

ST. BEDE'S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

celebrates life and learning



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PUPIL POLICY

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MISSION STATEMENT

St. Bede, patron of our school, wrote:

“It was always my delight to learn and to teach”.

We are a celebrating community, living the Gospel Values, committed to educating children in the light of the Catholic Faith.

We journey together so that we

“Might have life - life in all its fullness”.

John 10:10

RATIONALE

At St. Bede's Catholic Junior School, 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. We 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. The Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023 report, published by NHS England, found that 1 in 5 or 20.3% of eight to 16-year-olds had a probable mental disorder in 2023. This undoubtedly has an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement and 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 role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

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 emotionally available 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.

DEFINITION OF 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 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.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote positive mental health.
- To identify and support children/ staff with mental health needs.
- To train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs.
- To share key information about some common mental health problems.
- To signpost where parents/ carers, staff and children can get further advice and support.

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.

In school we have three Mental Health First Aiders for Social, Emotional & Mental Health Needs who:

- Lead and work with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide advice and support to staff and organises training and updates in a number of different approaches including Nurture and Trauma Informed Practice.
- Are the first points of contact with mental health services, and make individual referrals to them.

In addition to this, two out of the three (MHFAs) are also now trained Thrive Practitioners. Thrive offers a trauma-informed, whole school approach that helps to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by providing staff training, a bank of resources and an online assessment tool to better understand the needs of pupils and provide targeted, effective support where needed.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with advice from external professionals. Research from the government Green Paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' (December 2017) found that appropriately trained teachers /teaching assistants can achieve results comparable to those of trained therapists. 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. Sources of relevant support include:

- Senior Leadership/ Inclusion Team.
- Assistant Head/Designated Safeguarding Lead/Mental Health First Aider – Mrs Geoghegan, who also has responsibility for Children in Care and previously in care
- Assistant Head/SENDCo/ Mental Health First Aider/ Thrive Practitioner – Mrs Lloyd Green, 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.
- Pastoral Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Mental Health First Aider/ Thrive Practitioner – Mrs Harrington, who has a Diploma in Trauma and Mental Health-Informed Schools. This is an evidence-based approach that is able to support children and teenagers who suffer with trauma or mental health problems and whose troubled behaviour acts as a barrier to learning.
- School Nurse Team.
- Educational Psychology Service.
- CAMHS (Child and Mental Health Service).
- Local Authority Behaviour Support Team.
- MHSTs – Mental Health Support Teams.

The delivery of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in education settings is led by NHS England (NHSE), with support from Department for Education (DfE). MHSTs support the mental health needs of children and young people in primary, secondary and further education (ages 5 to 18) and use an evidence-based approach to provide early intervention on some mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, such as mild to moderate anxiety. MHSTs also support education settings in promoting good mental health and wellbeing. First announced in

2018, MHSTs work with the pastoral care and mental health and wellbeing support that already exists in and around education settings.

PROVISION

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.

SIGNPOSTING

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common spaces, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, website and social media), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure staff, students and parents/ carers understand:

- What help is available;
- Who it is aimed at;
- How to access it;
- Why should they access it;
- What is likely to happen next.

WARNING SIGNS

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 alert one of the Inclusion Team.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental;
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits;
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn;
- Changes in activity and mood;

- Lowering of academic achievement;
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- Abusing drugs or alcohol;
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope;
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather;
- Secretive behaviour;
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly;
- Lateness to, or absence from school;
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause;
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.

TARGETED SUPPORT

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those with a SEND (Special Educational Need and/ or Disability), those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams and the MHSTs in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working closely with the Local Authority, CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers;
- Provide a flowchart of internal and external support available;
- Invest in regular training to raise awareness and a shift in culture of emotional intelligence and empathy towards all students;
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it;
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the student's personal file, including:

- Date;
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made;
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation;
- Agreed next steps.

This information will be shared with the Head Teacher, in the first instance, and also a member of the school's Senior Leadership/ Inclusion Team.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell;
- What we are going to tell them;
- Why we need to tell them;
- When we're going to tell them.

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

INVOLVING PARENT/ 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.

On first entry to the school, our parent/ carers have an opportunity to meet with their child's class teacher to inform them of any specific information about their child. We ask parents to inform us of any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing. It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the School so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information is treated in confidence.

To support parents and carers, we:

- organise a range of activities such as workshops on mental health, family learning opportunities, maths and English skills workshops, family coffee mornings.
- provide information and websites (including Halton's Local Offer) on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced leaflets for parents on mental health and resilience, which can be accessed on the School website. The information

includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves.

- include the mental health topics that are taught in the PSHE curriculum on the School website.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services for their child, where appropriate. Our duty of care is primarily for the child, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority. We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

PUPIL VOICE

Pupil Voice is an important part of our school system in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils. Our Pupil Wellbeing Ambassadors and the School Council are involved in whole school campaigns on health and wellbeing and we seek their views about our approach, curriculum and in promoting whole school mental health activities.

As part of our self-evaluation, we always seek feedback from children who have previously accessed support in order to help improve that support and the services they received in the future. With the introduction of Thrive, this will allow us to continually gain pupil voice on wellbeing from ALL pupils not just those receiving targeted support.

TRAINING

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in children and know what to do and where to get help. Our Mental Health First Aid Team/ Thrive Practitioners have attended a variety of mental health awareness training and all of our teaching staff have attended relevant training in order to enable them to identify and support individual needs. Staff are signposted to any new training by the senior leadership team in order to keep their skills up to date.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is also an essential component of a healthy school and the Senior Leadership Team promotes opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing. All staff members have access to supervision. Staff have been informed of the opportunity to access work Mental Health Support service delivered by Remploy on behalf of Access to Work across England, Scotland and Wales, if needed. Support is available to individuals who are experiencing difficulties at work due to depression, anxiety, stress and/or other mental health conditions. Ensuring that staff are mentally healthy is also priority.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, regardless of race, faith, gender or capability in all aspects of school life. Self and mutual respect is promoted along with a caring and non-judgemental attitude throughout the school. The school has received the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Flagship status which recognises the commitment that the whole school community shows towards ensuring that an inclusive learning experience is provided for all.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Medical Needs, Anti-Bullying, Nurture, Young Carers and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Links with the School's Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unrecognised mental health need.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed by on an annual basis in the light of training and legislation, or at the request of a member of the school community. Any amendments are agreed by the staff and Governing Body.