

Appendix 2

Possible Mental Health Problems

As a school we are not expected to be mental health professionals and we will never attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. However, as a school we should have an awareness of the mental health problems which may affect our pupils.

Children may experience emotional and/or behavioural problems outside the normal range for their age, mental health professionals describe these as mental health problems or disorders. Such experiences are classified as:

- Emotional disorders e.g. depression, anxiety and phobias.
- Conduct disorders e.g. temper tantrums, anti-social behavior, aggression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional, defiant or conduct disorders. These are the commonest behavior problems in school age children.
- Hyperkinetic disorders e.g. delays in acquiring skills such as bladder control, speech, social ability. This is common in children with pervasive developmental disorders (autism);
- Attachment disorders e.g. where a child is distressed or socially impaired as a result of an abnormal pattern of attachment to parents or main care givers;
- Trauma disorders e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder due to persistent abuse and neglect or having experienced a traumatic event;
- Mental health disorders such as eating disorders, habit disorders, psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder.

Identifying children with possible mental health problems in children.

Changes in a child's behaviour or emotional state may be an indication of an underlying mental health difficulty. This may present as:

- Changes in their emotional state e.g. becoming withdrawn, fearful and low esteem;
- Changes in behaviour e.g. becoming challenging and oppositional, aggression or physical symptoms such as body rocking, head tapping;
- Changes in interpersonal behaviours e.g. seeking affection, excessive clinginess, being coercive and controlling, failure to understand and recognise emotions.