



# **Mental health and emotional wellbeing policy.**

## **St Catherine's C of E Primary School, in the Diocese of St Albans and affiliated to St Mary's Church, Ware**

**February 2025**

School vision:

**"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10**

**"St Catherine's is a nurturing community where differences are celebrated and caring, happy children flourish. Children embrace their learning and develop skills of wisdom and resilience, enabling them to live life in all its fullness."**

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## **1. Policy statement**

At St Catherine's Primary School, our strong ethos of nurture and love means that we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all our pupils, our families, members of our staff team and our governors. The school adopts a range of approaches in support of the whole community: universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches, proactive and reactive, aimed at vulnerable families and children. This policy is a guide for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, and governors and should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies.

## **2. Context**

The school vision is for all pupils to develop emotionally and spiritually as well as academically, in order to live life to the full. We recognise that children who are well mentally, do better in learning and in life. By encouraging children and young people to make positive behaviour changes regarding health and wellbeing, we can help them reach their full potential in terms of achievement and success. We promote healthy lifestyles throughout all aspects of school life: they are reflected and embedded in our policies and practice. The curriculum and quality first teaching promote positive attitudes to all aspects of health including emotional health, healthy eating and physical activity.

We want all our children 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.

## **3. The role of the Governing Body**

Governors embrace the whole school nurturing ethos of love and respect, and as such are fully supportive of any approaches, such as this policy, to promote good mental health and well-being for the whole school community. They will:

- Review and develop the school vision, goals, strategies and development plan to ensure that child and staff mental health and wellbeing is an integral part of whole school practice
- Inspire and support all those who must work together to develop this policy and implement it within the curriculum
- Support the leadership team in identifying priorities and monitoring impact of this policy in order to support children's wellbeing and achievement in school and creating a mentally healthy workplace
- Appoint a dedicated 'health and wellbeing' Governor

## **4. The role of key staff and governors**

All staff and governors should take responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils and staff, however key members of staff may have specific roles to play:

- DSPs
- Pastoral and attendance workers
- SENCO
- Head teacher
- Health and well-being governor
- Senior Mental Health Lead
- PSHE Coordinator
- Phase leaders

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a member of the school community, in the first instance they should speak to the Head teacher, deputy head, or relevant phase leader.

If there is a concern that there is a high risk or that there is a danger of immediate harm, the school's safeguarding procedures should be followed.

## **5. Whole school aims**

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students, other members of staff and in themselves.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support for children and adults with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students / staff and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff that any member of the school community may have mental health issues, and ensure that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing
- Ensure behaviour in school is such that it supports and promotes key school values such as kindness, love, understanding

## **6. Whole school approaches employed / strategies used to support**

- Whole school approach to behaviour (STEPS policy in place – a therapeutic approach) developing skills of reflection and awareness of our own actions and the feelings of others
- Local school partnership subscribed to - Family support workers, providing bespoke service for identified children and families
- CPOMs used to log ALL concerns, enabling key staff to monitor issues/incidents, provision and outcomes, prompting escalation if necessary
- Pastoral team, to support identified pupils on an individual level
- Fully trained Nurture team, providing bespoke programs of support for identified pupils with emotional and behavioural needs
- DSPs, SENDco & Pastoral leader meet fortnightly to review identified pupils and assess developments and needs
- Robust PSHE curriculum covering areas such as self esteem
- RE and Collective Worship support themes develop understanding and acceptance of differences between ourselves and others
- Mindfulness promoted across the school, during daily lessons, as 'focus weeks' including key visitors for the children, raising the profile of resilience and perseverance
- Regular whole staff training and updates on mental health issues

## **7. Warning Signs**

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil or staff member 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 the Head teacher, the deputy or a DSP.

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

## **8. Supporting individual needs**

When a pupil has been identified as giving cause for concern there are a number of approaches the school may take depending upon the individual concerned and the type/level of need, these could include:

- the pastoral team may offer support sessions immediately, either short or long term
- the school may ask parents to take the child to the GP, to secure support from CAMHs
- the school may, in agreement with the family, engage the LSP family support workers to visit the family and decide upon a program of support
- the school may decide to pay for the counselling service to hold regular 1:1 sessions with the child

## **9. General whole class teaching about mental health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves, and others, physically and mentally healthy and safe are included within the eSafety and PSHE curriculum and as part of Collective worship.

### **PSHE**

We follow the guidance issued by CORAM Education to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively [https://www.coram.org.uk/how-we-do-it/coram-life-education?gclid=EAlalQobChMIjNn7z7e93gIVAbDtCh1AMQkHEAAYASAAEgLunPD\\_BwE](https://www.coram.org.uk/how-we-do-it/coram-life-education?gclid=EAlalQobChMIjNn7z7e93gIVAbDtCh1AMQkHEAAYASAAEgLunPD_BwE)

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. See Section 15 for Supporting Peers

## **10. Staff training**

Staff attend any relevant training sessions, offered by HfL, DSPL3 and other outside providers, as and when appropriate. Training about recognising and responding to mental health issues, is regularly shared in-house. Staff governors and families may also access on-line training and advice from MindEd at <https://www.minded.org.uk/>

### **Other sources of support:**

- Schools Counselling Service
- DSPs and Pastoral workers in school
- CAMHS
- Close links to our local church
- Family support workers (local schools partnership)
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## **11. Managing disclosures**

If a child 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 are recorded confidentially, on CPOMS, and include:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure has been made
- Key points of the conversation
- Any next steps

This information is shared on a need to know basis. The school's usual expectations regarding confidentiality apply. Parents/carers will always be informed if there are concerns about a child. If further action needs to be taken, the school will usually discuss this with parents and obtain permission although there may be instances where, due to safeguarding or if a child is in danger of harm, that this is not appropriate. The school is mindful that any such conversations may be upsetting for parents and manage each discussion on an individual basis, as gently as possible. Parents may respond differently and may need time to reflect. The aim is always for an open and ongoing dialogue, where the needs of the child are paramount. Key points following discussions with parents are logged.

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

## **12. Staff wellbeing**

St Catherine's school as the employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees as far as reasonably practicable and accepts the Health and Safety Executive definition of work-related stress as "the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". There is an important distinction between 'reasonable pressures' which stimulate and motivate, and 'stress' where an individual feels they are unable to cope with excessive pressures or demands placed upon them. Please refer to the separate Staff Well-being policy which expands upon the School's Health and Safety policy, setting out how the School will promote the well-being of employees. The school endeavours to create a working environment where potential triggers of work-related stress are avoided, minimised or mitigated, as far as practicable, through good management practices, effective Human Resources policies and staff development.

## **13. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum by the leadership team. The next review date is February 2027.