

# Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

This policy is an extension of the health and safety policy and references the pastoral care policy, safeguarding policy and behaviour policy.

*'Mental health is a state of wellbeing 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 his or her community.'* (World Health Organization)

*'In order to help their children succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.'* (DFE)

*'Children have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.'* (UNCRC)

At St Bernard's, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. The school's caring ethos and environment has a major impact on staff wellbeing and there is a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected – both directly and indirectly – by mental health issues.

Mental Health issues often begin during school aged years. Early intervention is crucial. The school's role in this is summarised in four points – prevention, identification, early support and access to specialist support.

At St Bernard's there are clear expectations of behaviour. St Bernard's is a calm, safe predictable environment. Staff and student's wellbeing is promoted implicitly through lived values and attitudes and through the curriculum. Mental Health is not stigmatised. All staff understand behaviour as a method of communication and there is flexibility in the behaviour policy to allow for behaviours that are the result of emotional difficulties. There is a clear pathway of identification and referral, both internally and to specialist services. Families, outside agencies and the wider community are proactively engaged in the life of the school.

The designated mental health lead is a trained member of staff who is responsible for the school's approach to mental health.

The DfE suggests six roles for the mental health lead – oversight of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, supporting the identification of 'at risk' children, having knowledge and links of local mental health services, oversight of interventions, supporting staff and overseeing the outcomes of interventions on education and wellbeing.

The mental health lead will meet regularly with SLT and report termly to the governors.

## **Policy Aims**

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Raise awareness and develop resilience among students.
- Enable staff and students to recognise and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to get support when working with young people.
- Provide the right support to students and staff and know where to signpost students for specific support.
- Support the parents and carers of students suffering mental ill health.
- Support the wellbeing of all staff to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health

## **Key Staff Members**

While all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and have undergone mental health first aid training, the work is led by:

- Mental Health Lead (MHL) - Siobhan Denny

- Pastoral Team
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - Mike Tomlinson
- SEN Co-ordinator - Rodina Jaafar
- PSHE Co-ordinator - Ruth Cunningham
- School Counsellor – Anne Bibby

### **Duty of Care**

All staff have a duty of care. Staff are able to use their safeguarding training and mental health training to look out for changes in behaviour and other signs that may point to a student needing help. Staff are approachable and empathetic.

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 absentee

### **Disclosures**

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own or a fellow student's mental or emotional condition, staff should initially listen carefully and then try to respond calmly, supportively and non-judgementally.

A basic guide for any staff when talking to a student with a mental health issue:

- Focus on listening
- Do not be afraid to make eye contact
- Do not talk too much
- Do not pretend to understand
- Offer support
- Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues
- Do not assume that an apparently negative response from the student is actually what it seems to be
- Never break your promises

Staff cannot and must not guarantee total confidentiality, but should discuss with the student how, and with whom information will be shared. Normally, it should be the mental health lead and designated safeguarding lead who should be alerted and if necessary, be given relevant information.

Parents must always be informed when disclosures about a student's emotional or mental health or wellbeing are being made. Students will be given 24 hours in which to tell their parents about the problem before the school contacts them. We should always give students the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

Parents can find such revelations upsetting or even shocking and staff should be prepared for initial anger, fear or upset during a first conversation. Staff should be accepting of this reaction (within reason) and give parents the time to reflect. A clear means of getting back in touch with the school will be provided and a follow up meeting should be arranged. Parents may also find literature or sources of support, like parents' helplines, useful and reassuring.

### **Pathway of Identification and Referral**

Identify

Talk to student

Decide if it is urgent or not

Who does the information need to be shared with - HOY / DSL / MHL (following schools safeguarding procedure)

Referral can be made to School Councillor or outside agencies by HOY, DSL, MHL

### **Individual Care Plans**

If there is a student causing concern or who has received a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health, we will draw up an individual care plan (ICP) for him/her. This will include:

- Details of the behaviour causing concern or the diagnosed condition
- Any special precautions or requirements
- Any medications
- What to do or whom to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play in prevention, treatment and support

### **Teaching about mental health**

Under the Health Education curriculum, which became statutory at Key Stages 1–4 in September 2020, the study of mental health is a compulsory element of the curriculum. Our students follow specific modules that give factual information about mental wellbeing and the signs of mental ill health. We also help enable students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help as needed for themselves or others. We follow the PSHE Association's guidance in preparing our curriculum to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner. For the full curriculum, see the PSHE study programme folder.

In addition, each tutor group has a nominated student wellbeing representative who is there to pass on information and resources and to be the 'go to' person.

Students take part in a 'wellbeing' day once a term which focus on promoting positive mental health, coping strategies and recognising symptoms. During this time students are encouraged to share their opinion and talk about wellbeing and mental health with their peers.

There are displays around the school about positive mental health.

The Year 12 Young Health Champions are encouraged to take an active role in spreading awareness to their peers by leading assemblies and liaising with teachers.

### **Support for Parents/Carers**

Parents are encouraged to be in contact with the school if they need support.

