

# BETHANY SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

## February 2022

### 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)

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”.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeings>

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim by using a whole school approach, as well as targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. We always seek to encourage family involvement. We use the Bible and our Christian World View as the context for all our approaches.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. We recognise the NHS's statistics that “One in 6 (16%) 5 to 19 year olds had at least one mental disorder when assessed in July 2020” (NHS Digital - Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020 - Published 22 October 2020). By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

### Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and well-being. It is intended as an overview of our whole school approach and is aimed at providing information for parents/pupils/staff/governors and anyone who wants to find out about our approach. It is not intended as an exhaustive staff manual.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need. It should also be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy and Anti Bullying Policy.

The Policy Aims to:

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

### Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the wellbeing of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead** – David Charles  
**Designated Safeguarding Deputy** – Sarah Walker  
**SENDCO** - Anna Daniels  
**Pupil Wellbeing & Pastoral Lead** – Anna Daniels  
**Pupil Wellbeing Mentor** - Sarah Walker  
**Administrator** – Sarah Walker  
**PSHE Lead** – Lisa Nnodim-Raphael  
**Looked After Children Coordinator** – Anna Daniels  
**Online Safety Coordinator** – Sarah Walker  
**Pastoral Care/SMSC Governor** – Pete Jackson

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or well-being of a pupil should speak to the Pupil Wellbeing Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal safeguarding procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated safeguarding lead. 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 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed (including evidence collection) by the Wellbeing Lead. Bethany School can not directly refer to CAMHS but will advise, signpost and liaise with parents/guardians as to how to proceed (usually through their G.P.). Where the best route of referral is through relevant professionals already working with the child then the Wellbeing Lead will also liaise with them. Such services would include an educational psychologist, social worker or the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

### **Individual Healthcare Plans**

Bethany School will set up an individual healthcare plan for a pupil/member of staff who receives a medical diagnosis and medication pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the individual, the parents/guardian and relevant health professionals. This plan will be managed by the school administrator. It can include:

- Details of the condition/medical diagnosis/triggers
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication/administration and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play -monitoring requirements

### **Individual Educational Plans/My Plan/EHCP**

Depending on the specific needs of the child Bethany School will set up/manage an Individual Educational Plan. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents, teachers, SENDCO and any external relevant professionals. This can include:

- Details of the pupil's background and mental health history
- Pupil's strengths and needs
- Strategies to be in place to support the pupil both in and out of the classroom.
- Outcomes/targets

- Access arrangements for exams
- Other professionals working with the pupil
- Funding arrangements

## **Register**

Mental ill health comes under the category of Social, Emotional & Mental Health in the SEND Code of Practice 2015. Therefore any pupil diagnosed with it will be added to our SEND Register and will be monitored, supported and reviewed within our SEND framework, using a graduated response. This will be done in line with our SEND Policy and will be managed by the SENDCO.

## **Teaching about Mental Health**

Positive mental health is intrinsically upheld through Bethany School's whole school promotion of the Christian World View and spiritual well-being, especially in the thinking that:

- all people are valuable and made in God's image. We celebrate with our pupils that they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). This whole school view encourages self worth (for both our bodies and our minds) and the teaching that we are to value, support and positively strengthen each other in our relationships. Children are encouraged throughout the school to be emotionally literate through their relationships with others.
- God has designed us to have responsibilities over his creation and our own actions. This educates the pupils to have autonomy and responsibility.
- God has created an amazing world for us to enjoy. Our pupils are encouraged to engage with nature, sport, and the arts. This is woven through our curriculum, including our family afternoons and our school camp. It encourages personal challenge both in and out of the school environment.

These promoted values naturally provide for our pupils the foundations of resilience and the provision of protective factors to reduce the likelihood of poor mental health or mental ill-health.

In addition to this intrinsic teaching, we also directly teach the pupils about how to promote their own and other's positive mental health - including emotional literacy, risk factors, protective factors and how to build resilience. We take heed of the Health Education principles outlined in the DfE's: Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education Statutory Guidance (2019) when planning lesson content. These topics are covered through the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum and are built on throughout the year groups in an age appropriate manner. Pupils will be educated on developing the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others. Our aim is to teach about mental health and emotional well-being issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

## **Pastoral Care**

At Bethany School we seek to build trusting relationships between the teachers, pupils and families in a nurturing environment. This is aided by small class sizes and the fact that children have greater consistency of teachers throughout their school life. In addition to this nurturing environment we give the pupils the opportunity to receive mentoring through talking to our Pupil Wellbeing Mentor. This provides a safe space where pupils can share their struggles/concerns/disclosures in a non judgemental, neutral environment with a member of the non-teaching staff. This system is designed to provide protective factors

for good mental health and to aid resilience. It also provides a specific pathway for a pupil who wants to make a disclosure.

