



## Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

At St Joseph's School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We have a supportive and caring ethos and our whole school approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued. At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We recognise that positive mental health is everybody's responsibility and that we all have a role to play.

### Definition

Mental health is "the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of wellbeing and an underlying belief in our and others dignity and worth. It is influenced by our experience and our genetic inheritance." (World Health Organisation).

Mental health is how we feel, how we think and how we behave. It is about:

- Being able to form and maintain relationships with others.
- Being adaptable to change and other people's expectations.
- Being able to have fun.
- Being able to cope and manage different emotions.
- Being able to develop a sense of right and wrong.
- Being able to develop the resilience to manage ordinary setbacks.

In child-friendly language:

- **We all have mental health.** Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- **We all have small feelings every day:** These sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.

The mental health of children, adults in school, parents, carers and the wider whole school community will impact on all areas of development, learning, achievement and experiences.

- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 1-15 years old, have a clinically recognisable mental disorder in any one year.
- 1 in 4 adults will experience mental health difficulties; at least half of these difficulties can be traced back to childhood.

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School we recognise the importance of providing an environment and a curriculum that promotes and enhances positive mental health. This policy outlines how we do this.

### A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

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.

### **Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing Within Our Curriculum**

- **Our faith-** As a Catholic school our value system is based on the Gospel virtues. Christ's statement from the Gospel of St. John defines the ethos of the school:

***Love one another as I have loved you, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*** John 15.

**Our Mission Statement** 'To follow in Jesus' footsteps, caring for each other when we work, play and pray' is realised to the extent that each member of the school community is effective in living out this Gospel statement for the glory of God and for the good of the whole community. The manner in which it is realised is critical- the ideal being that all relationships in the school should be characterised by consideration, fairness, kindness, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation. Each classroom also has a prayer focus table and the children also have daily access to the prayer room and prayer garden, if they need to take some time to be still, pray and reflect.

- **Online Safety-** We teach all children how to be safe online and what to do if they see/hear anything that scares, worries or makes them feel uncomfortable. We have Digital Leaders who report to the Computing lead about any current issues so that the right support and advice can be given. Research shows that the use of social media can lead to numerous mental health difficulties such as cyberbullying, anxiety, depression and FoMO (fear of missing out).
- **Rights of the child-** We are a rights respecting school where we teach children about the rights they were born with, in line with UNICEF. Children understand they have the right to be heard (Article 12) and the right to express their thoughts (Article 13). Our rights respecting steering group actively encourage children to know about their rights and ensure all their rights are respected.
- **Playground/Lunchtime-** In the playground we have Buddies, Play Leaders and Mental Health Ambassadors. It is their responsibility to look out for children at playtime or lunchtime who are by themselves, appear to be sad or have fallen over. The children are trained by the Mental Health Lead so that they know how to identify children who may need their help and what to do.
- **Wellbeing lessons-** We use a variety of different resources to teach children about mental health and wellbeing. We use these resources to support our whole school and key stage assemblies, as well as standalone lessons when/if the need arises.



- **Transition-** In the summer term all classes take part in a 'Handover Day' where they meet their new class teacher and new classroom. This day enables children to reduce any anxieties or worries they might have about change and allows children to visualise and prepare for the next academic year. We also have a transition programme in place for our Year 6 pupils to support a smooth transition to secondary school.
- **Mental Health Ambassadors-** We have a group of children in Y6, who act as the Mental Health Ambassadors for the school. These children have been introduced to the whole school and are there to promote positive mental health and encourage other children to talk about their 'small feelings'.
- **Small Groups-** A group called Rainbows is run once a week for any children that have experienced loss in their life. Social groups (THRIVE) are also run in individual classes that need it and focus on improving children's communication skills around turn taking, dealing with issues and resolving conflicts.
- **Safeguarding newsletter for parents-** Every half term a newsletter is sent home to parents with a safeguarding focus to communicate current research and statistics and to give parents ideas and strategies to better support their child knowing how to be safe, both physically and mentally.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School offers a learning environment that promotes and enhances positive mental health. A consistent approach means that the school environment and school ethos all promote the mental health of the whole school community. Healthy relationships underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact.

A mentally healthy environment is where:

- **All children** have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging, participate in decision-making, celebrate academic and non-academic achievements, are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times.
- **All staff** have their individual needs recognised and responded to, have a range of strategies that support their mental health, have a recognition of their work-life balance, feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes.
- **All parents/people with parental responsibility** are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies, are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed and are signposted to appropriate agencies for support.

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, Mrs Chambers is the Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Responsibilities include:

- Ensure that all school staff are made aware of this policy.
- Manage the implementation and review of this policy.
- Attending training in regards to different areas of mental health.
- Organising staff training about recognising and responding to mental health issues.
- Support staff in the identification of pupils who may be experiencing mental health issues and provide strategies to better support them.



- Ensure all parents/ carers know who they can talk to if they have a concern about their child's mental health.
- Attend DSL updates and work closely with the DSLs, to share concerns or referrals for any specific children.

### **Warning Signs**

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 Miss Crowley, our Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends, becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity and mood.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.
- Change in attitude or behaviour- aggressive or disruptive.

### **Managing Disclosures**

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. Staff should listen, rather than advise. This information should be shared with the mental health and wellbeing lead, who will offer support and advice about next steps.

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