



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Saffron Walden

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

No. STM-014

Unique Policy Reference No	STM-014
Approved by (inc date)	<i>Governing Body</i>
Date Version Approved	<i>06 October 2025</i>
Date next due for review	<i>September 2026</i>
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Accountable Director (Relevant ED)	<i>Governing Body</i>

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

1. POLICY STATEMENT AND INTRODUCTION

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, inspired by Gospel teaching and our School Mission Statement: *Learning to Love, Loving to Learn, through Jesus*. Our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued in line with our faith and belief of the promotion and protection of human dignity.

Staff 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. These values stem from the Catholic virtues we promote in our interactions with pupils, staff and members of the school community.

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, naming them and understanding the thoughts and experiences linked to these.
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries, knowing the network around them to help them feel safe.
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they are individual, important and loved by God.
- encourage children to be confident and articulate, particularly of their needs.
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks and challenges.
- provide staff with the support and resources they need to talk comfortably with a trusted colleague, school chaplain or know where they can be signposted to access further support.
- enable a connection with God through prayer and worship as well as moments of peace and quiet reflection. This is available for both staff and pupils. It is also accessible throughout the school year to wider members of our community including parents and Governors.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging through our faith and our understanding of God's love.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making and pupil leadership.
- 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 and the spaces and resources to do so.
- Access to appropriate support that meets a range of needs including access to chaplaincy, Educational Psychologists, counsellors, School Nurse, wellbeing services, SEND inclusion team, etc.
- Actively discussing and teaching about mental health including displaying support helpline numbers, celebrating Mental Health Day, raising money for charities etc.

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.

2. STAFF WELLBEING

It is essential that staff are enabled and supported in their own wellbeing in order for them to support the pupils and families in their care. It is acknowledged that teaching is a profession where work-life balance is important and where staff may be exposed to situations that can have an impact on their own wellbeing. In addition to this, whilst staff are working in a professional capacity, they too may be experiencing challenges in their own personal lives. As a school, we have a duty to care for our staff to allow them to work effectively and happily, and to support wherever possible them as members of our school community.

For staff we refer to the NHS 5 steps to mental wellbeing, alongside MIND charities, NHS Mental Health Support, and where appropriate Occupational Health. Reminders for these services are provided throughout the school year and, where specific support is deemed important for the needs of an individual. We also signpost staff to chaplaincy or Educational Psychologist support.

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. Giving is how we are taught to share God's love with others.

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
- Keep a beautiful object near your desk
- 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

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.

We offer the following to support our staff's positive mental health:

- A dedicated staff room for relaxation and healthy eating. We share break and lunch together as a staff.
- A dedicated staff study room. The Sunshine Room is also often available for a quieter working environment.
- Opportunities to work from home for dedicated purposes.
- We organise a number of social events throughout the year for staff to participate in.
- We often provide lunch or snacks on INSET dates to promote good relationships and give time for staff to socialise
- SLT have an open door policy for all staff.
- SLT proactively support staff who are experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Regular wellbeing INSETs.
- Take staff mental wellbeing into consideration when deploying staff to various roles around school and policy development.
- Reasonable adjustments for staff with recognised mental health issues.
- Sign post staff to appropriate support mechanisms such as local clergy, charities, GP, and Relate.
- Staff meetings are held weekly where individuals can feel supported.
- A supportive sickness absence policy.
- Celebrate staff special occasions.
- Recognise individual staff strengths and offer CPD opportunities and career development whenever possible.
- Thanks and praise; feedback from observations; learning walks
- Staff mental health champion – this is a member of the SLT with an open door policy who is a point of contact for all staff.
- Encourage and support staff to put into perspective the everyday challenges of working with pupils.
- Help staff to set professional boundaries for themselves such as not sharing their telephone numbers; not texting parents with personal phones and not having their phones out during curriculum time.
- Remind staff not to share personal details such as phone numbers and to be mindful of interacting with parents on social media. Staff with children in school should be aware and take measures to protect themselves. For example set high privacy settings on Facebook.
- Flexible working applications are always seriously considered within the confines of what is best for the pupils.

3. PUPIL WELLBEING

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) for Years 1-6. In Early Years it is taught through the framework, particularly physical and personal social and emotional development and communication and language (the prime areas).

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
- Chaplaincy support
- School nurse
- Referrals to CAMHS or Chums
- Educational psychologist
- School counsellor
- Small group work with practitioner from MIND - part of the Mental Health Support Team for Schools in Uttlesford.

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. This is available on our website and through communication with parents, as well as posters.

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 / Mental Health Champion 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
- Bedwetting or accidents

4. 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.
- Be available to talk to and support parents, when appropriate, with their wellbeing e.g. through signposting, open communication and genuine concern and care. Parents should be supported to be able to support their own children through looking after themselves and getting the help they may need.

Working with other agencies and partners:

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

5. TRAINING

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues in themselves and others 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.

As overseers of the school's policies, governors will attend any available training to help support and develop their understanding of pupil and staff wellbeing, in order to further support the school in its application of this policy and approach.

6. SCOPE

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Managing Staff Absence 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. The policy incorporates our Equality Statement, under the Equalities Act (2010). It links to a series of other policies, including: RE.

Lead Members of Staff:

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

- Mrs A Stockdale – Designated Lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection / RE Lead / Attendance Champion
- Mrs N Hall – Deputy Designated Lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection / RE Lead / RSE Lead
- Mrs K Moy - Deputy Designated Lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection / SENDCo
- Mrs M Sherwin – Mental Health Champion
- Mrs M Lowe – PSHE Lead

