

# Ennis National School Wellbeing Policy

## School Policy Document

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### Wellbeing Policy



Policy Updated - October 2025



## Wellbeing Policy

### Introduction

Health is defined by the Department of Health as: everyone achieving his or her potential to enjoy complete physical, mental and social well being (Healthy Ireland, 2013). Positive mental health for children is part of their overall health and is inextricably linked with well-being. It is usually conceptualised as encompassing aspects of emotional (affect/ feeling), psychological (positive functioning), social (relations with others in society), physical (physical health) and spiritual (sense of meaning and purpose in life) well-being (Barry and Friedli, 2008).

### What is mental health?

There is no single accepted definition of 'mental health' but the following definition proposed by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2001, p.1) is frequently used in contemporary literature. Mental Health is: A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community. The Mental Health Foundation (2002) suggests that children who are mentally healthy possess the ability to:

- develop psychologically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, spiritually
- initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships
- use and enjoy solitude
- become aware of others and empathise with them
- play and learn
- develop a sense of right and wrong
- resolve (face) problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them (Alexander, 2002)

### What is wellbeing?

For the purpose of this policy, well-being may be defined as: "the presence of a culture, ethos and environment which promotes dynamic, optimal development and flourishing for all in the school community. It encompasses the domains of relationship, meaning, emotion, motivation, purpose, and achievement. It includes quality teaching and learning for the development of all elements related to healthy living whether cultural, academic, social, emotional, physical or technological with particular focus on resilience and coping"



## Policy Rationale

The core of the policy is that all children should experience wellbeing at school. This policy endeavours to nurture the wellbeing of the children in our care. Supportive and positive environments are created and provide the foundation for children to flourish and thrive. Children feel safe, secure, seen, heard and valued. Within this culture, children can reach their full potential. An effective wellbeing policy is central to this core objective.

## Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote mental health awareness
- promote wellbeing in our school
- build on the existing good practice already in place in our school
- develop a coherent whole school approach to mental health that focuses on children, their parents and teachers and which is integrated into core school structures and practices

## Principles

- A multi-component, preventative, whole school approach to the promotion of well-being, with interventions at both universal and targeted levels, is the priority for Ennis National School.
- A whole school approach to mental health promotion is taken so as to involve students, staff and parents and to ensure sustainability over time.
- This whole school approach involves the school environment and ethos, organisation and management structures, and relationships with parents and the wider community.
- Effective and consistent delivery of SPHE as part of a whole school approach to mental health promotion is central to implementation.
- Our school adopts the NEPS three tiered continuum of support model as a structure for the promotion of well-being and mental health. The continuum can be represented by three levels as follows: (i) School Support for ALL (ii) School Support for SOME (iii) School Support for a FEW
- Our school currently provides a range of evidence based supports and interventions that address the emotional well-being of young people across this continuum of support.

## Policy Content



The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (see Appendix 1) assists schools in ensuring that well-being promotion is embedded within the school's existing practice in the areas of:

- culture and environment
- curriculum (teaching and learning)
- policy and planning
- relationships and partnerships

### Culture and Environment

Ennis National School aims to foster an environment that enhances competence and well-being; one that consciously fosters warm relationships, encourages participation, develops pupil and teacher autonomy and cultivates clarity about boundaries, rules and positive expectations. Ennis National School provides a safe, secure and stimulating environment that encourages and supports pupils, staff and members of the whole school community, both in and out of school. Ennis National School adheres to statutory requirements and is accessible to all pupils. We encourage and promote self-esteem and self-confidence by providing opportunities for all members of the school community to contribute to school life. The school community is encouraged to make healthy choices and to take responsibility for their own health.

Ennis National School continues to provide a climate in which good relationships, respect and consideration for others prosper, and where individuals are encouraged to make a vital contribution through their personal skills and qualities.

### Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

The teaching and learning in Ennis National School aims to be democratic, inclusive, engaging, differentiated, fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunity for success while remaining grounded in our school ethos. We place a deliberate focus on the development of emotional and social competencies through our wellbeing programmes. The SPHE curriculum in Ennis National School strongly supports the social and emotional well-being of our pupils, by placing an emphasis on children's social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and, therefore, learning performance. In line with best practice, the Continuum of Support model delivered within our school offers a flexible framework within which we can address all educational needs, including well-being needs of our pupils. We provide challenges for pupils and staff through a wide range of physical, academic, social and community activities.

