Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Date of last review	November 2023	Review period	Every two years
Date of next review	November 2025	Owner	Deputy CSEL/Curriculum and Standards
Type of policy	School	Board approval	November 2023

Summary of changes	Date
Change of personel – removal of staff who have left and replaced by job roles.	CG/TC 17.11.23

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken"

God has great compassion for those who suffer. While it may not always be apparent in the midst of our difficulties, we remember the Lord is near. We can look to Him for peace, healing and comfort.

Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is at the heart of our school's Planning, Policies, Practice and Ethos. As a Rights Respecting School we not only teach about children's rights but also model rights and respect in all relationships. This policy is underpinned by:

Article 3: Everyone who works with children should always do what is best for each child
Article 24: Every child has the right to the best possible health.
Article 29: The right to become the best that you can be.
Article 31: Every child has the right to play and rest.

Definition

Mental health is "the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of wellbeing and an underlying belief in our and others dignity and worth. It is influenced by our experience and our genetic inheritance." (World Health Organisation)

Mental health is how we feel, how we think and how we behave. It is about:
- Being able to form and maintain relationships with others
- Being adaptable to change and other people's expectations
- Being able to have fun
- Being able to cope and manage different emotions
- Being able to develop a sense of right and wrong
- Being able to develop the resilience to manage ordinary setbacks.

In child-friendly language:
- **We all have mental health**. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- **We all have small feelings every day**: These sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.

The mental health of children, adults in school, parents, carers and the wider whole school community will impact on all areas of development, learning, achievement and experiences.
- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 1-15 years old, have a clinically recognisable mental disorder in any one year.
- 1 in 4 adults will experience mental health difficulties; at least half of these difficulties can be traced back to childhood.

At Holy Cross Catholic Primary School we recognise the importance of providing an environment and a curriculum that promotes and enhances positive mental health. This policy outlines how we do this.

A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise. This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

Promoting mental health and wellbeing within our curriculum

- **Our faith** - As a Catholic school our value system is based on the Gospel virtues. Christ's statement from the Gospel of St. John defines the ethos of the school:
  Love one another as I have loved you, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.   John 15.

  Our Mission Statement *'We share in Christ's life so He can guide our thoughts, words and actions',* is realised to the extent that each member of the school community is effective in living out this Gospel statement for the glory of God and for the good of the whole community. The manner in which it is realised is critical- the ideal being that all relationships in the school should be characterised by consideration, fairness, kindness, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation. Through daily Christian meditation we allow our children to recognise the importance of being still and pay gratitude through reflection and prayer. Each classroom also has a prayer focus table with a worry box on which children can place any worries they might have.

- **Online Safety**- We teach all children how to be safe online and what to do if they see/hear anything that scares, worries or makes them feel uncomfortable. We follow the 'Digital Literacy' lesson plans in order to ensure all children understand how to be safe online. We have Online Safety Ambassadors who report to the Online Safety lead about any current issues so that the right support and advice can be given. Research shows that the use of social media can lead to numerous mental health difficulties such as cyberbullying, anxiety, depression and FoMO (fear of missing out). The Royal Society for Public Health created this video to show the impact of the use of social media- *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElffOUB3TZ4*

- **Rights of the child**- We are a rights respecting school where we teach children about the rights they were born with, inline with UNICEF. Children understand they have the right to be heard (Article 12) and the right to express their thoughts (Article 13). Our rights respecting steering group actively encourage children to know about their rights and ensure all their rights are respected.

- **Playground/Lunchtime-** In the EY and KS1 playground we have Buddies and in the KS2 playground we have Peer Mentors. It is their responsibility to look out for children at playtime or lunchtime who are by themselves, appear to be sad or have fallen over. The children are trained by a Teaching Assistant so that they know how to identify children who may need their help and what to do.

- **Wellbeing lessons**- We use a variety of different resources to teach children about mental health and wellbeing such as Mentally Healthy Schools, Ten:Ten Resources, Character Education, Anna Freud Foundation, Mind Foundation. We use these resources to support our whole school and key stage assemblies, as well as stand alone lessons when/if the need arises.

- **Transition**- In the summer term all classes take part in a 'Handover Day' where they meet their new class teacher and new classroom. This day enables children to reduce any anxieties or worries they might have about change and allows children to visualise and prepare for the next academic year. We also have a transition progamme in place for our Year 6 pupils to support a smooth transition to secondary school.

- **Mental Health Ambassadors**- We have a group of children from Year 5 and 6 who act as the Mental Health Ambassasdors for the school. These children have been introduced to the whole school and are there to promote postivie mental health and encourage other children to talk about their 'small feelings'. On a Friday lunchtime, the Mental Health Ambassadors run a lunchtime club called 'Healthy minds' where children from all classes can come along and talk about any worries/anxieties they may have so they can be given strategies to deal with this. The Mental Health Ambassadors are trained and led by the Head of School.

