



St John's
School Billericay

Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

Date: September 2024
Those Responsible: Mrs A Fleming - Deputy Headteacher

To be reviewed: August 2025

Named mental health lead: Amy Fleming

1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important

At St John's, 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. All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events.

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.

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. 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 go if they need 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.

2. Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out:

- How we promote positive mental health.
- How we work to 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

Definition of mental health and wellbeing

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

3. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

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. This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Working effectively with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

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.

5. 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 Mental Health Lead:

- Leads and works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensures that pupils receive PSHCE teaching about mental health.
- Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.

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 support in school include:

- Our own Pastoral Team
- Our Safeguarding/Child Protection
- Our class teachers and form teachers
 - School support staff who are trained to manage mental health needs of particular children
 - Our SENCO 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.

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in children and know what to do and where to get help. A number of our staff have completed a course on mental health first aid. Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing.

6. Supporting children's positive mental health

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

- Assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- Peer mediation and mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child
- The Club – a lunchtime club supporting pupils at lunchtime.
- A personalised transition programme
- Worry boxes - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns.
- Mental health awareness programmes e.g. resilience teaching on a weekly basis, mindful mile and daily mindful minute.
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support

7. Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing

Through PSHE 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. Details of this can be seen in our PSHE Scheme of work.

8. Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs

Our approach:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensuring that the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve children in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

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:

- Monitoring behaviour, exclusions, attendance and sanctions.
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
 - Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns.
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer.

- Parental meetings.
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors 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 Pastoral Team, DSL, SENCo or Mental Health Lead. 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.
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.
- 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 Safeguarding procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency then the School's procedures for first aid are followed.

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the Mental Health Lead or the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil. All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

The kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and the child. In line with our Safeguarding policy, where we have serious concerns about a child, a referral for intervention or support can be made without discussion/consent of parents if this is in the best interests of the child.

9. Support for friends

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health problems it can be challenging for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected. In the case of eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case by case basis what support might be appropriate including one to one and group support. We will involve the pupil who is suffering and their parents and consider what is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told, how they can best support, things they should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset and warning signs that their friend needs help. We will also make information available about where and how to access information and support for themselves and healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

We have a duty of care to support children and will seek advice from medical staff and mental health professionals on the best way to support children.

10. Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders. School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Safeguarding Lead in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will usually only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs. However, in n line with our Safeguarding policy, where we have serious concerns about a child, a referral for intervention or support can be made without discussion/consent of parents if this is in the best interests of the child.

Persistent mental health problems may lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age.

11. Involving parents and carers

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs.

We ask parents to inform us of any mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing, based on a list of risk factors pertaining to the child or family. It is very helpful if

parents and carers can share information with the School so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information will be treated in confidence.

To support parents and carers, we provide information and websites on mental health issues and resilience, which can be accessed on the School website. The information includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves.

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health problems are common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available.

When a concern has been raised, the School will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (In almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified.)
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- Be available for follow up calls.
- Make a record of the meeting.
- Agree a plan including clear next steps.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child.
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided.

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger and children may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves. *The only exception to this would be if we have safeguarding concerns and it is in the child's best interest to proceed before informing the parent(s).*

We give children the option of informing their parents and carers about their mental health needs for themselves or of accompanying and supporting them to do so. We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Our primary concern is the child and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority.