St Mary's
Catholic Primary School

Mental Health Policy

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1. SCHOOL MISSION

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, our Mission is:

TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS
BY
LEARNING TOGETHER
LOVING OURSELVES
LOVING EACH OTHER
LOVING ALL PEOPLE
LOVING LIFE ITSELF
AND
CONSTANTLY STRIVING FOR
EXCELLENCE
WORTHY OF OUR GOD GIVEN GIFTS.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

At St. Mary's, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all our students and staff.

Our school culture is supportive, caring and respectful, with Jesus at the centre of all we do. We encourage pupils to be open, and we strive to ensure every child feels heard.

We recognise that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope at times. We understand that anyone may require additional emotional support. At St. Mary's, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility — we all have a role to play.

3. POLICY SCOPE

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, governors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting pupil mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant school policies:

SEND Policy

Behaviour & Relationship Policy

Safeguarding & Child protection Policy

4. POLICY AIMS

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students.

At our school, we will always:

• Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better.

• Ensure our pupils feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.

• Help children to form and maintain relationships.

• Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.

• Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.

5. STATUTORY AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2025

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2020)

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2018)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023)

SEND Code of Practice (2015)

Equality Act 2010

Prevent Duty Guidance: For England and Wales (2023)

6. WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our children. This means that every member of staff, every policy, and every aspect of school life contributes to creating an environment where positive mental health is understood, nurtured and protected.

6.1 PROMOTING A POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH CULTURE

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

• Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.

• Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.

• Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.

• Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.

• Promoting our pupils' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.

• Celebrating each pupil for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.

• Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it.

• Raising awareness amongst staff and children about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.

• Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in children.

• Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

6.2 CURRICULUM (RHE, PSHE, SAFEGUARDING & WIDER CURRICULUM)

At St Mary's, positive mental health is promoted through a planned, progressive curriculum across **EYFS, KS1 and KS2**.

Mental health and wellbeing are taught explicitly through:

- **Relationships and Health Education (RHE)** in EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, in line with statutory DfE guidance (2020) and the Catholic Education Service RHE framework.
- **PSHE**, including emotional literacy, resilience-building, confidence and healthy relationships.
- **RE and Catholic Social Teaching**, supporting compassion, dignity and belonging.
- **PE**, promoting physical health, fitness and positive lifestyle habits.

Mental health is embedded across the wider curriculum through:

- British Values and UNCRC rights
- Safeguarding education, including identifying safe adults
- Creative opportunities such as art, music and drama
- Activities that nurture confidence, reflection and self-esteem

Across EYFS, KS1 and KS2, children are taught to:

- recognise and describe feelings
- identify worries and articulate emotions
- understand healthy friendships and relationships
- develop strategies for self-regulation and resilience
- know how and when to seek support

- understand what keeps them mentally and physically healthy

Teaching reflects our Catholic ethos, placing the dignity and worth of each child at the centre of learning.

7. INCLUSION

St Mary's is committed to an inclusive approach to mental health, ensuring all pupils can access support regardless of ability, background or need. Our approach is aligned with the SEND Code of Practice (2015), Equality Act 2010, KCSIE (2024) and statutory RHE guidance.

We ensure that:

- Pupils with SEND, including SEMH needs, receive personalised support and reasonable adjustments.
- Support follows the graduated approach (Assess–Plan–Do–Review) in collaboration with the SENDCO, pastoral staff and external professionals.
- Pupils with EAL receive support to develop language for emotions and to express themselves confidently.
- Disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils are closely monitored to ensure early identification and targeted support.
- All staff receive appropriate training to understand how mental health needs may present differently across different pupils.

Inclusion is central to our school ethos. Every child is valued, respected and supported to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

8. KEY STAFF MEMBERS

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of children and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

• Our Designated Safeguarding Officers:

Mrs. Noone (Lead DSL), Mrs Yorke (HT),Miss Preedy (AHT), Mrs Jones, Mrs. Richards, Mrs. Tame and Mrs Birchenall.

• Pastoral Staff:

Mrs Yorke (HT), Mrs. Noone (DHT), Miss Preedy (AHT), Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Tame and Mrs Birchenall.

• SENDCO: Mrs Birchenall.

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to: Mrs. Tame.

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a staff member, then in the first instance they should speak to: Mrs Yorke.

If a child presents a medical emergency then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

9. SUPPORT AT SCHOOL AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a range of support available in school for any children who may be struggling. These include both internal and external pastoral services, alongside wider wellbeing opportunities.

9.1 PASTORAL TEAM

Our Pastoral Team meets fortnightly to discuss pupils who have been brought to their attention by staff, parents or peers. The team identifies actions, provides targeted support and monitors outcomes to ensure that each child receives appropriate care.

9.2 THRIVE APPROACH IN SCHOOL

At St Mary's, we use the Thrive Approach to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health development. Thrive is an evidence-based, whole-school programme designed to help children understand their emotions, build secure relationships and develop resilience.

Children are screened using the Thrive assessment tool, and pupils who are identified as needing support work with a trained Thrive Practitioner.

Thrive enables us to:

- identify gaps in emotional or social development
- plan targeted interventions that respond to individual needs
- teach emotional regulation strategies
- strengthen pupils' ability to manage feelings and form positive relationships
- embed nurture-based, relational practice across the school

9.3 CHILDREN'S COUNSELLOR – MRS TAME (BRANCHES)

Branches is a counselling service for children who require mental health intervention or emotional support. Pupils are referred and allocated to Mrs Tame through discussions and identification of need within Pastoral Team meetings. Children can self-refer through the 'drop in' option, should they feel the need for support. Mrs Tame offers person centred therapy to the children and is trained in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), Sand Tray work, and other relevant methods of therapy.

