



St Peter's VA Church of England
Primary School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Written by SLT

Dated September 2025

Review date September 2027

Named Mental Health Lead: Janice
O'Donovan

Named Governor with lead on Mental Health:
Kate Hoskin

At St. Peter's, our school vision of, 'One Family, Aiming High, Learning Together with God,' and our school parable of The Lost Sheep intrinsically linked within this policy. As our vision states, we are one big family and we will ensure we are all safe and cared for. Safeguarding all in our care is of paramount importance and through a range of mechanisms we achieve this at our school. Our relentless dedication to ensuring our children are safe and happy to enjoy God's love, free from abuse, is something we'll hold dear.

1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important.

At St Peter'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 is. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. In 2020, 2 in 10 children aged 5 to 16 have significant mental health needs and these can have an impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases, it is life-limiting.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "In order to help their children 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 children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community. 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 in ensuring 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 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
- Key information about some common mental health problems.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further 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. How the policy was developed and who was consulted

The development of this policy was led by the Mental Health Need, in consultation with children, staff, parents and carers and our school Art therapist, who is part of the organisation SafeSpace. Staff discussed the draft policy at a staff meeting. In developing this policy we have taken account of: Children and Young People's Mental Health: State of the Nation 2016. Education, Education, Education, Mental Health 2016 (secondary). Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England 2015. Preparing to teach about mental health, PSHE Association 2015. Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2014. Supporting children with medical conditions, DfE 2014.

5. Links to other policies

This policy links to our policies on:

Safeguarding, Medical Needs, Anti-Bullying, SEND and Equalities. Links with the School's Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need. At St. Peter's, we understand that all behaviour is a form of communication.

6. 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. Effectively working 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.

7. 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 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 (see appendix 1 on risk and protective factors).

Our Lead for Mental Health and wellbeing:

- works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- leads on PSHCE teaching about mental health.
- provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
- is the first point of contact with mental health services, and makes individual referrals to them.

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.

8. Supporting children' positive mental heath

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children's 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 mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child
- Friendship Squad – a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime.
- Transition programmes
- Transition Programme to secondary schools which includes all Year 6 children having a staff mentor to support a smooth transition to secondary school
- Class activities
- Praise boxes a mechanism where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done and have them celebrated in class
- Worry boxes - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class
- Mental health teaching programmes e.g. based on cognitive behavioural therapy Circle times

- We also have a 10 week wellbeing programme for Year 5, delivered by Leader of Learning for SEMH, as well as weekly circle times to help children learn personal, social and emotional, communication and problem solving skills.
- Whole school Termly Mental Health breakfasts -
- Inclusion Lead for Social, Emotional & Mental Health Needs runs breakfasts for staff to talk about mental health issues and do ongoing promotion
- Wellbeing week – whole school focus on doing things which make us feel good
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Staff mental health leaflet
- Small group activities
- Nurture groups
- Resilience Training
- Talkabout – a small group intervention to improve children’s communication skills around turn taking, dealing with issues, resolving conflict

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.

EYFS & Key Stage 1 children learn:

To recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings.

Simple strategies for managing feelings.

How their behaviour affects other people.

About empathy and understanding other people’s feelings.

To cooperate and problem solve.

To motivate themselves and persevere.

How to calm down.

About change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing toys, pets or friends). Who to go to if they are worried.

About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.

How to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help.

Key Stage 2 children learn:

What positively and negatively affects their mental and emotional health (including the media).

Positive and healthy coping strategies.

About good and not so good feelings.

To describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others.

To recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others.
To recognise that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them.

About resilience.

How to motivate themselves and bounce back if they fail at something.

How to empathise and be supportive of others.

About change, including transitions (between Key Stages and schools), loss, separation, divorce and bereavement.

About the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves.

About the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

9. 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.
- Ensure 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.

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: , SDQ (Social Difficulty Questionnaires), ECM (Every Child Matters file to identify individuals that might need support. Analysing behaviour, exclusions, visits to the medical room/school nurse, attendance and sanctions. Using Leuven scales to identify children in EYFS who need support. Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons. Worry boxes in each class for children to raise concerns which are checked by the Class Teachers and Mental Health Lead (these are anonymous but give an indication of needs in a particular classes regularly). Pupil Progress Review meetings termly, regular meetings for staff to raise concerns, gathering information from a previous school at transfer, parental meetings in EYFS, enabling children to raise concerns

to any member of staff, enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

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 habit; 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-compliance, 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.

Disclosures by children and confidentiality

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. Assessment, Interventions and Support All concerns are reported to the Mental Health Lead and recorded. We then implement our assessment system, which is based on levels of need to ensure that children 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.

Evidence-based Intervention and Support-the kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and children, for example monitoring highest need CAMHS-assessment, 1:1 or family support or treatment, consultation with school staff and other agencies Other External agency support Other interventions e.g. art therapy. If the school, professionals and/or parents conclude that a statutory education, health and care

assessment is required, we refer to the SEND policy and SEN School Information Report. All children needing targeted individualised support will have a Two Page Profile drawn up setting out the needs of the children, how the pupil will be supported, actions to provide that support and any special requirements. Children and parents/carers will be involved in the plan. The plan and interventions are monitored, reviewed and evaluated to assess the impact e.g. through a pre and post SDQ and if needed a different kind of support can be provided. The Care Plan will be overseen by the Mental Health Lead.

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 where appropriate. We will carry out a risk assessment and produce an Individual Care Plan to support children to re-integrate successfully back to school if they have had external medical interventions. When a child leaves an inpatient provision and is transitioning back to school, we discuss what needs to happen so the transition will be smooth and positive.

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

In some cases 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 childrens' Two Page Profile.. 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. Main Specialist Service Referral process Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Accessed through school, GP or self-referral Educational Psychologist Accessed through the Mental Health Lead. In some cases the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN).

11. 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 children who do have mental health needs.

On initial entry to the School, our parent's meeting will include a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We will 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.

We provide information, resources and links to websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes, 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 PSHCE curriculum section, on the School website

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).

12. Supporting and training staff

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. Our Mental Health Lead is a qualified 'mental health first aider' and will conduct training with staff. 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 celebrating Time to Talk Day.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website and hard copies are available to parents and carers from the school office. All mental health professionals will be given a copy before they begin working with the school as well as external agencies involved in our mental health work. The policy is reviewed annually.

