


# St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy



Love One Another as I have Loved you

John 13:34

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Policy Date:	November 2021		
Policy Review Date:	November 2021	Charlotte Crosse	
Ratified by Governing Body:			
Bernard Attard- Chair of Governors			

## **Policy Statement**

All children and young people have the right to be educated in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody. All adults have the right to work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody.

In practice, individual children or young people often have needs that cut across all of these areas and their needs may change over time.

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and/or Physical

Mental health can affect any pupil directly or indirectly and the effects can be long or short term. The aim of this policy is to recognise and illustrate how these needs are supported at St Thomas More CVA.

## **Aims & Objectives**

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

We have a supportive and caring ethos which is underpinned by our Catholic values. Our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and their contribution is valued.

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.

Our key objectives are:

1. To have an inclusive whole-school approach to good mental health, evident in every classroom.
2. To assess and identify individual mental health needs within school.
3. To ensure staff are adequately trained and supported in order to support children's mental health and wellbeing.
4. To engage with parents and families to work together where mental health needs affect individual pupils, or where mental health needs are prevalent within the immediate or wider family.
5. To work in partnership with outside agencies to gain the best possible outcomes for our pupils and families.

## **Lead Members of Staff**

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

- Charlotte Crosse- Designated child protection / safeguarding lead
- Alison Slater - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Claire Whitmore - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Dawn Broomhead - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Tess Lambert- Designated child protection / safeguarding officer & Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator
- Tammy Pereira- Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

### Whole School Approach

St Thomas More CVA offers a learning environment that promotes and enhances positive mental health. A consistent approach means that the school environment and school ethos all promote the mental health of the whole school community. This has been created through clear staff roles, specialist training for core staff and raising whole staff awareness and understanding. St Thomas More CVA strives to providing a place where all pupils feel safe, secure and able to achieve and experience success and well-being.

A consistent approach means that the school environment and school ethos all promote the mental health of the whole school community. Healthy relationships underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact. Senior leaders within school drive this agenda, build and sustain staff commitment to it. A mentally healthy environment has:

- A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all
- A commitment to being responsive to children and young people's needs
- Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
- A clear staff structure with responsibility for mental health promotion within school
- The expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's business'.

A mentally healthy environment is a place where children and young people:

- Have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging
- Have opportunities to participate in decision making
- Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed
- Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Have opportunities to reflect
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs
- Have a right to be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for
- Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times

A mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community:

- Is involved in promoting positive mental health
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
- Contributes towards the ethos of the school

A healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health, through the academic curriculum and extended and individual curricula. We also hold an annual 'Wellbeing Week' for pupils and families which is always held in line with the national children's mental health and wellbeing week, usually in February

Furthermore, a healthy learning environment ensures that children understand their own learning processes through developing their metacognition. The key benefits of metacognition in the classroom are:

- Higher achievement levels for the students.
- Increased ability to learn independently.
- Improved resilience.

November 2021

- It aids disadvantaged students.
- Transferable knowledge.
- Effective for all ages of students.
- Emotional and social growth.

Behaviours for effective learning are promoted within each classroom and support children in understanding how to become resilient and successful learners.

### **Teaching about Mental Health**

At St Thomas More CVA, we are aware that Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs can become acute quickly and can present large barriers to learning. We believe it is our responsibility to educate the 'whole child' to ensure that all needs are met and not just academic learning is catered for.

This means that by adopting a preventative approach through our personal, social, emotional development (PSED) curriculum (as part of our Ten:Ten RSE scheme of work) these SEMH barriers to learning are less likely to occur. The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSED curriculum. However, the specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught. We will also use the Personal Social Health Education Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

Equally, external support can be hard to secure and delayed in their intervention therapies, so we strive to bridge that gap between school curriculum and outside agency professional mental health support, as best we can through experience and sourcing professional advice.

### **Targeted support- Individual Pupil Approach**

Individual approaches at our school can incorporate:

- Pupil or staff champions for vulnerable individuals/groups
- Meet and greet sessions with key staff members each morning
- Daily debriefs at the end of the school day with key staff members
- Use of 'safe-spaces' and 'time-out' cards for individuals in lesson times
- Individual or class worry boxes
- Emotional literacy or mindfulness sessions
- Relaxation and anxiety interventions
- Self-esteem and resilience programs
- Social Communication intervention activities
- PSED class lessons

Needs are assessed primarily through observation in relation to staff's knowledge of age-appropriate emotional development. Very importantly, families play a huge part in us identifying mental health needs through raising their concerns with us and sharing historic/relevant information.

The school will make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing as appropriate including:

- Goodman's strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- The Boxall Profile
- Emotional literacy scales

November 2021

- Leuven Scales
- Mental Toughness questionnaire
- Data on attendance
- Academic and behavioural progress

### Family Engagement- Whole Family Approach

Because There are well documented links between parental mental health problems and mental health problems in childhood, we are keen to promote positive mental health for the whole family.

A mentally healthy environment is a place where parents/carers:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people's mental health
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies
- Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support
- Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with schools
- Have their Opinions sought and valued and responded to
- Have their Strengths and difficulties recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately

Within school, we tailor our communication approaches to meet the needs of different families. A member of our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) can be available to speak with within school hours, and families may have an appointed member of staff that they speak with in order to build a trusting relationship with them. Where needed, we will make home visits. We can communicate over the phone via calls or class dojo messages. We can set up home-school diaries where appropriate. The priority is that families feel comfortable and confident with the form of communication they choose and that all parties converse in non-judgmental dialogue.

Where school intervention is not enough for individual pupils or mental health difficulties are affecting other individuals in the family, we can sign post parents to additional sources of support outside of school. Support may be through local authority or NHS sources, charities, or privately sourced channels. We may be able to facilitate a referral or provide details to enable families to self-refer, depending on the service required. Our SLT will always discuss the individual's or family's needs with the parents prior to sign-posting or referring to other support.

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 PSED lessons and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

November 2021

- Ensure parents are aware of the age-appropriate behaviours for effective learning and report the children's progress against these

### **Working with other agencies and partners**

St Thomas More CVA regularly seeks advice and consults with outside agencies. They may provide informal advice, be able to attend meetings in a consultative capacity prior to official caseload involvement or provide formal advice through thorough assessment of individuals or families' needs post referral. With parental permission, we can transfer information between these services and school directly and together find the best strategies to help pupils and families.

Services that we regularly consult with include:

- The school nurse
- Educational psychology services
- Behaviour support through Oakfield pupil referral unit
- Paediatricians and General Practitioners
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists
- UAVA (United against violence and abuse)

Families will be informed if we intend to contact these agencies. We also sign post to a number of different charities or privately-run services, depending on the individual or diagnosed needs.

We also work closely with Children's Services and will contact them on occasions where pupil needs are great, families need considerable support or contact is being made in line with our school safe-guarding policy. The needs and safety of our pupils is always paramount in these circumstances and as such, parents may not be made aware that contact has been made, in the first instance, with this particular service.

### **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.

### **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 students safe.

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

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.

November 2021

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinators will signpost staff to any free CPD opportunities that can be undertaken voluntarily.

**Read in conjunction with:**

- SEND Policy
- SEND information report
- Restorative Approach, Relationship and Behaviour Management Policy
- Health and Medical Needs Policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Early Help offer