



ST MARY'S SCHOOL MANSFIELD

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

St. Mary's Primary School Mansfield

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Policy Statement

At our school, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. We utilise the information, advice, tools and resources provided through 'Be You', a national mental health initiative to promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff.

Policy Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting student and staff mental health and wellbeing. This policy has been written based on recommendations located in 'Be You' training and should be read in consultation with our Child Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, Mandatory Reporting Policy, Anti-Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace Policy, Critical Incident Policy, Learning Diversity and Special Needs Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy, Health and Safety Management System and Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Attendance and Unexplained Absences Policy, ICT Policy, Responsible Use of Social Media Policy, and Internet Code of Conduct.

Rationale

At our school, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with these challenges at times. We understand that everyone may need additional emotional support, students and staff alike. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. *We all have a role to play.*

St Mary's school culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students to engage in open dialogue and to have their voice heard.

Policy Aims

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our students and staff.

At our school, we will always:

- Help everyone to understand their emotions and experiences better.
- Ensure our students and staff feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries with person/s of their choosing.
- Help everyone to form and maintain relationships.
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with challenges.

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Promoting our student and staff voice in decision making.
- Celebrating each student for who they are and making everyone feel valued and respected.
- Adapting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to those who need it.

- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

Key Staff Members

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health and safety of students and each other.

However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Officer/s: Sharna Byrne
- Our Learning Diversity Leader: Jane Pimlott
- Our Wellbeing Leader: Sandra O'Brien

If a member of staff has a serious concern about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, staff member or themselves they should speak to our Principal and Assistant Principal: Trish Etccl and Mary Dunstan.

If a child presents a medical emergency then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

Teaching about Mental Health

Our SEL curriculum, 'Respectful Relationships', is implemented to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding students they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training.

We will regularly review our SEL curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they are meeting the aims outlined in this policy.

Support at school and in the local community

We have a range of support available in school for any students or staff:

In school support:

- Marie Hogath: School Counsellor operating Wednesdays weekly. Referrals via School Principal and Learning Diversity Leader.
- SEL curriculum which includes Mindfulness supported by Learning Diversity Leader via Team Teaching periodically throughout the term.
- Feelings journals written/drawn weekly to record reflections on what is going well and what is not going well at school. These journals are reviewed periodically by classroom teacher.
- Learning Support Officers available in class and excursions to support student learning and wellbeing as directed by teaching staff.
- Wellbeing programs including Lunchtime Activities are timetabled and implemented.
- Whole-School Wellbeing days include: Harmony Day, Bullying No Way Day, R U Ok? Day and White Ribbon Day.
- Student Leadership roles – which include Student Wellbeing Leaders.
- Learning Diversity Leader employed to support students directly. Learning Diversity Leader to support students via Personalised Learning and Safety Plans as well as access to suite of support services and resources, including those provided by BeYou (National Mental Health Initiative) and CEM Wellbeing and Learning Diversity Team.
- Program Support Group Meetings – attended by parents, support services, Learning Diversity Leader and students (as agreed) termly.
- School Nurse attending annually to review Foundation Students as well as any other student of concern.
- Child Safety Policy in Child Friendly Language – displayed in each classroom and reviewed termly with students.

- Information and Brochures available in office area, as well as posters displayed around the school at various times throughout the school year.
- We are a registered BeYou School – various members of staff training in Professional Practice.
- Compulsory Mandatory Reporting Training yearly for all staff members.

Support networks available for children in the local community includes:

Mansfield Family Support Services – Referrals can be direct from family or via Teacher/Learning Diversity Leader to Child First 1800 705 211.

Mansfield Psychology – Referrals made direct from family

CAMHS – Referrals...

Centre Against Violence – Referrals

For staff;

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – refer to Principal, Trish Etccl.

Signposting

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

Identifying needs and warning signs

All of our staff are trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems allowing them to offer help and support to those in need.

Warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Principal/Assistant Principal/Designated Safeguarding Officer/Learning Diversity Leader as appropriate.

Observations about concerning behaviour should;

- focus only on what you see and hear, rather than what you think about a child's behaviours, emotions and thoughts.
- take note of when, where and how often the behaviour or emotion is demonstrated.
- highlight what makes the experience better or worse.
- record the length of time the behaviour or emotion occurs for.
- notice what happens before and after the behaviour.
- consult with other relevant staff to consolidate and gather data together.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Stated feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer.
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.

* Noticeable and/or sudden changes in lifestyle habits e.g. Attending school without lunch.

- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

Recognising a critical incident

St Mary's follows the Be You definitions of a 'critical incident':

- Single, time-limited crisis event/s such as a natural disaster, family violence or death of a student, staff member or family member. Any situation faced by an individual that causes them to experience unusually strong reactions that can interfere with their life. It can be overwhelming and have major impact on the ability to cope.

A staff member's role in this process will vary depending on the job role, previous experience and connection with the child, young person and their family or staff member. A collegial approach is important to understand the overall process that enables everyone to get the support they need.

Actions that may result from a critical incident include, but are not limited to:

- Addressing the immediate health, wellbeing and safety of people involved in, or affected by, a critical incident with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues.
- Implementing our Accident and Critical Incident Management response plan and ensuring all required actions are undertaken in a timely and thoughtful manner.
- Communicating the critical incident to appropriate Catholic Education Melbourne bodies and regulatory authorities as per policy requirements.
- Trying to identify those most likely to need help and support (for example, peers, educators and special friends).
- Being flexible with and sensitive to people in need of help.
- Promoting effective and appropriate communication to everyone affected.
- Providing ongoing information regarding possible reactions of children and young people and sources of help for families of those involved.
- Resuming a normal routine as soon as possible, whilst acknowledging the effect of the incident on those involved.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

Managing Disclosures

If a student discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and shared with the appropriate authorities if necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Child Safety Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy.

The disclosure record will contain:

- The date of the disclosure.
- The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.
- The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.

For details refer to our Child Safety and 'PROTECT' policy and procedures.

Confidentiality

No staff member will promise to keep a child's secret. If staff member has concerns they will implement mandatory reporting procedures. When a member of staff shares student

information regarding wellbeing, where possible it will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it's necessary for somebody else to be told.
- When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the student's consent first, such as in the case of students who are at immediate risk. Protecting a student's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

Whole School Approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our students and staff community. This means working with parents and carers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

Working with parents and carers

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Share and facilitate access to further support.
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/ren's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about any mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.

The key principles for successful communication and a solid family partnership include:

- Attending – focussing and concentrating on the family without distractions.
- Active listening – using body language to show you are listening to their story.
- Empathetic responding – trying to mirror what they might be saying or feeling.
- Prompting and exploring – encouraging the family to talk.
- Reflecting back accurately (for example, saying “You say you were...”)
- Questioning – using open-ended questions.
- Pausing – being comfortable with gaps in conversation.
- Summarising – using statements that draw together conversation.
- Enthusing and encouraging – being positive.
- Negotiating – perhaps suggesting alternative views if necessary.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- School nurse.
- Paediatricians.
- CAMHS.
- Counselling services.
- Therapists.
- Family support workers.
- Behavioural support workers.

Supporting Peers

We understand that, when a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide adult support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

Training

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn more about child mental health. Additional training opportunities for staff will be considered throughout the year as appropriate due to developing situations for students. .

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every year to ensure it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.