St. John's Primary School



Mental Health and Well-Being Policy

"You should be protected from things that could harm you."

Article 36 United Nations Rights of the Child

Thinking Learning Caring

The Importance of Mental Health and Well-Being

At St John's school, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community; pupils, staff, parents and carers, and recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being 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 well-being and can affect their learning and achievement. Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice identifies Social, Emotional and Mental Health as one of the four areas of Special Educational Need.

All children go through ups and downs through their school career and some face significant life events. Research suggests that approximately 10% of children aged between 5 and 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on their quality of life, relationships and academic achievement.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "*in order to help their pupils 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 pupil's well-being and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that pupils can manage times of change and stress, be resilient, are supported to reach their potential and access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that pupils 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 be a school where:

- All pupils are valued
- Pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- Pupils 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

In addition to children's well-being, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being and we have a separate policy dedicated to this.

Definition of Mental Health and Well-Being

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing:

… a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community.

Mental health and well-being 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

A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, be happy and successful and prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that everyone understands
2. Helping pupils to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to
3. Helping pupils to be resilient individuals
4. Teaching pupils social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
5. Early identification of pupils 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 resilience

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues and aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of mental health issues.

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 pupils 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 pupils with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some pupils more likely to experience problems. These can include: a physical long-term illness, having a parent who has mental health difficulties, death, and loss such as the loss of friendships, a family breakdown and bullying.

The school's Pastoral team (Head Teacher/Deputy Head teacher, SENCO and Designated Safeguarding Lead) are responsible for:

- Leading and working with other staff members to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health
- Providing advice and support to staff and organising training and updates
- Keeping staff up to date with information about what support is available
- Liaising with the PSHE leader on teaching about mental health (if different to the members of the pastoral team)
- Being the first point of contact and communication with mental health services

- Leading on and making referrals to services

There are clear links with our Positive Behaviour through Positive Relationships Policy because we believe that behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, is likely to be related to an unmet mental health need. We consider behaviour to be a message.

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 pupils with mental health needs and their families.

Supporting Pupils' Positive Mental Health

We believe we have a key role in promoting pupils' positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including;

Class/School Council:

- Assemblies/discussions to raise awareness of mental health

Transition Support

- Transition lessons/work in Year 6 during the Summer Term
- Transition meetings with parent/carers, pupils and relevant staff
- ELSA
- Additional transition plans/visits for vulnerable children throughout the school
- Key adults might support secondary school visits with vulnerable pupils
- Transition support for parents and pupils with autism diagnoses.

Class Activities

- Worry boxes
- Sensory boxes
- Calming spaces
- Classroom scripts and signposting
- Class council

Whole School

- Mental Health Wellbeing focus threading throughout the school ethos and PSHE curriculum
- Encouraging positives relationships so children can be aware of trusted adults around them and where to find support
- Assemblies: links with oracy to discuss mental health themes; use of recommended, engaging materials
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within the school and outside the school
- After school clubs

Small Group Activities

- Lunchtime nurture support where needed
- Learning spaces for those pupils who are finding the classroom overwhelming
- ELSA/well-being groups: targeted support programmes
- Lunchtime
- LEGO Club

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible and provide a prompt response. We do this in different ways including:

- Discussions regarding pupils/families at the weekly meetings
- Identify individuals that might need support
- Working with the School Office staff who are often the first point of contact with families seeking support
- Home visits in Foundation Stage to identify needs
- Induction meetings for pupils / families joining after the Reception year
- Analysing behaviour, exclusions, first aid incidents, attendance and weekly Behaviour monitoring / Anti-Bullying Forms
- Pupil surveys
- Staff report concerns about individual pupils to the SLT and Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- Parental meetings
- Enabling pupils to raise concerns to class teacher and support staff
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school class teacher or to any member of staff - we have an 'Open Door Policy'
- Meetings with outside support services such as CAMHS, SEMHIT, SALT, ASCIT, Educational Psychologist

Warning signs of a deterioration in mental health could 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
- Vengeful thinking/ behaviour towards certain pupils/ adults
- Perceived negative attention from other pupils/adults
- 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
- Avoiding PE or getting changed secretively
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Staff are aware that mental health needs such as anxiety might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development. If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the school's child protection procedures are followed. A risk assessment and plan will be made.

Managing disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a child 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 and our first thoughts should be of the child's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' Think TED (Tell, Explain, Describe.)

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and recorded on 'My Concern'. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with a DSL (to seek support and advice about next steps).

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we feel it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/or a parent.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the mental health lead or DSL, this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence, and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil. Parents must always be informed if a referral is being made.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Leads, must be informed and a referral made to the Children and Families Hub immediately.

Working with Specialist Services

In some case a pupil's social emotional mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, school refusal and other complex needs. We make links with a range of specialist services, such as CAMHS and SEMHIT, and have regular contact with the services to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the pupils' provision.

Working with parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case-by-case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.

- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with all parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their child's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support the positive mental health of their child through regular information evenings.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their pupils are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

We display relevant sources of support in communal areas through emails. We regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of the pupil or parent seeking help by ensuring families understand:

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

Supporting peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- ✓ Where and how to access support for themselves
- ✓ Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- ✓ Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness will be monitored by our SLT. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if deemed necessary

Change History

Version	Date Issued	Issued by	Reason for Change	Presented To	Approved by:	Date
0.1	July 2025	JHa	Newly Issued Policy	All Staff		

See also:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- SEN and Inclusion Policy
- Counter-Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour through Positive Relationships Policy