

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Key people / dates

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) team	Janet McKinlay
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Clare Cook
Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health Lead	Tarranie Woolley
Deputy Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health Lead	Leanne Quilliam
Mental Health Governor link governor	Darren Preston
Date this policy was created and by whom	September 2024 Tarranie Woolley
Date this policy was reviewed and by whom	October 2025 Tarranie Woolley
Date of next review and by whom	September 2026 Tarranie Woolley

Policy Statement

At St Mary's Primary School, we aim to promote positive social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing for every member of our staff and student body. We recognise that staff are our most important resource and we seek to value our staff through personal and professional support, involvement in school decisions and access to professional development. Cheshire East as an employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees as far as reasonably practicable. It is also required to have in place measures to mitigate as far as practicable factors that could harm employees' physical and mental wellbeing, which includes work-related stress. This duty extends only to those factors which are work-related and within the school's control. We pursue this aim using whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health and both short and long-term social and emotional difficulties; including those caused by stress, anxiety, bereavement, separation and loss. Targeted support is offered through the school's varied provision; which offers a wide range of group and 1 to 1 interventions, tailored to the identified needs of the children within the current cohort that encompasses different methods including the practice of mindfulness and our school therapy dog, Charlie.

This policy accepts the Health and Safety Executive definition of work-related stress as "the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". There is an important distinction between 'reasonable pressures' which stimulate and motivate and 'stress' where an individual feels they are unable to cope with excessive pressures or demands placed upon them.

This policy recognises that there are many sources of work related stress and that stress can result from the actions or behaviours of managers, employees or students. We are committed to making sure that this Staff Wellbeing Policy is implemented so that each individual is able to cope successfully with the demands in their lives, whatever the cause of stress within a “no-blame” environment. The purpose of this policy is to maintain a school ethos which supports staff health and wellbeing by making sure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently. This policy applies to all employees working in St Mary’s. The School’s performance on wellbeing and stress management will be assessed in the context of the HSE Management Standards.

Scope

This policy describes the school’s approach to promoting positive staff wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Policy aims

- To develop a healthy, motivated workforce who are able to deliver a high-standard of education to pupils.
- To help ensure that our school promotes the health and wellbeing of all staff members, recognising the impact work can have on employees’ stress levels, mental and physical health.
- Develop and maintain a positive health and safety culture through regular communication and consultation with staff and their trade union representatives on health and safety matters
- To recognise that excessive hours of work can be detrimental to staff health and effectiveness and to agree on flexible working practices where possible without damaging opportunities for pupils to succeed.
- To communicate the importance of a work-life balance to all staff, and to ensure that all policy updates are communicated regularly.
- To encourage staff as individuals to accept responsibility for their own mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.
- To comply with all statutory requirements
- To respond sensitively to external pressures which affect the lives of staff members.
- To provide staff with training to deal positively with stressful incidents and provide them with a sense of confidence to deal with emergencies via training.
- To improve staff development, co-operation and teamwork by creating effective leaders.
- To make staff members aware of the channels which can be used to manage and deal with stress or work-related health and wellbeing issues.

Legislation

Additional frameworks and guidance considered include:

- DfE ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools’ Guidance (2023)
- Education (Health and Wellbeing of Pupils) Bill (expected 2025)
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF 2023–25 refresh)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) – recognising mental health as a safeguarding concern
- Public Sector Equality Duty (updated 2024 guidance)

Pieces of legislation that will be considered when promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, including, but not exclusively:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Working Time regulations
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body:

- Will take overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy while ensuring that staff enjoy a reasonable work-life balance.
- Will adopt the appropriate policies in respect of 'family friendly' employment, including consideration of part-time working, flexible working patterns etc., where this can be implemented without detriment to the operational requirements of the school.
- Actively demonstrate recognition and acceptance of common mental and physical health problems by creating an environment where staff feel comfortable in asking for help.
- Ensure that staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Ensure that all of St Mary's policies are assessed for workload impact
- Act early and provide consistent support
- Ensure the policy is monitored, evaluated and reviewed with the recognised workplace unions on an annual basis, in the light of changing needs and legislative frameworks.

The Headteacher and SLT:

The school will deliver regular wellbeing-focused CPD to develop staff confidence in supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing across the curriculum and wider school life.

- Will support the governing body in ensuring that strategies are implemented to effectively manage and, where necessary, reduce employee stress.
- Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner
- Will ensure that there is clear communication between staff and management with regards to all areas of school life.
- Will create reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss concerns and will enable staff to do so in an environment where stress is not considered a weakness.
- Follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work related stress and other mental-health problems, ensuring that a return-to-work policy is established in workplace that is supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work.
- Will monitor and review any measures that are planned and assess their effectiveness.
- Ensure that all staff have access to regular training sessions on health and wellbeing in schools, including practical sessions to deal with mental, physical and emotional wellbeing issues, and that they are given the appropriate time and resources to undertake this.
- In consultation with the workplace unions, conduct an annual survey of staff, focussed on health and wellbeing, and share and act upon results.

