehogs provision is extremely valuable in relation to this.

As part of our Health Education provision based on statutory guidance, pupils are educated about how to look after their physical health, mental health and well-being, and also how they could support others. These areas are covered through assemblies, displays, lessons and within individual/group sessions to support children's knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental health and well-being. Physical and online resources have been accessed, in order to further support our children. School continue to explore relevant CPD opportunities and staff receive appropriate training.

Pheasey Park Farm were part of a trailblazer programme in relation to Walsall-based Mental Health support and have established positive links with external agencies linked to this - Reflexions. School can submit referrals to the Reflexions Team for individual children and if accepted, pupils access 1:1 or group support with external professionals. Reflexions also support by creating assemblies for school to share with pupils and they offer parent workshops to support with a range of topics. Links with Reflexions support our Health Education provision in relation to mental health/well-being and work in conjunction with Hedgehogs support that we offer within school.

The Reflexions service provided training to some identified pupils and they are known as *Well-Being Champions* at Pheasey Park Farm. School are continuing to develop this role for these children and intend to involve them in more frequent activities to further promote well-being across our school.

Early Help

As part of working with children and families through Hedgehogs, it may sometimes be necessary to refer a family to Early Help. This process involves supporting families with accessing the right help at the right time, when concerns initially arise. Early Help

may prevent needs from escalating and is intended to improve outcomes for children. This process is voluntary - parents need to consent and engage with this.

Safeguarding/Child Protection

The Head Teacher and Early Years Centre Manager are Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) at Pheasey Park Farm. In addition to this, there are identified members of Senior Leadership Team who are Deputy DSLs, and the school has a Governor for Safeguarding. All staff are aware that any concerns relating to a pupil's safety and/or well-being must be referred directly to one of the DSLs or Deputy DSLs. All child protection issues, including sexual abuse, are dealt with through the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and the Recruitment Policy. All staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding our pupils; as part of this, regular safeguarding training and updates are provided. School have positive links with the NSPCC; we use their resources to educate and support pupils with themes like keeping themselves safe and talking to trusted adults about worries or concerns.

Confidentiality

Hedgehogs staff are likely to handle sensitive information from school, home and potentially from external agencies. It is important to explain to pupils that some information can be kept confidential, but information that may suggest a child is at risk or in danger must be passed on to the appropriate DSL in school. This enables clear and honest communication from the initial stages of mentoring support.

Supporting Documentation:

- PSHE Policy
- Relationships and Health Education Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- School Improvement Plans for PSHE and Relationships & Health Education

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Mrs N. Wilcox

October, 2023.