

St. Alban's Catholic High School



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Approved by Governing Body on: 25 September 2023

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1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important

At St. Albans, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community; pupils, 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 through their school career/life and some face significant life events. A person's mental health can have an enormous impact on their quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases, poor mental health it is life-limiting.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their pupils 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 pupils wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that they are able to manage times of change and stress, be resilient, are supported to reach their potential and access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that pupils 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 be a school where

- All pupils are valued
- Pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- Pupils 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 including child on child abuse or discrimination

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 prevent mental health problems
- How we identify and support pupils with mental health needs
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent mental health problems getting worse and support pupils
- Key information about some common mental health problems
- Where parents, staff and pupils can get advice and support

3. 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

4. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, be happy and successful and prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses 7 aspects

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

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues and aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of mental health issues.

5. Staff-their 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 pupils 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 a 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 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 (see appendix 1 on risk and protective factors).

Mental Health Lead

- Leads on and works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health
- Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates
- Keeps staff up to date with information about what support is available
- Liaises with the PSHE Coordinator on teaching about mental health
- Is the first point of contact and communicates with mental health services

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 pupils with mental health needs and their families.

Support includes:

- Heads of Year
- Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead
- Student support workers
- SENDCO who helps staff understand their responsibilities to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including pupils whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision.
- Advice from our school nurse
- External agencies eg. Counselling from 4YP

6. Supporting pupils' positive mental health

We believe we have a key role in promoting pupils positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including;

Pupil-led activities

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health
- Peer mediation and Peer mentoring

Transition programmes

- Transition Programme to support new Y7
- Transition programme from Key Stage 3 to 4
- Transition programme from Key Stage 4 and beyond

Class activities

- Praise boxes
- Worry boxes
- Mindfulness sessions for pupils
- Mental health teaching programmes eg based on cognitive behavioural therapy

Whole school

- Wellbeing weeks
- Our form tutors are key to supporting the wellbeing of students, particularly in Year 7, and they stay with the same form group all the way up the school providing a consistent support to them

- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within the school and outside the school

Small group activities

- Nurture groups

We also take opportunities to investigate new evidence-based approaches eg Take Ten

Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing

Through PYF we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help pupils to be more resilient, understand about mental health and help reduce the stigma of mental health problems.

Secondary pupils learn

Key Stage 3

- To manage transition to secondary school
- To recognise their personal strengths and how this affects their self-confidence and self-esteem
- To recognise that the way in which personal qualities, attitudes, skills and achievements are evaluated by others, affects confidence and self-esteem
- To accept helpful feedback or reject unhelpful criticism
- To understand that self-esteem can change with personal circumstances, such as those associated with family and friendships, achievements and employment
- What mental health is and types of mental health problems
- Strategies for promoting and managing mental health positively
- Healthy and unhealthy coping strategies
- To be resilient and manage failure positively
- How to deal with a breakdown in a relationship and the effects of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- About the emotional aspects of relationships
- To recognise bullying and abuse in all its forms (including prejudice-based bullying both in person and online/via text, exploitation and trafficking) and to have the skills and strategies to manage being targeted or witnessing others being targeted
- To reduce and prevent the stigma of mental health

Key Stage 4

- To manage transition to KS4
- Healthy and unhealthy coping strategies
- Strategies for promoting positive mental health and preventing mental health problems
- The cause and symptoms of stress and managing stress, anxiety and depression
- Strategies for managing strong emotions and feelings
- Evaluate the extent to which their self-confidence and self-esteem are affected by the judgments of others
- The impact of separation, divorce and bereavement on individuals and families
- Where to get help and support

7. Identifying, referring and supporting pupils with mental health needs

Our approach is to:

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

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 medical room/school nurse, attendance and sanctions
- Staff report concerns about individual pupils to the Mental Health lead
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- Enabling pupils to raise concerns or self refer-through school nurse, form tutor, class teacher, Head of Year, directly to the Mental Health lead or to any member of staff
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school nurse, form tutor, class teacher, Head of Year or directly to the Mental Health lead.
- The use of “report it sort it”

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors (see Appendix 1), types of mental health needs (see Appendix 2) 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.

