

St. Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Sunderland

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy 2024



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1.0 Policy statement

At St. Cuthbert's, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open

culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining St. Cuthbert's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

3.0 Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

4.0 Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Pastoral Staff- Mrs Cousins (School Counsellor)/ Mrs Patton (Nurture Group Lead)
- Designated Safeguarding Lead- Mrs Ward
- SENDCO- Mrs Brown
- Mental Health Lead- Mrs Ward
- PSHE Coordinator- Mrs Watkinson

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to Mrs Ward, our Mental Health Lead.

If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures will be followed.

If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

5.0 Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

6.0 Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing> Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

7.0 Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

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

8.0 Sources or support at school and in the local community

School Based Support –

If you are concerned about a child's mental health then the first step would be to share your concerns with the class teacher. Some issues can be easily addressed through day to day pastoral care and our delivery of the PSHE curriculum.

For more complex issues we have the following provision in school:

Nurture Groups

- What is it?- these are small group sessions which are led by pastoral staff and give children a safe space to share worries and concerns. The group also focuses on how to deal with those feelings and give children an opportunity to develop tools to help them express themselves and take charge of their feelings.
- Who is it suitable for?- Any child in school who is in need of smaller group pastoral interaction.
- How is it accessed? – usually children are identified by their class teacher working in partnership with parents.

Sensory Room

- What is it?- this is a dedicated space which is kitted out with a variety of sensory equipment. It provides a calm and safe space to help children regulate their emotions.
- Who is it suitable for?- This room is always available to responsive issues however children may also have a timetabled slot which is written into their care plan.
- How is it accessed?- The sensory room is usually accessed by children who have this written into a care plan again working in partnership with parents.

School Counsellor

- What it is? Mrs Felicity Cousins is our school counsellor and visits school once a week. She works with children on a one to one basis. This can be for a variety of reasons including bereavement/family breakdown/anxiety etc.
- Who it is suitable for- Any child experiencing trauma

- How it is accessed?- Permission is sort from the parent and an initial parent/ counsellor consultation will take place before counselling commences. Children will then receive weekly counselling for as long as this is needed.

Local Support

In Sunderland, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the Children & Young People's Service (CYPS) and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), these providers specialise in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

<https://www.sunderlandcommunitycamhs.nhs.uk>

9.0 Warning Signs

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 alert Mrs Ward or Mrs Brown

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

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| ▪ Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental | ▪ Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather |
| ▪ Changes in eating / sleeping habits | ▪ Secretive behaviour |
| ▪ Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn | ▪ Skipping PE or getting changed secretly |
| ▪ Changes in activity and mood | ▪ Lateness to, or absence from school |
| ▪ Lowering of academic achievement | ▪ Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause |
| ▪ Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide | ▪ An increase in lateness or absenteeism |
| ▪ Abusing drugs or alcohol | |
| ▪ Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope | |

10.0 Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working closely with Sunderland City Council Children's Services, Sunderland Community CAMHS

and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;

- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach;
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, According to the child's needs;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Sunderland Community CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities

available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;

- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

11.0 Managing disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the child's CPOMS file, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Senior Leadership Team (Mrs Ward/Mrs Steele/Mrs Brown)

12.0 Confidentiality

Members of staff will always ensure the child knows that the information has to be passed onto Mrs Ward, Mrs Steele and or Mrs Brown

We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues the child protection procedures should be followed.

13.0 Whole school approach

13.1 Working with parents/carers

When informing parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's CPOMS record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

13.2 Supporting parents/carers

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);

- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by Sunderland community CAMHS or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

14.0 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 to enable them to keep students safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

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 students.

15.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is **June 2026**

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of Mrs Jane Ward- Mental Health Lead

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.