Staff:

- Will act in a manner that respects the health and safety needs of themselves and others whilst in the workplace and ensure that they do not, through their actions or omissions, create unnecessary work for themselves or colleagues
- Will make themselves aware of all the relevant school policies e.g. Capability, Staff attendance, health and safety.
- Seek support or help if required. This includes understanding that a good relationship requires communication from both parties and therefore is important that issues are raised at the earliest possible moment so that effective strategies can be put in place to manage workloads.
- Consider attending training on health and wellbeing issues where they feel that this is appropriate.
- Will share their views, ideas and feelings about all issues concerning the school at formal meetings and informal gatherings.

Support Mechanisms

- The Senior Leadership Team (Headteacher, Deputy Head, and other managers) must encourage the creation and maintenance of an atmosphere where all staff members feel comfortable asking for help or raising concerns. The Senior Leadership Team should be sensitive to any problems which may cause the employee stress-related issues and should act in a professional, fair, consistent and timely manner when a concern arises.
- Where additional, professional advice is required, then Occupational Health Professionals and other avenues should be utilised.

Where necessary, staff should be encouraged to use the free confidential counselling service from Vivup. This is a free platform for employee's which offers a range of services including wellbeing:

<https://vivupbenefits.co.uk/>

- On joining the school and also moving to new roles the following support will also be offered:
 - ◆ All new staff will be given a school orientation and ensure that they receive the staff induction pack/staff handbook
 - ◆ All new staff will be made to feel welcome and given as much support as possible.
 - ◆ There will be reviews for new staff held throughout the first 6 months of employment which will be in line with school policy re induction
 - ◆ Discussion of new roles and expectations alongside support for new role and related tasks which will be in line with school coaching/mentoring policy

Whole-School Wellbeing Culture

In line with our 2025–26 Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, St Mary's embeds wellbeing visibly and actively across school life. Each class holds weekly wellbeing check-ins and emotional literacy sessions, and our wellbeing boards, "Poem of the Week," and pupil-led events (e.g. Hello Yellow, Children's Mental Health Week) promote a culture of belonging and positivity. The DMHL assists SLT in coordinating wellbeing initiatives, ensuring staff and pupils are supported, concerns are identified early, and families are informed of available support.

Arrangements for implementing the Wellbeing Policy

Arrangements for wellbeing and stress prevention through good management practices.

These include the following:

- Recruitment and selection procedures.
- Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure that the 'right' person is recruited for the job.
- Formal accreditation such as workplace charter.
- Agreed knowledge, skills and behaviours for managers, to be cascaded through to all levels of management and supervision.
- Training and Development procedures to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake the tasks/duties required of them.
- Promotion and reward procedures.
- Managing performance procedures
- Capability and absence management & return to work procedures to ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness.
- Suitable adaptations for disability.
- Harassment and anti-bullying procedures.
- Procedures for communicating with employees on the work of the School and issues affecting their work.
- Flexible working arrangements, and contact days with staff on maternity leave.
- The arrangements will be updated and augmented as required and when deemed necessary by the findings of stress risk assessments.

Curriculum

Our bespoke integrated curriculum is structured around the school's Christian ethos and Gospel Values. Through this curriculum and our TenTen programme, children are actively taught:

- to become responsible and valuable members of society
- to develop their social, communication and interaction skills
- to build positive relationships
- to recognise relationships that are potentially damaging
- to use expressive arts to promote their own wellbeing
- to think creatively to solve problems
- to be resilient, resourceful and determined
- to develop independence
- to understand their own emotions and emotional triggers

- how their actions affect others emotionally
- strategies for enhancing their own wellbeing
- to keep themselves safe both physically and emotionally
- to recognise dangers and risks and to make informed decisions to keep themselves safe
- about the link between physical and emotional health
- to be active
- to eat a healthy, balanced diet
- to recognise their own value and believe in themselves

All these areas of learning work together to help the children develop into individuals who realise their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make a contribution to their community. Many of these are also spotlighted in Weekly Planning through our 'Statements to Live By', which are also displayed on the whiteboards as our SMSC for the week.

Wellbeing Moments

Providing 'Weekly Wellbeing Moments' is common practice by all teachers. The aims of these 'moments' are to make everyone smile; to build positive relationships within the class; to build children's feelings of positivity about school; to raise the profile of wellbeing and to encourage the children to be active in their approach to their own emotional health and wellbeing.

