

# **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

**'Following Jesus in all we do'**



## **Mental Health Policy**

**2020-2021**

### Contact Details

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## **Beliefs and Values**

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an inclusive community that aims to support and welcome each individual as a valued part of our community. We are committed to working for quality and equality of opportunity for all pupils and enable our pupils, staff and community working in partnership with the school to develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes necessary for mental health now and in the future.

### **We aim to:**

Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health.

Recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement.

All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events. In 2017, about 1 in 10 children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases it is life-limiting.

### **The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that:**

"in order to help their children, succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy". Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a school where:

- All children are valued.
- Children have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued.
- Bullying is not tolerated.

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing.

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing;

“ 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”.

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all our children/young people to:

feel confident in themselves.  
be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.  
be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.  
cope with the stresses of everyday life.  
manage times of stress and be able to deal with change.  
learn and achieve.

### **Whole School Approach**

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as: physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-

esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

### **The Role of Our Mental Health Leader**

Leads and works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

- Leads on PSHCE teaching about mental health.
- Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.

Is the first point of contact with mental health services and makes individual referrals to them.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

### **Support Teams within School:**

- Our Senior Leadership Team
- Our Pastoral Leader and Nurture Team
- Our Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead and Deputies
- Our SENCO who helps staff understand their responsibilities to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including children whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision.
- Our School Nurse
- Our Family Support Worker

### **Supporting Children's Positive Mental Health**

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

#### **Pupil-led activities**

- Peer mediation and Peer mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child.
- Playtime Buddies – a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime.

- Our school parliament -is actively involved in bring pupil voice to the forefront of the leadership team and governors.
- Our RE network (Prayer leaders, Liturgy planners, St Joseph's workers, etc.) bring the school's ethos and faith to the forefront of the school.

### **Transition programmes**

Transition Programme to secondary schools which includes all Year 6 children having a staff mentor to support a smooth transition to secondary school.

Our SENCO and Safeguarding lead will liaise with the SENCO and safeguarding lead of our feeder school to ensure a smooth transition for our most vulnerable pupils.

### **Class activities**

Praise rewards schemes - where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done and have them celebrated in class.

- Worry boxes - where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class.
- Well-being curriculum- delivered across Key Stage One and Two.
- Nurture sessions- delivered by our Nurture team.
- Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs

### **Our approach:**

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve children in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

### **Disclosure:**

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount, and staff listen rather than advise. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the Mental Health Lead or the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

## **Assessment, Interventions and Support**

All concerns are reported to the Mental Health Lead and recorded. We then implement our assessment system, which is based on levels of need to ensure that children get the support they need, either from within the School or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating;

The school follows the MHFA England 'Mental Health First Aid Action Plan:

### **The five basic steps: ALGEE**

#### **A**

Approach  
Assess for Crisis  
Assist with Crisis

Approach:

Open conversation – Consider your own judgement-right place/time?

Be sensitive/mindful of personal space- Respect privacy unless risk of harm to self or others.

Asses for Crisis:

Watch for warning signs. – Suicidal crisis? – Self harm? – Panic attack? - Traumatic attack?  
– Severe psychotic state? – Medical emergency?

Assess with Crisis:

Ensure own personal safety.- Ensure person not left alone if immediate crisis- Seek immediate emergency, help if in doubt. -Inform external helpers of situation and mental health needs.- Encourage person to talk. – Don't give advice, argue, deny their feelings/experiences.- Reassure help is available and can be found.- Stay clam – it's infectious.- Physical first aid for medical emergencies.

#### **L**

Listen and communicate non- judgementally

Listen without judging person:

Set aside any judgements you hold. Listen without interrupting. -Ask appropriate clarifying questions. Reflect back what person has said, use minimal prompts (mmm, ah, etc.) – Silence can be supportive. – open body language. – comfortable eye contact. Don't invade their space. Don't be critical, argue or get frustrated. Don't offer glib advice (e.g. Cheer up) Avoid confrontation unless necessary in crisis. Remember, you can acknowledge emotional experience without agreeing with concerning actions and or pretending delusions hallucinations are real.

## **G**

### Give support and information

Treat person with respect and dignity. – Don't blame them for their difficulties (mental health issues are real and they're coping as best they can). Have realistic expectations for them (any behaviour change takes time, they're not lazy or weak).

Offer consistent emotional support and understanding. Give hope for recovery (effective treatments are available). Give practical help, but don't try to take over and solve all problems; instead support new coping strategies. Give high quality info relevant to their condition. Where risk to self or others exists, don't keep a secret, but try to consult person before sharing any details.

## **E**

### Encourage appropriate professional help

This can be a difficult step to take, but vital, so help person make decision- early intervention aids recovery.

Discuss wide range of options: GP, counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, NHS, IAPT, Early intervention in Psychosis, Crisis resolution, Community Mental Health Teams, Inpatient, voluntary sector e.g. mind

GP first port of call or 999 in crisis

Medication and psychological treatments both important, balance side effects and negotiate with professionals. Explore reasons why (cost, fears, negative experience). Tell person you'll support if they change their mind. Respect person's right not to seek help unless they are risk to self and others. If person very unwell, seek help on their behalf; try to involve them as much as possible. Never threaten with forced treatment, legalities are complex, seek advice.

## **E**

### Encourage other supports

Family/friends can play key roles and can help by listening, encouraging and providing practical and emotional support. Support groups and informal befriending services can validate experiences, reduce isolation and provide peer learning for self-help.

Voluntary and community sector support. Self-help strategies can help and give people sense of regaining control of their lives and doing something positive. Wellbeing strategies- 5 ways to well-being. Complementary therapies e.g. mindfulness, massage therapy, yoga, relaxation strategies, nutrition, exercise, creativity.

## Working with specialist services

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders.

We have access to a range of specialist services and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the children' Individual Care Plan.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead/SENDSCO following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

Main Specialist Service	Referral process
Educational Psychologist	Accessed through the Mental Health Lead or SENDSCO
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS Cast)	Accessed through the Mental Health Lead or SENDSCO
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Accessed through school, GP or self-referral

## Working with Parents/Carers

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs. Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger alongside any children who may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves.

## Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health problems are common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available.

### When a concern has been raised, the School will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (In almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified.)
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- Be available for follow up calls.
- Make a record of the meeting.
- Agree a mental health Individual Care Plan including clear next steps.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child.
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website and hard copies are available to parents and carers from the school office. The policy is monitored and reviewed annually and approved by the governing body.

Other Linked Policies:

Religious Education Policy

Physical Education Policy

Medication Policy

SEND Policy

Health and Well Being Policy

Staff Mental Health and Well Being Policy

Mental Health Policy Date for Review September 2021

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