



The Academy at St James

Mental Health and Well-Being Policy

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Approved by Governors May 2021

Review July 2022

Christian beliefs and practices that underpin this policy

Compassion

Compassion is responding to the feelings and actions of others with kindness. Jesus was often “moved with compassion” and acted accordingly. Compassion leads to a desire to do something good for someone else.

“You must love your neighbour as you love yourself.” Luke 10:27b

Interior Posture

Someone who has a strong interior posture makes the right choice simply because it is the right choice. God’s love for us and our love for him helps us to do what is right. We love and serve others, because he first loved us.

“The righteous care about justice for the poor.” Proverbs 29:7

Wisdom

Wisdom is a true understanding of the consequences of our thoughts, words and actions and an awareness of the true value of things. It is rooted in a proper reverence for God, the source of all life and values. Jesus told the parable of the ‘Rich Fool’; true happiness is found with God.

“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.” 1 Kings 4:29

Endurance and Courage

Jesus’ followers are challenged to think of life like a race. However - NOT a short sprint but a marathon! The bible says that we are made stronger for the future every time we endure and refuse to give up.

“You know that many runners take part in a race, but only one of them wins the prize. Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize.” 1 Corinthians 9:24

Policy Statement

Mental health is 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. (World Health Organization)

In addition, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils and staff needing support.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils and staff affected both directly and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing issues.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and any medical plans a child may have.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Members of Staff

All staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils. Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the DSL, Mental Health First Aider or SENDCo in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Child Protection Office staff or the head teacher. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the SENDCo.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs, which indicate a pupil 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 a member of the Safeguarding Team and Mental Health First Aider.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly

- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen, rather than advise, and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and recorded on CPOMs. This record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with a member of the Safeguarding Team, who will offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

If it is necessary for us to pass on our concerns about a pupil then we should discuss with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent, particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague (Safeguarding Team); this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing, as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil. It ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and

discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their child's mental health and wellbeing and pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. We should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputies must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case-by-case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral.
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible, as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

The Equality Act 2010 states that all people, whether children or adults, cannot be discriminated against due to a protected characteristic. These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment or identity
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

- race

- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

As a school, we recognise that these protected characteristics are important. The law states that if a child explores their own feelings and thoughts regarding any of these protected characteristics, we are not obliged to inform parents or carers. Furthermore, the law states that a child exploring their feelings and thoughts related to these characteristics does not constitute a safeguarding risk.

Working in partnership with children, parents and the school's SENDCo, a referral can be made to our school counsellor so that a child is able to explore their own feelings and thoughts with a trained professional in a safe environment.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
 - Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- 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

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in either one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset

- Warning signs that their friend can help with (e.g. signs of relapse)
- Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:
- Where and how to access support for themselves
 - Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
 - Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

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 developing situations with one or more pupils.