Where possible we also provide tailored intervention programmes for pupils who have specific anxiety or emotional regulation needs. The content of programmes are formulated with the involvement of the pupil's specific professional (such as CAMHS/Speech and Language Therapy) and/or with parents. Any such programmes are carried out on the basis that our staff are not qualified mental health specialists.

### **Signposting**

We inform staff, pupils and parents about sources of support within school, in the local community and at a national level. We will explain how this can be accessed, and display relevant sources of support in communal areas. We will highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Signposting will be carried out with the aim of ensuring pupils and parents 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 well-being issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with our Pupil wellbeing lead (or the Safeguarding Lead if more appropriate). Warning signs should be considered with the perspective of their context and the developmental age of the child.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or 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
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Displaying negative behaviours (out of character)
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school

- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

### **Risk Factors and Groups**

It is acknowledged that there are risk factors that when present in a young person's life can increase the likelihood of developing mental health conditions.

These risk factors fall into 4 main categories:

- Individual Based
- Family
- School
- Community and Society

At Bethany School we seek to identify pupils who are 'more at risk' and put specific support frameworks in place to monitor, promote protective factors and detect any warning signs as soon as possible. In particular we recognise the following groups in our school community who are likely to need extra support

with nurturing their positive mental health. They are:

- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)
- Children who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Plus (LGBTQ+)
- Children experiencing safeguarding issues, including peer on peer abuse
- Children experiencing family breakdown
- Children experiencing challenges due to cultural background

Please refer to our SEND Policy, SRE Policy, Bullying Policy and Safeguarding Policy for details on identification, monitoring and support frameworks.

Our Looked After Children Coordinator supports the specific needs of our LAC and PLAC pupils, providing a clear pathway for communication between school, families and the Local Authority.

We recognise that the above groups are not the only categories of children who are at risk, and we will work proactively to support any pupil who is identified as being vulnerable.

### **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 held confidentially. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made

- Main points from the conversations
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Pupil Wellbeing Lead who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

### **Confidentiality**

Staff should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for them to pass their concerns about a pupil on, then they should discuss with the child:

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

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

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Pupil Wellbeing Lead. This helps to safeguard staff's own emotional well-being as they are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in the staff member's absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. The staff member should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Staff should be sensitive to a pupil who has 'come out' to them about their sexuality or gender and fears that they will 'out' them to anyone else. Staff are aware that just because a child has trusted them to confide in, they are not therefore consenting to that staff member informing other teachers or their parents/guardians/G.P/outside professionals such as MAST. It will always be the aim of Bethany School to support the pupil in being able to 'come out' to their parents; but parents need to be aware that this may not be possible immediately.

Parents must always be informed by school if a pupil is in danger of self-harming (including but not exclusive to, cutting, burning, bruising, eating disorders or drug/alcohol use).

If a pupil gives staff reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the safeguarding lead/deputy lead must be informed immediately (not the mental health lead).

### **Working with Parents/Guardians**

#### **1. Whole School Approach**

We seek to support parents/guardians to promote their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child. This information will be given through our parents' meetings.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents – published on our website. • Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our Parents'

meetings.

- Inform parents about the mental health lessons their children are learning about in PSHE.

## **2. Targeted Approach**

Where school are concerned about a specific pupil's mental health we will prioritise parent/guardian involvement (see sections above on Managing Disclosures and Confidentiality) and will work with the pupil to facilitate conversation. When informing parents, staff need to be sensitive in their approach. Before disclosing to parents they 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, their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, 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. Staff should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

Staff should aim to highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets where possible to take away, as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news being shared. 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 school 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. It is recommended that each meeting should be finished with agreed next steps and a brief record of the meeting should be kept confidentially.

## **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 by the Pupil Wellbeing Lead, either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with 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 or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (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

### **Staff Support**

As a school, we recognise and take seriously the need to support staff in protecting their own positive mental health. Many of our intrinsic values that benefit our pupil's positive mental health, also are applicable to our staff. We actively foster good working relationships with colleagues and an open door policy for staff to bring any issues/struggles/concerns to the Senior Leadership Team is in operation. Our appraisal system gives staff a valid pathway for discussing progression, struggles and targets.

Our staff are encouraged to support each other in strengthening their faith and staff prayer meetings are a part of the school day.

All staff have open door access to a pastoral care governor (non-staff member) for support when needed.

Where mental distress or ill health is present then school seek to support staff wherever possible, including doctor's appointments and flexible phased returns to work.

Adaptations and flexibility to staff routines/meetings etc are made where possible to aid staff who are struggling with their mental health.

### **Training**

As a school we take seriously the importance of mental health training.

Our Wellbeing Lead makes maximum benefit of externally funded training including that from CAMHS. Further specific training will be considered on a need by needs basis.

General staff training is given as required by the Wellbeing Lead during staff training days and staff meetings.

Bethany school staff attend any general mental health training that is covered by the Christian School's Trust.

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