### Policy and Planning

Policies are written documents which support the everyday running of the school through active implementation on a day-to-day basis. They form the background script by which the school



navigates its way. They are developed and implemented by the whole school community, not just by one or two people. Parents/guardians and community members are encouraged to participate in policy development. Ennis National School regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils that are in accordance with the school aims, philosophy, vision and ethos.

### Partnerships

Ennis National School continues to develop strong partnerships with parents/guardians and the wider community, which is a central part of the well-being process.

We engage with appropriate agencies and specialist services to advise, support and contribute to health and well-being, teaching and learning.

### School Based Initiatives that promote wellbeing

Ennis National School implements a number of programmes and initiatives throughout daily school life that support the well-being of our pupils; this list is not exhaustive;

- Athematic learning through play , The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) which encompasses four themes, Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking. This framework is used in our Infant classes.
- Project based learning from 1st class to 6th class
- SPHE Curriculum
- Positive Behaviour for Learning programme for Junior Infants to 6th Class
- Bí Cinealtas, using FUSE programme from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class to promote friendship and kindness and understanding
- Yearly Friendship Week
- Friends for life programme in 4<sup>th</sup> class
- SALT programme for resolving conflict
- Continuum of Support Model
- School Committees – School Council, Green Schools Committee
- Outdoor Learning
- Irish Centre for Cycling – 7 week programme for 5th class pupils
- External teachers for different strands of PE to promote active living e.g. GAA (weekly), badminton, basketball and rugby
- Voluntary school staff coaches for sports teams after school
- School subsidised swimming lessons – 6 week block for all pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Whole-school assemblies and Masses
- Wellness promotion (Wellness Wednesdays)
- Themed Weeks (e.g. Maths Week, Science Week, Engineers Week, Book Week, etc)
- Promoting the Arts – whole-school musical, infant plays, purchase of school instruments, Band membership for pupils 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, Tin Whistle programme for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>
- After School Clubs - French, Lego, Speech & Drama, Homework, Coding etc.
- Gardening Projects for juniors infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class.



- Communicating with National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to gain SNA access for pupils
- Education Welfare Officer – support for pupils with poor attendance
- Links with HSE personnel e.g. Primary Care Team, Child Disability Network Team, Assessment of Need Team

#### Whole School Approach Indicators of Success

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported</li> <li>• Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos</li> <li>• Children and young people experience</li> </ul>
Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all</li> <li>• Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing</li> </ul>
Policy and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and Centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices</li> </ul>
Relationships and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community</li> <li>• All adults in schools and Centre's for education have an increased awareness</li> </ul>



	of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.
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### Role and Responsibilities

The Principal has overall responsibility to ensure that all tasks and duties in this policy are delivered and completed in an effective way. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to implement staged interventions at class level. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education Team. The Principal is involved at all stages of the continuum of support and assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when an assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

### Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed by Staff & Parents.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ and communicated to parents thereafter.

### Review Timetable

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years time and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

### References

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023

Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion: Well-Being in Primary Schools

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Dan O Connell, Chairperson, Board of Management



Ray McNerney, Príomhoide

Appendix 1: Wellbeing Framework

### Key Area 1 – Culture and Environment

	Statements of Effective Practice for All
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to the school's mission statement and management takes responsibility to promote wellbeing.</li> <li>● Parents/carers receive communication and information from schools in relation to initiatives which support the wellbeing of the child/young person.</li> <li>● All class and subject teachers understand their shared role in supporting learning for and learning about wellbeing in their classroom/subject.</li> <li>● The relationship between academic achievement and a child/young person's wellbeing is understood by all children and young people and staff.</li> <li>● There is a positive approach to discipline where issues are resolved with care, respect and consistency.</li> <li>● Children and young people and staff have a strong sense of belonging to the school.</li> <li>● Systems are in place so that the voices of the child/young person, staff and parent/carer are heard.</li> <li>● Child/young person's participation within the school community is valued by staff and children and young people are actively supported and encouraged to provide feedback for school improvement.</li> <li>● The school building, grounds, classrooms and work spaces, are well maintained and appropriately furnished creating a welcoming, safe and warm environment.</li> <li>● The school building is accessible for all children and young people and accommodation is <b>modified</b> to meet the needs of all.</li> <li>● Indoor and outdoor space is provided to facilitate social interaction, physical activity and quiet time.</li> <li>● The school environment is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices.</li> <li>● The indoor space displays the work, talents and accomplishments of children and young people.</li> </ul>





