

BUNSCOIL GASÚR NA
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Holy Cross Boys' Primary School

Holy Cross Boys' PS

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

November 2023

Policy Statement

At Holy Cross Boys' Primary School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.

We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play.

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings better
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count.
- encourage children to be confident and to use 'TTR' (Think, Think, Respond).
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making,
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities to reflect.
- Access to appropriate support that meets their needs.
- Weekly philosophy lessons, TTR homework diary and weekly philosophical debates.

We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches.
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long term difficulties including attachment disorder.

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Medical policy and our SEN policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for Behaviour and Anti-bullying, and it should also sit alongside child protection procedures.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Mr Curran (Designated child protection officer)
- Mrs Reel (Designated child protection officer & SENCo)

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the lead in the first instance and record their concerns. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated safeguarding lead.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to Mr Curran or Mrs Reel.

Possible warning signs include: (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Noticeable changes in appearance/behaviour/attitude
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Curricular and Extra-Curricular Support

We support the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils through:

- A strong school ethos which empowers tolerance and respect, including respect for difference and diversity
- High profile anti-bullying procedures and policy through corporate posters, assemblies and events
- Establishing clear rules, routines and expectations about behaviour for learning and social cohesion.
- Encouraging positive, caring and constructive relationships
- Having active listeners, including assistants and adults other than school staff to whom a child may turn
- Opportunities for pupil leadership through school council, play leaders, peer mediators and other roles
- An emphasis on praise and reward
- Opportunities for reflection and spiritual development through art, literature and the RE curriculum
- Having nurture groups for general wellbeing as well as specific mental health, such as interventions dealing with anxiety or emotions
- Enhancing school and classroom layout, facilities and resources, such as our sensory room
- Recognising the background of individual pupils and their physical, social and emotional needs
- Consistent support for vulnerable children and those with SEN from trained teams of pastoral and learning support, teaching assistants and other agencies where appropriate.
- A balanced curriculum with opportunities for intellectual, physical and expressive development
- Using a range of teaching styles such as Circle Time appropriate to pupils' age, ability and level of maturity
- Primary 1 pupils receive Massage in Schools programme provided by Ardoyne Shankill Healthy Living Centre.
- Primary 7 pupils receive stress management and breathing techniques from Ardoyne Shankill Healthy Living Centre.

- We have a mental health workshop for our pupils through our extended schools programme.

Staff Support

We support the mental health and wellbeing of all staff through:

- Curricular planning time within the school week
- Whole school training events, including Safeguarding and Action Mental Health
- Access to appropriate external training
- Involving all staff in decision making and proposed change e.g. timing of the school day, frequency of reporting to parents and so on.
- Provision of non-contact time to allow for planning, delivery and evaluation of healthy school activities
- Consultation on training and support needs through regular review
- Work in conjunction with HSENI guidelines on managing work related stress and mental wellbeing
- Work life balance regularly reviewed and acted upon i.e. reduction of unnecessary paperwork, admin tasks
- Monthly staff draw for promotion of health and wellbeing- free prizes
- Staff health and wellbeing day involving local agencies for massages, beauty therapies and stress management techniques
- Encouragement of social events

Working with Parents

In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school jotter app, Facebook & Twitter pages.
- Share and allow parents to access sources of further support e.g. through parent Autism group.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their child.
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PDMU and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- The school nurse
- Educational psychology services
- Behaviour support through Clarawood pupil referral unit
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists

Training

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.

Counselling

NB: Counselling opportunities at HCB are only made available when funds are attained through Outside Agencies including Extended Schools, Happy Healthy Minds etc...

At any time, pupils may need additional emotional support, beyond the normal pastoral care offered by school staff. Pupils experiencing emotional problems may find it difficult to engage with the education process to reach their potential and may appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education.

Counselling is provided in school, but it is independent of the school. The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school-based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, supervision requirements, safeguarding practices and continuous professional development.

What is Counselling?

“... a way of helping young people through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. Young people are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Counselling can help young people to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset therefore increasing their capacity for learning. Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment.”

Who can refer to counselling?

Referrals for counselling sessions may be made by the young person, parents or school personnel.

A parent who wishes to make a referral should seek an appointment through the Key Contact.

Counselling is not compulsory, and a pupil may choose whether or not to attend. School Counselling is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as such.

How do I make a referral?

Each school has a Key Contact for the counselling service (Principal: Mr McArevey & Designated Teachers: Mr Curran and Mrs Reel.