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HR1 4DR

## ***Supporting our community during Mental Health Awareness Week 2025***

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach Mental Health Awareness Week 2025 (12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May), we reflect on this year's theme: **Community**. This national week, led by the Mental Health Foundation, is dedicated to raising awareness of mental health, breaking down stigma and encouraging conversations that promote wellbeing for all.

The theme of **Community** invites us to consider how the connections we build with others play a vital role in supporting our mental health. A strong, compassionate community can offer a sense of belonging, understanding and encouragement, especially during times of stress or difficulty.

At St Mary's, we are committed to fostering a supportive environment in which every student feels valued and connected. This aligns with our Catholic values, which emphasise compassion, dignity and the importance of nurturing one another.

### **Opening conversations with your child**

Engaging in open dialogues about mental health can be challenging but is crucial: it helps children and young people to understand and manage their emotions, reduces stigma and builds trust. When mental health is discussed openly, children and young people are more likely to recognise when they are struggling and feel safe asking for help. It also promotes resilience, improves relationships and supports overall wellbeing: emotionally, socially and academically.

Here are some approaches to consider:

- **Create a safe space:** Choose a quiet time to talk, ensuring both you and your child are not distracted or stressed.
- **Be an active listener:** Show empathy by listening without judgment, allowing your child to express their feelings freely.
- **Use open-ended questions:** Encourage conversation with questions like, "How have you been feeling lately?" or "Is there something on your mind?"
- **Normalise the discussion:** Share your own experiences with stress or emotions to make the conversation feel more relatable.



## Supporting your child through exam stress

The pressure of exams can be overwhelming for students. To assist them:

- **Establish a routine:** Help your child create a balanced study schedule that includes breaks and leisure activities. These are vital for stress reduction and help our brains to take on more information - and recall it better!
- **Encourage healthy habits:** Ensure they get adequate sleep, eat nutritious meals, and engage in physical activity. Discuss the importance of screen-free time and taking a break from phones before bed to aid sleep.
- **Be present:** Offer emotional support by being available to talk or simply to sit with them during study sessions.
- **Promote relaxation techniques:** Introduce practices like deep breathing, meditation, or mindfulness to manage anxiety.

## Caring for yourself as a parent or carer

Your well-being is equally important. To maintain your mental health:

- **Set boundaries:** Allocate time for yourself, engaging in activities that rejuvenate you.
- **Seek support:** Connect with other parents or support groups to share experiences and advice. If you have concerns about your child, we have many resources and specialist staff members within school.
- **Access resources:** Utilise available services for guidance and assistance when needed.

## Local and national mental health support

There are numerous resources available to support both you and your child:

### Support at St Mary's

- Pastoral support from our Wellbeing Team, Heads of Year and Form Tutors.
- 1:1 strategy-based sessions with the NHS Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST).
- 1:1 counselling sessions.
- Boxing workshops with South Wye Boxing Academy.
- [The School Nursing Service](#) . Parents can also contact them directly on 07813 451034.
- [Phoenix Bereavement Support Service](#)

### Local support in Herefordshire:

- **[Herefordshire CAMHS \(Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services\)](#):** Provides mental health services for children and young people. Contact via the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust website.
- **[Vennture](#):** An independent charity providing help and support to individuals and families facing life's challenges.



- **The Nurture Hub Therapy Service:** A not-for-profit mental health support service offering low-cost counselling and support to families with SEND children that reside in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and surrounding areas.
- **Onside:** A Herefordshire and Worcestershire based charity providing mental health services, including counselling, to children and young people.

#### National support:

- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline:** Offers free, confidential advice for parents concerned about their child's mental health. Call 0808 802 5544 or visit their [website](#).
- **Nip in the Bud:** Provides free mental health resources for parents via their website. Learn about common mental health problems through articles, videos and podcasts.
- **The Mix:** Provides support for young people under 25 through various channels, including phone, webchat, and email. Visit their website for more details.
- **MindEd:** An online resource offering free, simple advice about children and young people's mental health for all adults.
- **Papyrus:** A charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide, offering support and resources and a helpline.
- **Kooth:** Online resources and guidance for children and young people to cope with stress, anxiety and low mood.
- **Alumina Course:** A free online course for 10-17 year olds who are self-harming. Run by counsellors and trained mental health workers.
- **Lumi Nova App:** An NHS app for children aged 7-12 to help manage worry and anxiety.

We encourage you to reach out if you or your child need support. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, and you are not alone.

Let us continue to build a community rooted in care, understanding and support, reflecting the teachings of Christ in our daily lives.

Yours faithfully,

*Mrs Peake and Mrs Wardell*

St Mary's Wellbeing Team



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