



St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School

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Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

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This policy was written in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and professionals involved in mental health and wellbeing.

Policy Statement

At St Thomas More Primary School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.

We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

Staff are encouraged to use a Trauma Perceptive Practice (TTP) approach to understanding behaviour and supporting emotional wellbeing. Our school promotes the values of TPP – Compassion and Kindness, Hope, Connection and Belonging.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play. We have a Senior Mental health lead who ensures there is a supportive network around vulnerable children.

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings better
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- promote self esteem and ensure children know that they count.
- encourage children to be confident
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Providing opportunities to reflect.
- Access to appropriate support that meets their needs

We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long term difficulties including attachment disorder.

For staff we refer to the NHS 5 steps to mental wellbeing

Research shows there are five simple things we can do as part of daily work or home life to build resilience, boost our wellbeing and lower the risk of developing mental health problems. The simple actions are known internationally as the Five Ways to Wellbeing (these were developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) on behalf of the Foresight Commission in the UK). They have subsequently become the **NHS 5 steps** to mental wellbeing:

The Five Steps: summary

1. Connect: strong relationships with others are an essential part of building resilience and boosting wellbeing

Evidence shows that connecting with others including colleagues, friends, and the wider community promotes wellbeing, and helps build a support network for when times get tough.

Checklist examples:

- Talk to someone – and really listen
- Organise a shared lunch
- Eat lunch with colleagues
- Find ways to collaborate
- Plan a social event at work
- Join in with the children and young people in your school
- Talk or phone instead of emailing

2. Keep Learning: being curious and seeking out new experiences positively stimulates the brain

Setting goals, being open to new ideas and continuing to learn throughout life helps boost wellbeing and build resilience. Learning improves our self-esteem, keeps us connected and involved and helps us adapt to change and find meaning in our lives.

Checklist examples:

- Participate in a course
- Add to your work knowledge
- Organise lunchtime workshops
- Set a goal and work towards achieving it

- Take on a new task or help someone
- Get to know your colleagues more

3. Be Active: being physically active every day is great for our bodies and minds.

As well as improving physical health and fitness, being active can also improve our mood and overall mental wellbeing, and decrease stress, depression and anxiety. These benefits are increased when we get outside.

Checklist examples:

- move or stand more at work – build habits to bring more active movement into workday
- Go for a gentle stroll at lunchtime
- Break up long periods of sitting
- Have walking meetings
- Use the stairs instead of the lift
- Try some stretches

4. Give: giving makes us feel good. Carrying out acts of kindness, whether small or large, can increase happiness, life satisfaction and general sense of wellbeing.

Giving is more than just sharing material things with others. It's about cultivating a spirit of generosity and actively supporting others. The acts of giving, receiving and being aware of acts of kindness, even indirectly, give us a sense of purpose and self-worth.

Checklist examples:

- Compliment someone
- Help a colleague with their work
- Share your ideas or feedback
- Express gratitude - thank someone
- Make someone a cup of tea
- Perform a random act of kindness for a colleague, friend or even a stranger

5. Take Notice: paying more attention to the present moment, to thoughts and feelings and to the world around us can boost our wellbeing.

Using attention to increase awareness, concentration, and focus on the current moment and the task at hand, has been shown to improve wellbeing and mood. These are skills that can give us greater creativity, accuracy, and productivity.

Checklist examples:

- Keep a beautiful object near your desk
- Practise gratitude

- Try mindfulness meditation
- Sit quietly somewhere
- Listen to your favourite music
- Take a break from digital devices
- Single-task – do one thing at a time

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and SEND policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for Behaviour and Anti-bullying and PSHE policies. It should also sit alongside child protection procedures.

Lead Members of Staff

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

- Mary Jo Hall - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer / Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing lead
- Elaine McNally – Deputy designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Kathie Moy - Deputy designated child protection / safeguarding officer and deputy Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing lead
- Several Mental Health 1st Aid practioners

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum (Jigsaw).

Targeted support

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

- Circle time approaches or ‘circle of friends’ activities.
- ‘worry boxes’
- Zones of Regulation Practice
- Learning Mentor support
- Listening Service
- Socially Speaking Intervention

The school will track wellbeing as appropriate.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further support.

Identifying needs and Warning Signs

All staff have a duty to identify difficulties that a pupil may have. Difficulties which may be identified are:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning □ Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstances
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

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 with the designated child protection and safeguarding officer / emotional wellbeing lead as appropriate.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Working with Parents

In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website

- Share and allow parents to access sources of further support
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their child.
- Make our emotional wellbeing and 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.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- The school nurse
- Educational psychology services
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists

Where necessary the school will organise a Team Around the Family (TAF) or Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting to support parents and children.

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 pupils safe.

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 to developing situations with one or more pupils.