



Nurture, Prepare, Support, Enable

We ***place our children at the heart of all we do***,
Inspired by the love, life and teachings of Jesus.

“I am the way, the truth and the life.”

(John 14:6)

St Mary's Catholic Primary Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Date of Policy	March 2022
Policy Approved by	Governing Body
Review Date	March 2024



IT'S OK
NOT TO
BE OK

The vision for our school:

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that wellbeing is all about our holistic health, including the physical and emotional. When we have good levels of wellbeing, we feel that life is in balance and that we can generally cope well. We feel motivated and engaged, we are resilient and able to deal effectively with daily troubles, as well as 'bounce back' from life's challenges.

The vision for St Mary's Catholic Primary School is that:

- Our children will be emotionally intelligent and emotionally resilient, equipped with the skills they need to grow and thrive.
- Our children will know when and where to go for support when faced with challenges and will be able to access that support when it is needed.
- Our children will be supported to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.
- Our parents and carers will be given the skills and knowledge to understand and respond to the difficulties children face and we will ensure that information, advice and support is readily available to them.
- Through our culture, our staff team will be supported to protect and improve their own emotional wellbeing and will be equipped to identify and respond to low levels of emotional wellbeing in young people, parents and carers and fellow staff members.

PRINCIPLES

We use the DfE's guidance, *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*, as a guide and work to the their ideals:

1. **Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos.
2. **Identification:** recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible.
3. **Early support:** helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions.
4. **Access to specialist support:** working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

Policy Aims

We provide opportunities that promote positive mental health, through the standard curriculum and extended provision, e.g. Circle Time, differentiated learning activities and visual timetables:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and children.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to children with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst children and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Instil a culture of staff and children's welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school
- Will give schools a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to mental health
- Should underpin all policies and practices currently used in schools
- Will raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own mental health and that of others
- Will help to de-stigmatise mental health
- Will support people and provide opportunities that enable everyone to reach their potential
- Will strengthen relationships and provide opportunities for different ways of working
Will provide foundations for life-long learning
- Will promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community and empower everyone to face life's challenges

THE TIS APPROACH

Our first priority at St Mary's is to care for every child in a secure, friendly environment enabling them to enjoy their time in school and feel confident to learn.

In order to maintain this ethos, the staff work together to support children's emotional and social learning, we maintain this attitude during lesson times, break times and through all activities that take place throughout the day to make sure our children feel secure in school. This method is called the TIS Approach- Trauma Informed Schools.

What is the TIS Approach?

Not all children can put their needs into words every time they experience a different emotion, but the way children behave can tell us a lot about how they are feeling. TIS Approach draws on the latest research – from current neuroscience, recent attachment research, current studies of effective learning and current models of child development – in order to help our school to understand the needs being signalled by children's behaviour. It gives us targeted strategies and activities to help them re-engage with learning and life.

Why do some children need TIS?

Unfortunately, (like all of us at some point in our lives), children may face challenges that knock them off course. What is needed then is understanding and support to get them back on track. Many children will respond to the care, understanding and support given by parents, family, friends and teachers. However, some children need a little bit extra to enable them to:

- Feel good about themselves
- Know that they matter
- Become more resilient and resourceful
- Have a positive place in society
- Form trusting, rewarding relationships
- Be creative
- Be compassionate and empathetic
- Be thoughtful and self-aware
- Be productive
- Be able to overcome difficulties and setbacks

What extra support can St Mary's offer?

Children who need a little bit of extra help are identified through a variety of ways such as our whole-class screening process, by class teachers, or through communication with families or outside agencies. For some children there may be an obvious reason why they need a bit of extra support. This might be bereavement, family break down or an identified medical condition such as ADHD. For others, there can be no obvious trigger to why they are finding some aspects of school and/or home life difficult. Working closely with parents we

carry out full assessments of identified children's social, emotional and behavioural needs. This helps us to build a bespoke TIS Action Plan of activities to support their needs.

What is a TIS Action Plan?

A TIS Action Plan is plan of activities tailored to support a child's identified social and emotional targets. The activities are carried out one-to-one and/or in small groups. They are play and arts-based activities designed to help the child feel better about him/herself; become more resilient and resourceful; form trusting, rewarding relationships; be compassionate and empathetic; and/or be able to overcome difficulties and setbacks. They might include playing in the sand tray, cooking, painting, model making, exploring difficult situations through role-play or comic strips, playing strategy games or projects focusing on the child's own interests – all dependent on the needs of the individual child. We will always work with parents and encourage them to do some of the activities at home if possible. The Action Plans are reviewed regularly so that we can see the progress children have made.

So, who gets TIS?

We try to emphasise to everyone that TIS is just like any other learning intervention. If children struggle with their mental health and any trauma, they get extra support. The TIS practitioner is the EAA (Emotional Available Adult) who will assess individual needs and input. Part of the role of the practitioner is to be available any time through the school day when needed.

Everyone gets class TIS activities (although they might not realise it); most activities are taught within the TIS Approach. But if your child needs regular out of class Thrive/TIS time, one-to-one or in a small group, you will be consulted and asked for your input into their assessment and Action Plan.

What makes St Mary's a TIS school?

At St Mary's we don't consider TIS to be an intervention carried out in the TIS Room for just a few children, we consider it to be a whole-school approach. We all believe that all behaviour is communication and that communication needs to be understood and supported – not "dealt" with. TIS feeds into everything we do; celebration assemblies, getting to know everyone and their families, sharing all achievements – not just academic ones, celebrating our diversity.

Wellbeing:

Wellbeing is a priority in all classes at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. We ensure this is the case by having a Worry Box in every classroom, in which children can post a note if they are upset or worried about something but feel they cannot, or do not want to, approach an adult our TIS practitioner can support the child and the teacher. As well as the RSHE

lessons, the children are encouraged to take part in mindfulness activities. Monthly Newsletter will also be posted on Dojo and paper copies will be available for those parents unable to access electronic devices.

Supporting Peers

When a child is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis when friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the child who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Wellbeing Ambassadors:

At St Mary's we understand the importance of positive mental health for every child. We have 'Wellbeing Ambassadors' who are pupils who have shown a real interest in championing positive mental health and wellbeing. These pupils are keen to share their learning around mental health and advertise the importance of self-care. With an adult leader, our Ambassadors have a responsibility for leading and promoting wellbeing throughout school; they drive the message forward and release the stigma around talking about challenging feelings and encourage their peers to talk. At St Mary's the Wellbeing Ambassadors provide feedback on what's working well and highlight any gaps in whole-school approaches to wellbeing.

They run lunchtime sessions for pupils to drop in and focus on sensory activities and relaxation, mindfulness techniques. These children link with our School Council and discuss how wellbeing can be promoted and how positive relationships can be enhanced throughout the school.

Supporting Parents

At St Mary's 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
- 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.

Our Environment:

A mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people's mental health
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies
- Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support
- Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with schools
- Opinions are sought and valued and responded to
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately
- Is involved in promoting positive mental health
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
- Contributes towards the ethos of the school

Measuring impact:

This policy offers opportunities to measure the impact in a variety of ways, e.g. our school's Mission Statement, Gospel Values and Virtues, staff well-being, feedback from the whole school community, number of external referrals, improved relationships, children and young people feel listened to and valued.

The promotion of positive mental health for children and young people is **everybody's business**.

This policy promotes positive mental health and wellbeing.

This policy must be reviewed every two years

Sarah Shailes
March 2022