Form tutors, HOY's, SLT and other members of the pastoral team are able to support parents.

Parents receive resources on supporting their children's mental health by email and the weekly letter.

### **Support for Staff**

Staff are encouraged to complete the educare modules on wellbeing.

- Understanding low mood and depression
- Mental wellbeing in children and young people
- Understanding self-harm
- Understanding anxiety

In addition, Governors and SLT are encouraged to complete the following educare module:

- Supporting staff wellbeing in schools

Staff are also encouraged to complete this free course for teachers:

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/services-for-schools/mental-health-champions-foundation-programme/>

## **Staff Wellbeing**

All staff are expected to:

- Treat each other with empathy and respect
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit
- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing

Line managers are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance with support of the department's wellbeing rep
- Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures
- Promote information about and access to external support services with support of the department wellbeing rep
- Keep in touch with staff if they are absent for long periods

Senior staff are expected to:

- Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork, and seek alternative solutions wherever possible
- Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload
- Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as inspections

The governing board is expected to:

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, such as by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the headteacher
- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regard to workload
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them

The school will support and discuss options with any staff that raise wellbeing issues, such as if they are experiencing significant stress at school or in their personal lives.

Where possible, support will be given by line managers or senior staff. This could be through:

- Giving staff time off to deal with a personal crisis
- Arranging external support, such as counselling or occupational health services
- Completing a risk assessment and following through with any actions identified
- Reassessing their workload and deciding what tasks to prioritise

At all times, the confidentiality and dignity of staff will be maintained.

PGCE students take part in a training session on mental health and wellbeing in their first term at school. Each department/faculty has a wellbeing rep who is able to share resources and listen to concerns. There is a CPD group dedicated to staff wellbeing. Staff take part in a wellbeing / retreat day each year. Staff can expect their workplace to be a safe, calm and predictable environment with an understanding and non-judgemental leadership team. Staff are able to express their concerns. Staff are able to access support when necessary. Mentoring is available for new teachers.

Social events take place. The school day is planned to allow staff time for breaks in-between classes. Any amendments to the 'normal' school day are given at least a week in advance. Each department/faculty have a designated staff area where they can go for time alone, or to socialise or rest with other members of their department/faculty. Staff have the opportunity to express their opinion and their feelings in a safe environment.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Outside Support for students:**

CYPMHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/children-young-people-mental-health-services-cypmhs/>

CAMHS - <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/websites>

NHS - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhsbirthday/get-involved/live-well/mental-health-and-wellbeing/#cyp>  
GP / NHS 111

Childline – 08001111

Shout (text) - 85258

Papyrus Hopeline UK - 08000684141

Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Place2Be - <https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>

Cruse Bereavement Care – 08701671677

The Childhood Bereavement Network - <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Sudden - <https://sudden.org/>

Ataloss - <https://www.ataloss.org/>

Resources are received weekly from the Slough Borough Council Health and Wellbeing Project.

### **Outside Support for staff:**

MIND - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Every Mind Matters - <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Samaritans – 116123 (phone)

Shout – 85258 (text)

Education Support - 08000562561

Anxiety UK – 03444775774

British Red Cross - <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help>

### **Outside Support for Parents:**

Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

Charlie Waller Trust - <https://charliewaller.org/>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Self-Harm**

This term describes any behaviour where a 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 or young people with SEN, are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang and bruise themselves.

## **Depression**

All people experience 'ups and downs' as a normal part of life experiences and we develop strategies better to cope with or allay these feelings as they mature. But for someone who is suffering from depression, these mood swings are more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade the whole of their daily lives over an extended period of weeks or months. These emotions have a significant effect on behaviour and the ability to and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

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

Children and young people experience and feel anxiety in a wide variety of ways. Again, all of us will have experienced worry and anxiousness at relatively low levels as part of growing up and normal adult life. But when thoughts of anxiety, fear and 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 everyday life, intervention is needed. Uncertainty and fears generated by the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, as well as school closures, may well have created heightened anxieties for a much wider range of children and young people than is normally the case.

## **Obsessions and Compulsions**

Obsessions can be described as intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter the mind, and which are disturbing or upsetting. Compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage obsessive thoughts or feelings. Constant worry about taps left running, electrical apparatus not switched off, doors not locked, or fear of house fires are common manifestations of this type of behaviour. Obsessive compulsive disorder can take many forms such as repeated hand washing, insistence on extreme tiredness, cleanliness and order.

## **Eating Problems**

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with or communicating about difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviour that children and young people experience day to day. Media insistence on a particular form of physical perfection also generates fears of ugliness, fatness, inadequacy etc. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia, binge eating and bulimia. Others, particularly younger children, 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 that the child does not have the vocabulary to express or the words to convey.

## **Suicidal feelings**

People may experience complicated thoughts about wanting to end their own lives. Most never act on these feelings although they may openly discuss and explore them. Some, however, do attempt suicide after having talked about it: others die suddenly at their own hand apparently out of the blue.

**Approved by the Catholic Life of the School Committee: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Next Review: May 2023**