- **Small Groups**- A group called Rainbows is run once a week for any children that have experienced loss in their life. Social groups are also run in individual classes that need it and focus on improving children's communication skills around turn taking, dealing with issues and resolving conflicts.

- **Safeguarding newsletter for parents**- Each month a newsletter is sent home to parents with a safeguarding focus to communicate current research and statistics and to give parents ideas and strategies to better support their child knowing how to be safe, both physically and mentally.

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School 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. Healthy relationships underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact.

A mentally healthy environment is where:

- **All children** have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging, participate in decision-making, celebrate academic and non-academic achievements, are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times.

- **All staff** have their individual needs recognised and responded to, have a range of strategies that support their mental health, have a recognition of their work-life balance, feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes.

- **All parents/carers** are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agenices, are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed and are signposted to appropriate agencies for support.

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, Miss Cotter is the Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School. Miss Cotter is the Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL)

Responsibilities include:

- Ensure that all school staff are made aware of this policy

- Manage the implementation and review of this policy

- Attending training in regards to different areas of mental health

- Organising staff training about recognising and responding to mental health issues

- Support staff in the identification of pupils who may be experiencing mental health issues and provide strategies to better support them

- Ensure all parents/ carers know who they can talk to if they have a concern about their child's mental health

- Work closely with the Assitant Principal i/c of Inclusion, to ensure all children with special educational needs are supported to meet their own specific needs

- Attend DSL updates and work closely with the Lead DSL, to share concerns or referals for any specific children.

Warning signs

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 Head of School or the Executive Principal, our Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits

- Increased isolation from friends, becoming socially withdrawn

- Changes in activity and mood

- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope

- Secretive behaviour

- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

- Change in attitude or behaviour- aggressive or disruptive

Managing disclosures

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-judemental. Staff should listen, rather than advise. This information should be shared with the mental health and wellbeing lead, who will offer support and advice about next steps.

Appendix A

Tips for a good nights sleep

Parents know first-hand the impact a poor night's sleep has on child. Lack of sleep can contribute to crankiness, problems with attention and learning, behaviour issues, and even health problems such as obesity. Though the reasons for poor sleep vary, many parents worry that media and technology interfere with bedtime routines and sleep. Studies on how media use affects children's sleep aren't conclusive. But they do highlight certain behaviours that are associated with poor sleep. We've put together a list of tips for ways your family might manage technology use to help your child/children (and you!) sleep better. We hope you find something that works for you.

Encourage physical activity instead of screen time after school. After a long day at school, many children just want to plop down in front of a computer or TV and veg out. Although children definitely deserve a break, studies show that increasing physical activity during the day can lead to better sleep.

Keep devices off the bed. It's possible that the blue light emitted from laptops, tablets, and smartphones interrupts sleep patterns. Set up other comfy spots in the living room or on the bedroom floor for tweens and teens to do computer work or just enjoy their screen time.

Try white-noise apps to calm babies and toddlers. With bedtimes for young children starting as early as 6:30 or 7 p.m., you may find it hard to provide a quiet environment for sleeping babies. Apps such as *White Noise* or *White Noise Baby* can help soothe little ones to sleep while the rest of the family carries on with regular evening activities.

Limit young children's exposure to violent content. Especially for children under 8, seeing violence in videos, on TV shows, in video games, and in movies can directly affect quality sleep. Exposure to media violence can increase children's anxiety and lead to nightmares that interrupt the sleep cycle.

Keep TVs out of the bedroom. The connection between bedroom TV and poor sleep is well established. Children don't sleep as well or as long with a TV present.

Make the bedroom a "no-connection" zone. The growing trend of sleep-texting is a disturbing enough reason to play it safe. Confine online activity to common areas such as the dining room or living room and have children charge their phones in another room at night.

Minimise screen time right before bed. Try to establish the hour or so before bed as a screen-free time for children to wind down. A calming routine such as a bath followed by quiet activities

or reading will help young children make the transition more easily. Getting teens to "unplug" before bed will help them disconnect from the excitement and drama happening online.

Introduce your children to meditation or calming apps. Meditation apps can be a quieting addition to children's bedtime routines. *Stop, Breathe & Think* (iOS, free) offers 15 guided meditations that encourage children to take stock of their mental and emotional states.

Set up a phone/iPod charging station in the family room. Some studies suggest that simply sleeping near small devices such as phones is associated with poorer sleep. With notifications and texts coming in at all hours, tweens' and teens' sleep will get fewer interruptions if they leave their phones in the living room or kitchen for the night.

Model healthy sleep habits. No matter which ground rules and routines you put in place for your family, it will be a hard sell if you don't practice what you preach. Young children emulate their parents, and tweens and teens will question your rules if you don't follow them yourself.