



*'Growing, loving and learning in the arms of Mary'*

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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## **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY**

**Named mental health lead:** Mrs Claire Clinton

**Named Governor for mental health and wellbeing:** Mr Ken Devlin

### **Rationale:**

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are as important as physical health to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. Within their school career all children will experience ups and downs and some may face significant life events. The Department for Education recognises that: *'in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.'*

*'Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'*

*World Health Organisation (WHO)*

### **Aims:**

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers). We pursue this aim by using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable children. Pupils and staff will be taught skills to increase their awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, five children will have a probable mental health disorder. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for children affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

This policy describes the school's approach to positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and it is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It should be read in conjunction with our medical policy, should a student's mental health overlap or be linked to a medical issue; the SEND policy, where a student may have an identified special educational need; the behaviour policy, because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to unmet mental health needs and the Safeguarding policy, in relation to prompt action and wider concerns of vulnerability.

### **The Policy aims to:**

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to children suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

## Objectives:

Eight principles to promote a whole school and college approach to emotional health and well-being taken from '*Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach.*' Public Health England, 2021.



The eight identified principles will underpin the approaches used to support the development and integration of wellbeing strategies within St Mary's Primary School. The policy and curriculum delivery will be tailored to promote the key aspects of improving mental health and emotional wellbeing. It will focus on creating a social, emotional and physically rich environment, where key relationships can thrive and children can feel secure in their learning. The curriculum will promote 'pupil voice' by fostering their resilience, promoting 'good choice making' and actively encouraging our pupils to recognise feelings, whilst learning to express them appropriately.

Staff will be signposted to approaches and resources that will support their own emotional health and wellbeing with an aim to foster healthy, open conversations around mental health.

## **Teaching about mental health**

At St Mary's we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a pro-active way to avoid problems arising.

### **We do this by:**

- Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and well-being.
- Adhering to a positive, restorative approach to behaviour management.
- Helping children to form and maintain positive relationships with their peers.
- Helping children to feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries.
- Teaching children emotional skills and an awareness of mental health so that they understand their emotions and feelings better.
- Promoting self-esteem and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
- Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.
- Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers.
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
- Developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health.

### **We promote a mentally healthy environment through:**

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities to reflect
- Enabling access to appropriate support.
- Mental Health and PSHE for all year groups
- Wellbeing weeks and access to information around the school

### **We pursue our aims through:**

- Universal, whole school approaches
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties including attachment disorder.
- Groups to focus on mental health, resilience and wellbeing.

ALL STAFF have a responsibility to promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils.

### **Staff with a specific responsibility include:**

- Mr Martin Clephane, Mrs Claire Clinton and Mrs Sarah Duffy Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Mrs Anne-Marie Roddy - SENCO
- Mrs Gemma Smith - PSHE Lead

### **Our Mental Health Lead will:**

- Lead and work with all staff to co-ordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Work with the PSHE lead re: teaching about mental health.
- Provide advice and support to staff and organise training and updates.
- Liaise with mental health services and makes individual referrals.

### **Targeted support**

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

- Circle time approaches or 'friends' activities.
- Managing feelings resources e.g. 'worry boxes' and 'worry monsters'.
- Managing emotions resources.
- Primary Group Work/Mental health and wellbeing groups
- Therapeutic activities including art, lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques.

### **Early Identification and Warning Signs**

All staff will be vigilant in identifying a range of possible difficulties that may be contributing to a pupil's poor mental health, including:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstance
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

School staff may also become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 communicate their concerns with the designated child protection and safeguarding officer or the mental wellbeing lead as appropriate.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

## **Assessment, interventions and support**

All concerns are reported to the designated adults within school and needs are assessed through a triage approach with SLT, class teachers and SENDCO to ensure the child gets the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service, as quickly as possible. Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, should record this on CPOMS in the first instance.

## **Working with parents and carers.**

Parents or carers can approach their child/children's class teacher if they have mental health concerns. This will be cascaded to the Mental Health Lead for assessment.

### **To support parents and carers we will:**

- Provide information online on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes.
- Share ideas about how parents and carers can support positive mental health in their children.
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics taught in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this at home.
- Organise presentations on mental health, anxiety, resilience and five steps to wellbeing.

### **When a concern has been raised, teachers or the Mental Health Lead and SENDCO will:**

- Contact parents to discuss the outcome of any assessment (Although there may be cases, parents and carers cannot be involved due to child protection issues.)
- Discuss any relevant referrals to external agencies.
- Signpost parents to further information or provide resources to take away.
- Create a chronology of actions and events.
- Agree mental health care and protection plan where appropriate including clear next steps.
- Discuss how parents can support their child through strategies or signposts to parenting support groups

## **Working with specialist services**

As part of our targeted provision, the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing. Children may be referred to one of the following services for additional support.

- Together for Children Sunderland Early Help Service
- Educational Psychology Services
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- School Nursing Service
- Therapists
- Counselling Services

## **Staff Training and CPD**

As a minimum, all staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training in order to enable them to keep pupils safe. We will host relevant information on our school website for staff and parents who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wanting to know more about a specific issue.

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

## **Appendix 1: Further information and sources of support about common mental health issues**

Below is sign-posted information and guidance about the issues most commonly seen in school-aged children. The links will take you through to the most relevant page on the listed website. Some pages are aimed primarily at parents but they are listed here because the links are useful for school staff too.

Support on all of these issues can be accessed via Young Minds ([www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)), Mind ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)) and for e-learning opportunities Minded ([www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)).

### **Self-harm**

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

**Online support** [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk) National Self-Harm Network: [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

### **Depression**

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for us all, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months, and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

**Online support** Depression Alliance: [www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression](http://www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression)

### **Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias**

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

**Online support** Anxiety UK: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

### **Obsessions and compulsions**

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms - it is not just about cleaning and checking.

**Online support** OCD UK: [www.ocduk.org/ocd](http://www.ocduk.org/ocd)

**Suicidal feelings**

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives.

**Online support** Prevention of young suicide UK POPYRUS: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**Eating problems**

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, communicating about difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

**Online support** Beat - the eating disorder charity: [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/)  
Eating Difficulties in Younger Children and when to worry:  
[www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/eating-problems/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/eating-problems/)

**Appendix 2: CAMHS REFERRAL PROCESS**

<https://www.sunderlandcommunitycamhs.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.sunderlandcommunitycamhs.nhs.uk/for-professionals/referral/>