

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

**'Following Jesus in all we do'  
Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy  
2020-2021**

**Mental Health Policy Approved by Governing Body: September 2021**

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## **Introduction**

All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life changing events. In 2017, about 1 in 10 children aged 5 to 16 were diagnosed with a mental health need. This can have an enormous impact on their 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”.

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”.*

## **Our Whole School Mental Health Commitment**

St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is an inclusive community that aims to support and welcome each individual as a valued member of that community. We are committed to working for quality and equality of opportunity for all pupils and enable our pupils, staff, Governors and parents to work in partnership with the school to develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes necessary for mental health both now and in the future. Our school is a place where all children 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 children, it provides a place of respite from challenging home situations, offering positive role models and relationships, critical in promoting children’s wellbeing and engendering a sense of belonging and community.

**Our overall aim is 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 enjoyment of life, their learning and achievement.
-  Recognise and promote the importance of staff wellbeing
-  Create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues. (We recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues.)

## **Our Whole School Strategy**

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems, it is enabling and educating a resilience to the challenges on mental health. We want all our children/young people to be able to cope with the pressures of every-day life.

We have developed a Mental Health Team to successfully monitor and implement the success of our approach (see Roles and Responsibilities)

### **We are 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.

### **We promote all in our community 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.

## **The Theory**

Our whole school approach encompasses seven aspects:

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

Our School uses a range of strategies and approaches to deliver our commitment to supporting children's mental health and development. These demonstrate that pupil voice is at the forefront of everything we do and is passionately supported by the leadership team, staff and governors.

### ***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** – dedicated to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school environment and pupils views on issues. Leading on initiatives and making things happen.

**Our RE Support Network** (Prayer leaders, Liturgy planners, St Joseph’s workers, etc.) bring the school’s ethos and faith to the forefront of the school.

**Sports Crew** organise / support with sporting activities across the school at lunchtime, within class PE lessons, at intra school competitions and Sports Days.

**St Joseph’s Parking Partnership** (launched September 2018) – a group instigated by children’s concerns for the safety of our community at the beginning and end of the school day.

Outside of these groups individuals do write to the head teacher requesting what they would like to do ie charity work etc. Children are always listened to and their requests, as long as they are reasonable, are supported and do happen.

### **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.
-  Consistent and fair Behaviour Policy
-  Individualised support as is necessary

## **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.

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.

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

### **Team Members:**

**Mrs Joanne McDonagh – SENDCO; Mental Health Lead; Pastoral Lead; Deputy DSL**

**Mrs Louise Bury – Headteacher; DSL; Mental Health Lead.**

**Mrs Nicola Boswell - staff wellbeing coordinator**

**Mrs Sally Crocker – Nurture and Wellbeing HLTA (part of the Nurture Team)**

**Mrs Tracey Eaborn – Family Support Worker; Deputy DSL**

The Mental Health team will:

coordinate whole school activities, promoting positive mental health and wellbeing

develop the teaching of PSHE about dealing with issues that can impact on mental health.

Provide updates, advice and support to staff; organising relevant training as is appropriate.

Make individual referrals to mental health services.

**Support is also provided by other members of the Senior Leadership Team, our School Nurse and within the Safeguarding 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 within My Concern, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next step.**

## **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.

##### **Assess 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 calm – it's infectious.- Physical first aid for medical emergencies.

#### L: Listen and communicate non- judgementally; Listen without judging person:

Listen without interrupting. -Ask appropriate clarifying questions. Reflect back what person has said, use minimal prompts (mmm, ah, etc.) – Set aside any judgements you hold.

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

Give hope for recovery (effective treatments are available).

- ✚ 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 practical help,

- ✚ 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

Early intervention aids recovery: This can be a difficult step to take, but vital, so help person make decisions.

- ✚ 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**

Encouraging and providing practical and emotional support can come from family / friends who can play key roles and can help by listening.

- ✚ 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 cases 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's Individual Care Plan.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead/SEND CO 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.

<b>Main Specialist Service</b>	<b>Referral process</b>
Educational Psychologist	Accessed through the Mental Health Lead or SEND CO
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS Cast)	Accessed through the Mental Health Lead or SEND CO
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, 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 in line with Safeguarding.

#### **Other Linked Policies:**

Safeguarding Policy

Love and Relationships Policy

Religious Education Policy

Physical Education Policy

**Medical Conditions Policy**

**Includes: First Aid** (including management of medical conditions, intimate care); Drugs and substance misuse;

SEND Policy

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