

St Anne's Catholic Voluntary Academy Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

September 2023

Review date: September 2025



Designated Mental Health Lead: Laura Chapman (Inclusion Manager)
Named Governor with lead on mental health: Lorraine Gavin

I. Why is mental health and wellbeing is important?

At St Anne's Catholic Voluntary Academy, 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.

In 2017, about 1 in 10 children aged 5 to 16 were considered to have a mental health need and this can have an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. 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. Most importantly, 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 access 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 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. How we aim to promote this will be detailed below.

2. Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out:

- How we promote positive mental health.
- How we prevent mental health problems.
- How we identify and support children with mental health needs.
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health problems
- How we support staff with their mental health and wellbeing.
- How we support visiting staff and student teachers with their mental health and wellbeing.
- Key information about some common mental health problems.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

3. Definition of mental health and wellbeing

The World Health Organisation defines mental health and wellbeing as:

“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 are not just the absence of mental health problems.

We want all children/young people and staff 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.

4. How the policy was developed and who was consulted

The development of this policy was led by our Designated Mental Health Lead (DMHL) and SENDCO, in consultation with our school Wellbeing Champions, staff, parents and carers and Educational Psychologist.

They organised a series of consultations to gather their views:

- The Wellbeing Champions gave their views following their training and gave their views when creating our Mental Health Curriculum.
- School council gave their views on the best ways to teach about mental health.
- Parents and carers were invited to a consultation meeting and gave their views on what they wanted their children to be taught and what support would be helpful.
- Staff discussed the draft policy at a staff meeting.
- Governor discussed the draft policy at a meeting.

5. Links to other policies

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, SEND and Inclusion.

6. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health: Our Mental Health Curriculum

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. As a school we aim to create an ethos that supports mental health and resilience. We teach the children how to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.

St Anne's Mental Health Curriculum

We have developed a curriculum which explicitly teaches the children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health. This curriculum was developed by our DMHL/SENDCo and Wellbeing Champions following their training. We teach this curriculum through specific focus afternoons each half term.

The curriculum is based upon these key themes:

- Identifying what emotions are.
- Establishing how we can express our emotions and speak out.
- Strategies for managing stress
- Positive wellbeing work.

As part of this curriculum some of the activities we engage in are yoga, mindfulness, creation a wellbeing wall, listing emotions, drawing our emotions, puppy therapy and much more.

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. This is promoted by own school mental health poster and mental health displays.

7. Supporting children' positive mental heath

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. As well as our St Anne's Mental Health Curriculum our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

Pupil-led activities

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- Playground leaders – a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime.

Transition programs

- Transition Program to secondary schools which includes all Year 6 children having a staff mentor to support a smooth transition to secondary school.
- Specific additional transition intervention groups for SEND pupils which supports transition all the way through Year 6.

Extra class activities

- Proud cloud- celebrating our achievements.
- Positive affirmation jars with inspiring quotes to keep us motivated.
- Worry boxes/Monsters - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class.

- Mental health check ins where the children can write how they are feeling at different parts of the day.
- Daily greetings- greeting the children each day at the door with a hi-five, hug or fist pump.

Whole school

- Wellbeing Week – whole school focus on doing things which make us feel good.
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support.
- Poster competition- design our whole school mental health poster.
- A contemplation station for reflection and quiet time.

Small group activities

- Lego therapy.
- Zones of Regulation Intervention
- Time to Talk intervention
- ELSA sessions
- Counselling
- Support from Crossroads

Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing

Through PSHE and our Mental Health Curriculum sessions we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient, understand about mental health and be less affected by the stigma of mental health problems.

EYFS & Key Stage 1 children learn:

- To recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings.
- Simple strategies for managing feelings.
- How their behaviour affects other people.
- About empathy and understanding other people's feelings.
- To cooperate and problem solve.
- To motivate themselves and persevere.
- How to calm down.
- Who to go to if they are worried?
- About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.
- How to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help.

Key Stage 2 children learn:

- What positively and negatively affects their mental and emotional health (including the media).
- Positive and healthy coping strategies.
- About good and not so good feelings.
- To describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others.
- To recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others.
- To recognise that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them.
- About resilience.
- How to motivate themselves and bounce back if they fail at something.
- How to empathise and be supportive of others.
- About change, including transitions (between Key Stages and schools), loss, separation, divorce and bereavement.

- About the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves.
- About the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

8. Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility

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.

Our Designated Mental Health Lead

- Leads and works with other staff to coordinate the St Anne's Mental Health Curriculum to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Leads assemblies about mental health.
- Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
- Is the first point of contact with mental health services and makes individual referrals to them.
- Refers children to support by our family support worker.
- Records incidents regarding mental health on CPOMS.
- Reports to governors about mental health.

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 children with mental health needs and their families.

Sources of relevant support include:

- Our own Senior Leadership Team
- Our Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead
- Our Family and Student Support Worker
- School support staff employed to manage mental health needs of particular children
- Our SENDCO /DMHL 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.
- Action for Children counselling service.
- Crossroads who support children with difficulties within their family.
- CAMHS who provide 1:1 therapy and group work to children who are referred.
- Our community CAHMS worker who trains staff and advises the DMHL on supporting children with specific mental health problems.