Rewards Systems

St Mary's has a whole school reward system of house points. There are four different house teams- Mark (red), John (green), Matthew (blue) and Luke (yellow). House points are awarded and then physically represented using plastic tokens and are collected and displayed visually at the front of the school. Each term, the winning house is announced at a special praise assembly. The winning house at the end of each term gets a treat such as a visit to the ice cream parlour that we set up in school.

We have a weekly Praise assembly on Friday afternoons, where class teachers choose a child to be celebrated for their weekly achievements and also a whole Key Stage has their work celebrated.

At St Mary's, we believe positive relationships and mutual respect are critical to behaviour management. Staff work thoughtfully and consistently with rewards to encourage intrinsic motivation and teamwork, not simply individualistic and extrinsic- that is pupils doing the right thing because that is the expectation in their class and around school and they want to work hard and do well, rather than doing it to 'earn' or 'get' something. However, within this ethos, the following rewards may be used:

- Verbal praise.
- Share desired behaviour with teacher/ headteacher.
- Positive comments to parents- postcard home.
- Praise assembly.
- House points are awarded- can be given by any member of staff for a pupil who is doing well inside or outside of the classroom.
- Golden tickets awarded for a whole class and their behaviour moving around school and at break times etc. These are displayed outside of each classroom.
- Each class may also agree a class reward system- e.g. a bead jar, class Dojo, raffle tickets etc that are age and class appropriate

Voice of the Child

Our school council act as the voice of their class; having been voted into the role by their peers, they are able to bring and suggestions / concerns to their weekly meetings for discussion. The school council also act as student Wellbeing Champions; planning events or initiatives to promote wellbeing across the school; for example, the development of the playground environment and use of coaches at lunchtime to help support children in their play. The children also complete our annual Pupil Survey through which we can identify and common threads of concern amongst the children and address and issues. Targeted support is also offered for any children with more individual concerns / difficulties.

Targeted Approach

How we identify children who would benefit from support

- Class teachers and Teaching assistants can request support for any child by speaking to Miss Woolley or Mrs Quilliam. These requests will then be considered and time built in as appropriate with an individual, bespoke plan devised for the child and their needs.
- Parents are encouraged to share concerns with their child's class teacher, either within an informal chat or a more formal meeting can be arranged if desired.
- Children can approach the Well Being Champions to request support for themselves also.

What targeted support is available?

Various levels of support are available through a range of means. Children can take part in a number of sessions, either within a small group or individually. Although they are continually assessed and redesigned to meet the needs of the pupils, current activities include:

- Variety of Mindfulness activities (e.g. colouring, meditation etc.)
- Accessing nurture room and sensory resources
- Lego and construction Therapy
- Time with Charlie (our therapy dog)
- A variety of clubs including: Chicken Club, Gardening Club, Choir (music therapy)
- Worry Monster time
- Play therapy
- Music therapy
- Access to adults with ELSA/ Mental Health and Wellbeing training
- Equipping the children with skills they can use to recognise when they may require extra help e.g. through RSHE programmes and metacognition
- Library Club
- Chapel
- Reading Shed
- Access to outdoor gym equipment at break and lunchtimes

How we communicate internally and with parents

During weekly staff briefing and SLT meetings, safeguarding, behaviour wellbeing and pastoral issues form the first item of every agenda. Staff are requested to share any appropriate information relating to the safeguarding, behaviour or welfare of students with the teaching team to ensure we can provide a consistent approach and to highlight areas of concern, such as friendship group issues, changes to personal circumstances, etc. which may affect the child's emotional health and wellbeing. The minutes from these meetings are made saved on Staff Share and can be access by any member of staff at any time, including teaching assistants as they are often well-placed to offer additional nurture / support on an informal basis.

Parents are informed by the school of their child joining any nurture intervention and activity as this is seen as part of the school's intervention programme; comparable with a child joining a reading or spelling booster group. The aims and outcomes of the support will be discussed as part of routine parent consultations and if there are significant emotional or mental health concerns about the child, these are discussed with the parents by the class teacher as soon as possible. If any parent has questions or concerns about provision, they are encouraged to speak to the class teacher in the first instance.

How to escalate a concern requiring more specialist intervention

Where a teacher feels that the intervention offered through school is not sufficiently meeting the needs of the child, they will discuss this with the SENCO (Laura Dziemarksi). The SENCO will be able to provide more specialist knowledge/ advice related to a range of emotional and mental health concerns and will facilitate referral to an external agency where appropriate: for example, CAMHS, Visyon, CARITAS and the Emotionally Healthy School Links Team.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed annually alongside the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. Staff and

pupil voice, attendance, and engagement data will be analysed termly. Findings will be reported to SLT and the Wellbeing Governor to evaluate impact and inform improvements.