



# Saint Aidan's Church of England High School

## Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

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*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)*

## **1. Our Statement**

At Saint Aidan's, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all staff and students by providing a range of support from universal level support to targeted and specialised individual support.

We aim to develop and deliver practicable procedures that promote positive mental health and wellbeing and that provide appropriate advice, care and support when needed by those suffering with their wellbeing or mental health difficulties.

We also aim to:

- promote self-help and positive wellbeing and mental health
- eliminate prejudice regarding mental health and wellbeing issues
- ensure support is identified for students and staff who need it in a timely manner

## **2. Legal Framework and Supporting Policies**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2002
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Children Act 1989

This policy has been created with regard to the following DfE guidance:

- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2016) 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice: 0 to 25'

This policy is supported by, though not limited to, the following school policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Child Protection Policy
- SEND policy

### 3. Key Staff

Whilst all members of staff have a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their students is supported, the following staff have a specific remit linked with wellbeing and mental health.

**Anthony Lord** – Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead. Responsibility for KS4 pastoral support.

**Kate Bray** – Assistant Headteacher and Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Responsibility for KS3 pastoral support. Senior Mental Health Lead.

**Heads of Year** – Miss Barks, Miss Wood, Miss Butler, Miss Dixon, Miss Wilkinson.

**Faye Nowotarski** – Pastoral Support Manager

**Danielle Keehan** – Attendance Officer

**Diane Cox** – School Chaplain

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the relevant Head of Year or member of SLT responsible for the Key Stage of the student. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm due to mental health, the mental health emergency protocol should be followed and can be found in section 6. If there is a safeguarding concern, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

### 4. What is meant by 'mental health difficulty'?

The term 'mental health' describes 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. A mental health difficulty is one in which a person is distracted or unable to engage with ordinary life due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/or feelings. These problems may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and produce a variety of symptoms and behaviour likely to cause distress and concern.

## 5. Legal Considerations

- Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities. This will include students with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder and disordered eating.
- The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as anti-depressants) or therapy.
- Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against students with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principle of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjustments to enable a student to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and students may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.
- Under the Data Protection Act (DPA), all information regarding students with mental health difficulties is regarded as sensitive and personal information. Any and all information about student mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis, and is aligned with defined procedures on sharing of information about students.
- Duty of Care - All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our students, staff and visitors. If a school knows (or should know) that a student is experiencing mental health difficulties, the student should be advised to seek appropriate help and reasonable measures to support them need to be in place. This is particularly important in regard to passing on personal information where mental health difficulties occur.

## 6. Mental Health Emergencies or Crisis'

A Mental Health Emergency or Crisis is defined as: 'A mental health crisis often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-to-day life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

There may be instances where a student's behaviour and mental state are concerning and may lead to immediate danger through harm to themselves or others. The following situations or symptoms classify as a mental health emergency:

- self-harm
- suicidal ideation
- hearing voices
- psychosis: experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions.
- extreme emotional distress

If a student presents with any of the above problems, relevant staff will ensure the pupil, fellow students, and staff members are safe. If the student requires being sent home or is advised to go to A&E, this will be directed by senior pastoral support staff. Parents will be informed.

## **7. Warning Signs**

Students who are showing signs of mental distress do not always express problems directly or ask for help, even where there are clear signs that they are having difficulties and could be due to a number of reasons. Students may still feel stigma around mental health problems, or may be concerned about the consequences of telling someone. They may be unaware that they have a problem, or be aware but feel that they have to cope with it on their own.

Adolescence can be a difficult developmental time and this period of change can result in the gradual onset of mental illness. It is important that warning signs are recognised and an appropriate, supportive response is put in place as soon as possible. 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 relevant pastoral support staff.

Possible warning signs include:

- The student has told you there is a problem, for example, they have been feeling low or anxious recently.
- Significant changes in the student's appearance, for example: weight loss/gain, decline in personal hygiene, noticeable signs of self-harm.
- Changes in mood, for example: mood is very up and down, miserable, tired, withdrawn.
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Changes in eating patterns or sleeping habits.
- Concerns expressed from friends, family, other staff members.

