

Positive Mental Health Policy



Purpose

The **purpose** of this policy is for Knocknacarra National School to establish, promote and maintain the mental health and wellbeing of all staff & pupils through workplace practices and to encourage staff & pupils to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

A consistent approach means that the school environment and school ethos all promote the positive mental health of the whole school community.

Mental health is how we feel, how we think and how we behave.

It is about:

- being able to form and maintain relationships with others
- being adaptable to change and other people's expectations
- being able to have fun
- being open to learning
- being able to develop a sense of right and wrong
- being able to develop the resilience to manage ordinary setbacks.

Goals

Our goal is to build and maintain a learning **environment and culture** that supports positive mental health and wellbeing and prevents discrimination (including bullying and harassment).

A mentally healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health, through the curriculum and other activities: Incredible Years, Golden Rules, Circle Time, Friends for Life, Playworks, SPHE, Stay Safe, Friendship Week, Anti-bullying week, Aistear, Golden Time, Culture's Week, Student Council, Health Promotion Committee, Leadership Team, Mindful Moments, Peace Corner/Wiggle Spaces, differentiated learning activities, individual timetables, movement breaks, parents/carers groups, clubs, teams, etc.

A mentally healthy **environment** has:

- a clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all
- a commitment to being responsive to children and young people's needs
- clearly defined mental health links in school policies
- clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
- strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
- a named lead for mental health promotion with the expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's business'.

A mentally healthy environment is **a place where children and young people:**

- have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging
- have opportunities to participate in decision-making
- have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
- have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed
- have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- have opportunities to reflect

- have access to appropriate support that meets their needs
- have a right to be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for
- are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times.

A mentally healthy environment is **a place where staff:**

- have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way
- have a range of strategies that support their mental health, e.g. a named person to speak to – (see Post of Responsibility Duties), signposting
- have recognition of their work-life balance
- have the mental health and well-being of the whole staff reviewed regularly
- dissemination of information regarding the Carecall service
- feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes
- celebrate and recognise success
- are able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively
- are provided with opportunities for CPD both personally and professionally
- have their unique talents and skills recognised and opportunities are provided for development
- have time to reflect
- can access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional needs in both the short term and the long term.

A mentally healthy environment is **a place where parents/carers:**

- 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.

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

- 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.

Scope

- This policy applies to all employees, pupils, parents/guardians and partners of Knocknacarra National School.

Responsibility

All **employees/pupils/parents and all partners in education** are encouraged to:

- Understand this policy and seek clarification from management where required
- Consider this policy at any time while representing Knocknacarra National School
- Support fellow workers/pupils in their awareness of this policy
- Support and contribute to this school's aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all workers/pupils.

All **employees** have a responsibility to:

- take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, including physical health
- take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the health and safety of other people in the workplace.

In-school **Management** Team has a responsibility to:

- ensure that all workers are made aware of this policy
- actively support and contribute to the implementation of this policy, including its goals
- manage the implementation and review of this policy.

Communication

Knocknacarra National School will ensure that:

- all employees receive a copy of this policy during the induction process
- this policy is easily accessible by all members of the school community
- employees are informed when a particular activity aligns with this policy
- employees are empowered to actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy
- employees are notified of all changes to this policy

Monitoring and review

Knocknacarra National School will review this policy in 2018.

Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

- feedback from teachers, parents, pupils, the Health Promotion Committee and in-school management
- review of the policy by management and Health Promotion Committee to determine if objectives have been met and to identify barriers and enablers to ongoing policy implementation

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra N.S. on December 13th 2016 and subsequently communicated to the school community via the school's website.

Frank Laffey

Chairperson, Board of Management