Mrs Tame follows the fundamental principles laid out in The National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society's Code of Ethical Practice Framework. Please note that all sessions are confidential and the children are made aware that any disclosers will be passed on to the Safeguarding Team and other agencies.

9.4 MENTAL HEALTH LEADS

Mrs Yorke and Mrs Tame are both trained Mental Health Leads within the school. They support the emotional wellbeing of pupils and staff and identify needs, plan appropriate support and ensure that mental health provision is consistent across the school. Their training enables them to guide staff, contribute to whole-school mental health strategies and strengthen the systems we have in place to promote positive wellbeing.

As trained Mental Health Leads, they provide a point of contact for staff who have concerns about a child's emotional development or who may require support themselves.

9.5 EXTERNAL PASTORAL SUPPORT – MRS HUGGINS (ZACCHAEUS)

Zacchaeus is a bought in support service who work with children in need of emotional support. Mrs. Huggins is a qualified teacher with years of pastoral experience working in a number of both, primary and secondary schools in Birmingham, specialising in bereavement and loss. The sessions are confidential and disclosers are passed on to the senior leadership team.

9.6 OTHER PASTORAL SUPPORT IN SCHOOL

In addition to specialist therapeutic support, we offer pupils a range of opportunities to build confidence, resilience and emotional wellbeing, including:

- friendship groups
- circle time
- participation in the School Council and other school groups

These activities help children develop social skills, self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

As a Catholic school, we place Jesus at the centre of all we do. Daily prayer and reflection allow children to pause, consider their feelings and appreciate the gifts God has given them.

Our Year 6 'Buddy System' supports Reception pupils in their transition from pre-school to primary school. Buddies build nurturing relationships through shared activities, stories and play, helping younger children feel safe and supported.

9.7 SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We also signpost pupils and families to local community support networks, including:

- **St Mary's Parish Youth Group**
- **The Stonehouse Gang**
- **Central Youth Services**

- **Pause** – a drop-in mental health service in Digbeth providing immediate clinical support for young people
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**, also known as Forward Thinking Birmingham, available for anyone who feels their child may need mental health support

10. SIGNPOSTING

We ensure that all staff, pupils and parents are aware of the support that's available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

Young Minds: **Tel: 020 7089 5050** **www.youngminds.org.uk**	**Anna Freud:** **Tel: +44 (0)20 7794 2313** **www.annafreud.org**
The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health **www.acamh.org**	**Forward Thinking Birmingham:** **Access Centre Number:** **Tel: 0300 300 0099** **www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk**
Pause Birmingham: **Tel: 0300 300 0099** **21, Birmingham B5 6B**	**NSPCC:** **Tel: 0808 800 5000** **www.nspcc.org.uk**
Childline: **Tel: 0800 1111**	**Child Bereavement UK** **www.childbereavementuk.org**

11. IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to children who need it, when they need it.

These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

• Physical signs of harm.

• Changes in eating and sleeping habits.

• Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.

• Changes in mood.

• Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.

• Drug and alcohol abuse.

• Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.

• Secretive behaviour.

• Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer.

• Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

• Attendance and absenteeism.

• Punctuality and lateness.

• Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.

• Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties

12. PUPIL VOICE

Children are encouraged to participate in open discussions during RHE and PSHE lessons. They complete a termly Mental Health Questionnaire. Data from which is quickly shared with the Pastoral Team, who then identify children who may need emotional support.

We have introduced a 'How do you feel today? check in.' Children put a lollipop stick with their name on into a pot according to how they feel. This is then checked after registration and lunch. Children who have requested to speak to an adult are spoken with, giving them time, reassurance and tools/strategies should they need it.

13. MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a child discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially on our 'My Concern' safeguarding recording system within school and only shared with the appropriate authorities if necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

The disclosure record will contain:

• The date of the disclosure.

• The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.

• The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.

• Agreed next steps.

• Actions

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

If a member of staff thinks it's necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the child. They will be told:

• Who the staff member is going to tell.

• What the staff member is going to disclose.

• Why it is necessary for somebody else to be told.

• When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the child's consent first, such as in the case of pupils who are at immediate risk.

Protecting a child's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk. Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. In this case, the safeguarding policy will be followed.

15. WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents, we will:

• Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.

• Share and allow parents to access further support.

• Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.

• Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.

• Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.

• Keep parents informed about how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.

16. WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our children's' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The school nurse/s.
- Paediatricians.
- CAMHS. (FTB-Forward Thinking Birmingham)
- Counselling services.
- Therapists.
- Family support workers.
- Behavioural support workers.

17. SUPPORTING PEERS

We understand that, when a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support. We will provide support in a one-on-one or peer group setting. These sessions will be guided by the child/ren, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

18. SUPPORTING STAFF

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can affect the staff member's own emotional wellbeing. To help with this, we treat all mental health concerns seriously and support staff who may be experiencing difficulties themselves. We aim to create a pleasant, safe and supportive working environment where staff feel able to talk openly, seek help without judgement and access appropriate guidance. Staff are signposted to external support where needed, and reasonable adjustments are considered in line with the Equality Act 2010. We also ensure that staff wellbeing is monitored through regular check-ins.

19. TRAINING

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our staff notice board and via emails so staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional

training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.

20. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.