- Changes in behaviour, academic achievement, extracurricular activity engagement, or among peers. For example, doing too much work, not socialising as much as usual, withdrawn, not attending school, being late or, failure to meet deadlines.
- Increased isolation from friends, family.
- 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.
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

## **8. Internal and External Support**

### **Referrals**

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Provision Map outlines how we anticipate supporting student's wellbeing from universal service level up to individual, targeted support.

Referrals within school should be made to one of the pastoral support team (including Heads of Year). Referrals to outside agencies will, primarily, be made by Faye Nowotarski, Kate Bray or Anthony Lord.

We also have an email system whereby students can email wellbeing@st-aidans.lancs.sch.uk if they would like a conversation with someone in school or support with accessing services to support their wellbeing. This is monitored by staff in school on a regular basis but is not a 24/7 service.

### **Interventions**

The following are examples of interventions that we may use with students in order to support mental health difficulties.

- 1:1 time with our pastoral support workers
- time out card
- referral to SHINE team
- leaving class early
- quiet space
- group work
- use of Student Support Centre

## **External Support & Signposting**

Our Wellbeing Provision Map includes a directory of useful agencies, charities and groups that provide support for mental health and wellbeing.

You may also wish to speak to a GP regarding mental health difficulties and concerns.

In an emergency, you may need to attend A&E or can contact the CASHER team on

Around school, we may display information about sources of support. You can also use the 'Wellbeing and Mental Health Support' area of our website for further information regarding support.

## **9. Supporting Parents and Staff**

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 go 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.

Parents and staff members may also struggle with their mental health. Caregiving and teaching can both be emotionally demanding jobs and it is important to ensure that care is taken around personal wellbeing. Many of the resources available on our website and in our Wellbeing Provision Map may also be of use to parents and staff.

If a parent feels they need additional support, such as with housing or finance, we may be able to access the support of services such as the Children and Family Wellbeing Service by completing an Early Help Assessment.

If staff feel they need additional support they can approach their line manager or access the Employee Assistance Programme that is available (see Kate Bray for further information).

## 10. Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE (Personal Development) curriculum and via our Personal Development Days.

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

We follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Mental health will also be thematically addressed in other subjects too and through our whole school and year group worship assemblies.

## 11. Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose mental health concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, therefore, all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

How to respond to a Mental Health Disclosure:

- If a student 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.
- Try to be sympathetic and understanding, and remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender or any physical or sensory impairment or condition that they might have.
- Be prepared to listen and give the student some time if you can. You can simply ask the student how they are as this may provide them with an opportunity to discuss their concerns with you.
- Ensure that students are aware that you will need to pass the information on to another member of staff as a result of the school's responsibility to their safety and duty of care. Try to be clear about what you will communicate and answer any questions the student might have about information sharing.
- The mental health disclosure should be communicated as soon as possible to one of our Pastoral Support Team. If the disclosure relates to a safeguarding concern this should be shared with Anthony Lord (in accordance with the safeguarding procedures)



- Staff should be very clear about boundaries in the instance of a serious threat by a student to harm themselves. Staff responsibility to the student in a crisis is limited to listening, being supportive, and passing the information on to Faye Nowotarski, Kate Bray or Anthony Lord. Under no circumstances should a member of staff who is not professionally qualified attempt to counsel the student.

## Confidentiality

- We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:
  - 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 student 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 (this is anything linked to a safeguarding issue) advice.
  - All disclosures should be recorded and passed to Anthony Lord.
  - Parents will be informed if it is deemed necessary, this will almost certainly be the case for students in Key Stage 3 depending on the kind of disclosure and may also be the case for students in Key Stage 4.
  - Information may be shared on our school Synergy system and shared with relevant staff. This will only be staff who will need to know in order to best support the student.

## 12. Training

All staff receive safeguarding training yearly and responding to mental health concerns will form part of this training.

Kate Bray is the school's Mental Health Senior Lead and has received suitable training for this role.

Heads of Year and pastoral support staff receive regular training and updates regarding services, referrals and supporting young people with their mental health and wellbeing.

Staff within the pastoral support team have completed training such as Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health Awareness in Schools and Bereavement Training.