These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- Lowering 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 child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency then the school’s procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the student support managers. We then implement our assessment system which is based on levels of need to ensure that pupils get the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

<p style="text-align: center;">Need</p> <p>The level of need is based on discussions at the regular Inclusion meetings/panel with key members of staff</p>	<p>Evidence-based Intervention and Support-the kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and pupils</p> <p><i>For example</i></p>
<p>Highest need</p>	<p>CAMHS-assessment, 1:1 or family support or treatment, consultation with school staff and other agencies</p> <p>Refer to GP</p> <p>External agency support such as 4YP that provides 1:1 support and group work</p> <p>Other interventions eg art therapy</p>
<p>Some need</p>	<p>Access to in school nurture group, family support worker, school nurse, art therapy, educational psychologist, 1:1 intervention, small group intervention, skills for life/wellbeing programmes, circle of friends</p>
<p>Low need</p>	<p>General support</p> <p>Eg school nurse drop in, class teacher/TA, form tutor</p>

Pupils are informed that the mental health Lead is available when a pupil is dissatisfied with the level of care and support.

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.

Support for pupils after inpatient treatment

We recognise that some pupils will need ongoing support.

We have a duty of care to support pupils and will seek advice from medical staff and mental health professionals on the best way to support pupils. We will carry out a risk assessment and produce a care plan to support pupils to re-integrate successfully back to school.

When a child leaves an inpatient provision and is transitioning back to school we discuss what needs to happen so the transition is smooth and positive

8. 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.

We have access to a range of specialist services and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the pupils' Individual Care Plan.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will 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.

Specialist Service	Referral process
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Accessed through school, GP or self-referral
School Counsellor	Accessed through student support
Educational Psychologist	Accessed through student support

SEND and mental health

Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils having significantly greater difficulty in learning, than the majority of those of the same age. In some cases the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN)

9. Involving parents and carers

Promoting mental health

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 their children with mental health needs.

On first entry to the school, our parent's meeting includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. 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 (see appendix 1). It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the school so that we can better support their child.

To support parents and carers:

- We provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced leaflets for parents on mental health 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 include the mental health topics that are taught in the PYF curriculum, on the school website
- When children start school, all parents and carers are given our mental health and resilience leaflet that includes information on how parents can support their child's mental health and where to go for help and support.

Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs

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 help 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 most case parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as child protection issues. Children over the age of 16 are entitled to consent to their own treatment.

- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- Be available for follow up calls
- Make a record of the meeting
- Agree an individual mental health care plan together with 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

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger and pupils may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves. We give pupils the option of informing

their parents and carers about their mental health need for themselves or go along with them.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Our primary concern are pupils, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority. We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

10. Involving pupils

Every year we train up a group of pupils as our health champions who lead on whole school campaigns on health and wellbeing. Last year the Champions led a campaign on promoting mental health, reducing stigma and the importance of talking to someone if you feel worried and helped plan ways to reduce stress before exams.

We seek pupil's views about our approach, curriculum and promoting whole school mental health activities. We have a group of mental health champions and their role is to promote positive mental health in school.

We always seek feedback from pupils who have had support to help improve that support and the services they received.

11. Staff wellbeing and staff training

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 pupils and know what to do and where to get help. A number of our teaching and support staff have completed training and are Mental Health First Aiders

Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training and where possible access to supervision from mental health professionals

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, such as yoga, mindfulness, and physical activities.

At St. Alban's Catholic High School staff wellbeing is a priority. We aim to foster a culture where staff can speak openly about their mental health. Our wellbeing lead is Mark Donohue and we also have a number of staff trained as mental health first aiders, who can signpost staff to mental health support.

We have implemented the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter. The charter sets out commitments from the DfE, Ofsted and employers working in education on actions to protect and promote the wellbeing of education staff. We commit to:

- Prioritising staff mental health
- Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing
- Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage
- Establish a clear communications policy
- Give staff a voice in decision making
- Drive down unnecessary workload
- Champion flexible working and diversity

- Create a good behaviour culture
- Support staff to prepare their careers
- Include a sub strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health
- Hold ourselves accountable including by measuring staff wellbeing

Mental Health and wellbeing support is promoted to staff. For example, the education support partnership which can be accessed via 0800 562 561 or Samaritans 116 123.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website. All mental health professionals are given a copy before they begin working with the school as well as external agencies involved in our mental health work.

The policy is monitored at an annual review meeting led by the Mental Health Lead and involves staff with a responsibility for mental health, including specialist services supporting the school and governors.

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Signed P Dance, Chair of Governors.....

Date.....

Appendix 1 Protective and Risk factors (adapted from *Mental Health and Behaviour DfE March 2016*)

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic influences • Specific development delay • Communication difficulties • Physical illness • Academic failure • Low self-esteem • SEND 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being female (in younger children) • Secure attachment experience • Outgoing temperament as an infant • Good communication skills, sociability • Being a planner and having a belief in control • Humour • Problem solving skills and a positive attitude • Experiences of success and achievement • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect
In the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord
In the School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Negative peer influences • Peer pressure • Poor pupil to teacher relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems • A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging

