

Mental Health at St David's School

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Introduction

Good mental health and wellbeing is essential for children at school. Mentally healthy pupils are more likely to come to school ready to learn and thus prosper from their educational experience. Children who are mentally healthy are more likely to engage in school activities and develop positive relationships with others and develop effective problem-solving skills for life.

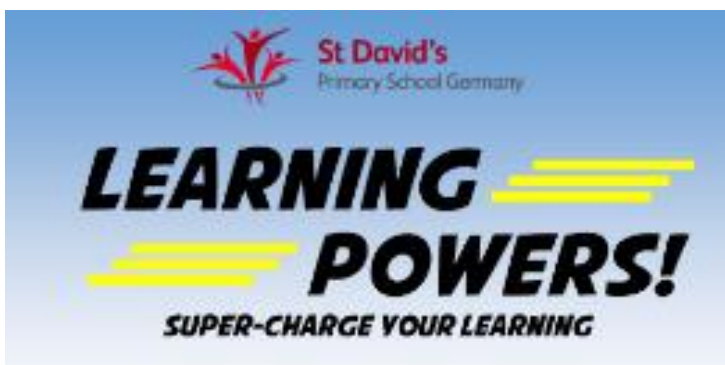
Mental Health refers to one's emotional, psychological and social well being. This is impacted by stressors people face and affects how we think, feel and act. At St David's there are a number of ways how we directly approach the support of Mental Health for our children, in order to help our children get the most out of their education and lives ahead.

Jigsaw Programme



The fundamental approach towards nurturing positive mental health for our children comes through a specific element of the St David's curriculum. This is provided through our Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme, 'Jigsaw.' Within this, all children (FS - Y6) receive a taught lesson each week, centred, primarily, on strengthening emotional literacy and mental health. Lessons are blocked in sequences of key themes, including 'Being Me in My World,' 'Healthy Me' and 'Relationships.' Children work through a journal and each class has a Jigsaw piece character that goes home with a chosen child over the weekend to look after. Special Jigsaw assemblies on the key themes (as well as 'Mindfulness') take place to supplement the offer and strengthen children's aptitude in 'emotional literacy,' promoting healthier mental wellbeing.

School Values and Learning Powers



A key intention behind St David's School's Learning Powers approach is to target the development of children's 'Executive Function Skills.' These include:

- Sustained attention

- Working memory
- Flexibility of thought
- Inhibition
- Organisation/Planning/Initiating

Research shows that people lacking in these areas can be negatively affected in a number of areas, including 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health.' One approach to target improvement in these areas is through a clear metacognitive focus. (Developing one's awareness to their own thought processes, i.e. 'learning to learn.')

This is where Learning Powers helps.

At St David's School, we have an explicitly shared series of Learning Powers that are shared as part of our approach to nurture the pupils' development. These include:

- *Be resilient*
- *Be curious and creative*
- *Review and Reflect*
- *Learn from and teach others*
- *Help yourself*
- *Stay focused*

Each of these are explored as a concept with the children through assemblies and focus within the class environment. A focus Learning Power is chosen each month and shared as a focus for the whole school. (This is also shared with parents to promote the message at home.) Recognition of those demonstrating achievement against the Learning Powers is celebrated within class and across the whole school. This comes both through individual praise and reflection, as well as through more explicit rewards such as 'Star Awards' and Celebratory Friday Phone Calls to parents.

Through this endeavour, our aim is to support the development of our children's Executive Function Skills and thus nurture healthy mental wellbeing for life.

ELSA Trained Professionals



At St David's, there are staff trained in Emotional Literacy, through the ELSA programme. 'ELSAs' are Learning Support assistants or class teachers that are specialists with a wealth of experience of working with children and young people. ELSAs are trained by and work regularly with Educational Psychologists.

ELSA is designed to help with the following:

- Loss and bereavement
- Emotional Literacy
- Self-esteem
- Social Skills
- Friendship issues
- Relationships
- Managing strong feelings
- Anxiety and worries
- Bullying
- Conflict
- Emotional Regulation
- Growth Mindset
- Social and therapeutic stories
- Problem solving

In conjunction with parents and the Educational Psychologist, we are able to set up programmes for individuals or groups of children who we - in partnership - believe could benefit from some extra support, understanding and development in these areas through the programme.

Embedded Focus



There are a number of embedded practices established at the school that are targeted towards (directly and indirectly) supporting the wellbeing of our children. Each of these measures of assistance, pastoral support and curricular enrichment are known to enhance educational experiences of children and are thus their mental health.

- ASD friendly classrooms and practice
- Dyslexia friendly classrooms and practice
- Class charter that children have ownership of
- Forest school provision for all children
- A broad curriculum, where all national curriculum subjects are valued and celebrated during parent 'Launch' and 'Landing Pads.' Forest School for all children. Swimming for all children in KS1 and KS2.
- Weekly singing assemblies, with carefully chosen songs (Singing is known to relieve stress.)
- A full range of extra-curricular clubs, covering a range of physical, musical, artistic, creative, active and intellectual areas

'Kind School' accreditation



St David's School has a 'Kindness School' accreditation. Through this, we work with the 52 Lives Charity project, School of Kindness. This involves regular workshops and projects to help promote understanding and action in the concept of kindness. These activities can take place both internally and across a range of schools within the School of Kindness network.

Through these projects, we examine the impact that kindness has on mental and physical health, the value of self-kindness and how to help us connect with others. The concept also provides specific focus on Children's Mental Health Week.

Pupil Voice



The School Senate provides a very clear pupil voice system, empowering the children to take an active role in the leadership of the school. All children meet each week in their 'Senate Groups,' with the older members (the 'Senate Elders') sharing topics for discussion, which they take forward to a weekly meeting with the Headteacher. This is provided to enable a clear and active system for pupil ownership in the school's development, thus targeting a sense of belonging and self-efficacy amongst all children.

Additional Outside Support Opportunities



Where possible, the school takes opportunities to work with outside specialists to enhance the offer we provide in supporting children's mental health. An example of this is the collaborative work we undertook with a locally based Psychotherapist, who shared workshops with the children on exploring and understanding emotions, together with mindfulness techniques. The areas explored through this have also been shared widely across the school community, including the parent body, in order to share knowledge and strategies and thus widen the impact.

Author and Review Details

Name of Policy Writer/Amendments	Jens Niedzwiedzki SENCO	Notes
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