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- Analysing behaviour, exclusions, visits to the pastoral support worker, attendance and sanctions.
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
- Worry boxes in each class for children to raise concerns which are checked by the Class Teachers and Mental Health Lead (these are anonymous but give an indication of needs in a particular class regularly).
- Pupil Progress Review meetings termly.
- Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns.
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the School.
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer.
- Parental meetings in EYFS.
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

All staff at St Anne's have had training on the types of mental health needs and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the Mental Health Lead/ SENDCO who is a trained Mental Health First Aider.

These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits.
- Falling academic achievement.
- 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.
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE.
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather.
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

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. If there is a medical emergency, then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Involving parents

We recognise the importance of parental involvement in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children. Therefore, on entry at our school we ask parents either through consultations or on the entry forms to inform us of any mental health needs their child has or anything that may impact their mental health and wellbeing. It is very important that parents share this information with the school, so we can support the child in the best possible way, all information will be treated confidentially.

To support parents and carers:

- We include them in information sessions at school surrounding mental health and wellbeing and try and include parents in many in school activities such as parent afternoons, afternoon teas etc.
- We provide information on our school website and through letters about how to best support their child's mental health, signposting to where they can access more specialist support.
- We share our St Anne's Mental Health Curriculum topics with parents each term.

Supporting the parents of those children with mental health needs

We are aware that parents react in different ways when becoming aware their child has mental health needs and we aim to be sensitive and supportive. We also try to reassure parents that support is available and many mental health issues are common.

When a concern is raised the school will:

- Contact parents and meet them face to face.
- Offer advice and signpost to useful information for that parent to look into.
- Be available for follow up calls/meetings.
- Make a record of the meeting.
- Create a plan of a way forward.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support the child.
- Keep the parents fully involved of any updates, interventions or further support provided.

Parents will always be informed about any concern we have, and we will make every effort to ensure parents get the support they need from services to support their child.

Involving children

For the first time this year, we have trained a group of pupils who fulfill the role of Wellbeing Champions for the school, we will continue to do this every year.

These children lead assemblies, collect feedback from other pupils and are actively involved in designing all of our mental health activities and most importantly our curriculum supporting mental health.

We believe that it is vital to include our pupils in supporting mental health and wellbeing in our school and we always listen to their feedback and ideas.

9. Supporting Staff with Mental Health and Wellbeing

At St Anne's we hold the mental health and wellbeing of our staff of vital importance. We need our staff to be healthy, positive and resilient in order to best support the pupils in our care. We try to maintain a positive working environment where staff feel supported, listened to and valued. Equally, we maximise the opportunities to work as team and support each other, both in and outside of school.

Some ways in which we try to support the mental health and wellbeing of our staff are:

- Encouraging and facilitating professional development of colleagues to ensure they feel confident and able to fulfill their role.
- Shared lunches and breakfasts to show appreciation to one another and take time to communicate.
- Supporting each other with behaviour management.
- Regular wellbeing check-ups by the DMHL and other SLT members.
- Organising staff social events.
- Staff buddy system where staff can help and check up on their buddy regularly.
- Looking at ways to reduce staff workload such as encouraging leaving early on a Friday or limiting work emails and working from home at weekends.

Equally, for staff members who need further support with their mental health, the DMHL can refer to more specialist services such as local support groups, Multi-Agency Team workers, NHS Mental Health services and other support workers.

10. Supporting temporary Staff and Teaching Students with Mental Health and Wellbeing

Whether you are a permanent member of staff or temporary, at St Anne's we work hard to ensure we support your mental health and wellbeing. Supply staff are able to access the majority of support provided to our permanent staff. Supply

staff are invited to training along with other staff and are equally included in social events and wellbeing checkups where possible depending on the length of time they spend at our school. Equally, we try to ensure supply staff are well informed about their role, the needs of the children and school routines and policies. We believe by ensuring supply staff are well informed, they are then able to develop key relationships with the children and they feel comfortable and confident when fulfilling their role.

We recognise the importance also of supporting trainee teaching students whilst carrying out their teaching practice at St Anne's. We support and nurture trainee teachers at the very start of their teaching career in order for them to succeed in their training and move forward in the teaching profession.

Some ways in which we support trainee teaching students are:

- Weekly mentoring sessions where the student can discuss their work that week but also ask anything they have concerns about and discuss their personal and professional development.
- Inclusion in staff social events to ensure they feel part of the team.
- Suggested timetables of suitable working hours.
- Additional planning and assessment time to ensure they are prepared for their roles and responsibilities each week.
- Access to whole school resources.
- Access to school policies including the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy.
- Additional support with managing behaviour of the pupils.
- Signposting more specialist support if a trainee is struggling with their mental health.

Appendices

Appendix 1

For information on the main types of mental health needs

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE March 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2#history>

Appendix 2

Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK- <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>

OCD UK- <https://www.ocduk.org>

Depression Alliance with Mind- <https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/depression-alliance/>

Eating Disorders- <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

National Self-Harm Network- <https://www.nshn.co.uk>

Suicidal Thoughts- <https://papyrus-uk.org>

For general information and support

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

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

<https://www.minded.org.uk>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk>

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/children-s-mental-health/>

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

