



*St Nicolas C of E Academy*

*Together We Flourish*

*Mental Health &  
Wellbeing Policy*

*September 2022*



# **St Nicolas C of E Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy**

## **Vision and Values**

Our vision as a Church of England primary school, deeply rooted in a strong Christian tradition, is to develop happy, young people with enquiring minds, a spirit of curiosity, respect for themselves, others and the environment so that they will have the skills, resilience and adaptability to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Our vision draws inspiration from the Parable of the Sower which is found in the gospel of Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 in the New Testament.

A farmer sows seed in a field:

- Some seed falls on the paths, and the birds quickly eat it.
- Some seed falls where there are rocks, and not much soil. Plants grow quickly, but soon the sun dries them. There is not enough soil, and the plants die.
- Some seed begins to grow in a place where there are too many weeds. The weeds stop the growth of the plants, and the plants die.
- But some seeds fall on rich soil. So, the plants flourish.

We strive to provide the rich soil that enables our children and adults to develop the deep roots that they need to flourish in the love and grace of God. Within our community, our Christian school nurtures growth and supports all to have the courage to face challenge and the resilience to persevere even when confronted by difficulties. We endeavour to provide abundant opportunities which provide a platform for unique strengths and talents to blossom, where everyone feels valued and has respect for themselves and others, and hope for the brightest future.

Our mission, as a school with a religious character, is to provide an education of depth and quality in a Christian ethos which ensures the children and adults have the nurturing and aspirational environment to reach their full potential.

To realise our mission, we endeavour to live out our vision through our school motto:

### **Together We Flourish**

Christian Values are interwoven through our vision, mission and motto and are embedded throughout the curriculum with a particular focus given to:

- Love (Compassion and Friendship)
- Peace
- Thankfulness
- Perseverance
- Service
- Hope

Our one school rule of respect ensures everyone feels valued and is the lens through which all our values are viewed.

### **Equalities Statement**

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

*Mental health is 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.*

(World Health Organization)

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

## **Scope**

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need. There is also reference within the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support is crucial. This policy explains the school role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing and can be summarised as:

**Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos;

**Identification:** recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible;

**Early support:** helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions; and

**Access to specialist support:** working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment

## **Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Sharon Thorpe – Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Martyn Yeo – Deputy Headteacher, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)
- Angela Parsons – Assistant Headteacher, SENDco, DDSL Mental Health First Aider (in training)
- Simon Byrne – Assistant Headteacher & DDSL
- Lauren Morris – THRIVE Lead and Learning Mentor
- Deboarh Hollis – THRIVE Lead & Pupil SEMH

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to a mental health lead in the first instance and record on CPOMs. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to a Safeguarding Lead. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the SENDCO.

## **Individual Health Care Plans**

If necessary an individual health care plan for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health will be produced. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

## **Teaching about Mental Health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Our PSHE curriculum has creative and engaging content based on a sequential Jigsaw scheme. This is supported through a strong emphasis on emotional literacy, building resilience and nurturing mental and physical health which is embedded in our whole school ethos. We also follow the Warwickshire schools' Taking Care: Protective Behaviours Scheme as well as a number of other programmes to support pupil's understanding of their mental health and well being e.g. Rights, Respecting School and imoves.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

## **Thrive**

The Thrive programme provides those who work with children and young people with the knowledge, skills and tools to optimise social and emotional development, focusing on the relationship with the child or young person. It may take the form of one-to-one sessions, small group work or whole class teaching.

## **Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We display relevant sources of support in communal areas and toilets, for staff and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will ensure that everyone involved understands:

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

## **Warning Signs**

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 communicate their concerns through our usual safeguarding procedures.

Possible warning signs include but are not limited to:

- behaviour problems
- persistent difficulty separating from a parent
- difficulties in relationships
- excessive fears and worries
- extreme hyperactivity
- sudden decrease in school performance
- sudden changes in sleep habits
- complaining of physical illness
- visible prolonged sadness
- contemplating death or suicide
- loss of appetite
- loss of motivation

## **Managing disclosures**

A student 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 student 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding system. Disclosures should be recorded on CPOMs or on a Green form and reported to a DSL.

This information should be shared with the Mental Health and Wellbeing leaders, who will provide store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

## **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student 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

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Wellbeing team, this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Where appropriate, parents will be informed if staff have concerns regarding their child's mental health or wellbeing. However, if a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues a DSL must be informed in the first instance. The DSL will then advise on further communication with parents.

## **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 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 step 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 children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- 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 positive mental health in their children
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

## **Supporting Peers**

When a student 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 experiencing difficulties 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
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend help (e.g., signs of relapse) 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

## **Staff Support**

We take the mental health and wellbeing of all our staff very seriously and it remains high priority in school. A range of processes are in place to support the wellbeing of staff, being mindful of workload.

When a member of staff is suffering from mental health or wellbeing issues, it can be a difficult time for them and their family. Support will be provided by school and or the Multi-Academy Trust on a case-by-case basis. Initial support may include: additional release time for workload, 1:1 supervision, sharing of places to seek support and advice.

We further support the mental health and wellbeing of all staff through:

- Whole school training events, including Safeguarding
- Access to appropriate external training
- Involving all staff in decision making and proposed change e.g. changing of School Rules, frequency of reporting to parents
- Provision of non-contact time to allow for planning, delivery and evaluation of school activities
- Consultation on training and support needs through regular review
- Work life balance regularly reviewed and acted upon i.e. reduction of unnecessary paperwork, admin tasks
- Supportive teams for subject leaders

- Encouragement of social events
- Introduction of an Adult Mental Health First Aider
- Access to free support for all staff via the Employee Assistance Programme

## **Training**

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe. We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.