### Statements of Effective Practice for Some and Few

- The school demonstrates commitment to identifying, including and providing targeted supports for children and young people experiencing barriers and challenges to wellbeing and learning.
- Staff, children and young people are inclusive of those from different cultural backgrounds and those with additional needs.
- The physical environment is modified to meet the needs of children and young people with additional and/or complex needs.
- The following are available if applicable: • Sensory room/sensory gardens • 'Safe' room/space for distressed/anxious students • Room(s) for meeting with parents, visiting professionals • Room(s) for individuals and small groups requiring targeted intervention and support • Lifting equipment • Specialist technology • Buddy bench \*This list is not exhaustive

### Key Area 2 - Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

#### Statements of Effective Practice for All

- All curricular and subject plans have explicit reference to teaching, learning and assessment approaches that promote collaboration, self-assessment and a sense of achievement.
- All curricular plans outline how teaching/learning approaches and assessment of learning outcomes will be differentiated for children and young people, providing adequate challenge and opportunities for success.
- Teachers use varied teaching and assessment methods and differentiate their expectations to promote full participation and achievement for all.
- Teacher continuing professional development (CPD), sharing of learning and reflective practice is encouraged and facilitated through communities of practice.
- Throughout primary schools, and in post primary school up to Junior Cycle, the SPHE curriculum is implemented on a mandatory basis.
- There is a whole school and coordinated approach to the provision of CSPE, PE and SPHE as part of the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle Level (post primary only).
- Children's and young people's physical, social and emotional health education are effectively implemented and are a visible part of the Curriculum for SPHE, PE, RSE, CSPE (CSPE - post primary level only).
- Appropriate use is made of programmes/resources to support SPHE, RSE, and CSPE.



- Universal, evidence-based programmes are appropriately chosen to teach core social and emotional competence and coping skills.
- The school links with community-based clubs and organisations to ensure that a broad, accessible and inclusive extra-curricular programme is provided.
- Specific national or local initiatives are included in the school's wellbeing promotion initiatives.
- Children and young people, and parents/carers are involved in planning the school's extra-curricular programme.
- Children and young people are actively engaged in learning and enjoy coming to school.

#### Statements of Effective Practice for Some and Few

- All curricular plans outline how teaching methods and assessment of learning outcomes will be differentiated for children and young people at risk or with additional and/or complex needs so they experience a sense of achievement.
- Teachers attend CPD and deliver specialised and targeted programmes to individuals and/or small groups that are grounded in research and evidence and selected in line with best practice guidelines.
- Individualised teaching approaches are linked to specific learning outcomes.
- The school deploys resources based on individual learning, behavioural, social and emotional needs under the Teacher Resource Allocation Model.
- The Special Education Team and/or Student Support Team support all class and subject teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to implement appropriate strategies for children and young people with additional and/ or complex needs and those recommended in professional reports.
- Delivery of one to one support teaching is supported by continuing professional development and reflective practice facilitated through communities of practice.
- There are opportunities for CPD and ongoing practice support and guidance for SNAs.
- Extra-curricular activities are planned to include those with additional and /or complex needs.
- Children and young people with additional and/or complex needs and their parents/carers are actively involved in planning and evaluating the school's extracurricular programme.



Ennis National School

### Statements of Effective Practice for All

- The wellbeing of the whole school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.
- Consultation with staff, children and young people, and parents/carers is undertaken when developing and reviewing and updating school policies.
- Policies are made available to staff, children and young people, parents/carers and relevant partners.
- Schools have the following policies, plans and guidelines in place: e.g. Anti-bullying policy and procedures; COS policy; Child protection policy & procedures; Critical Incident Management Plan; Acceptable Use Policy for ICT etc.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff are familiar with these policies and procedures.
- Policies and plans set out how inclusive practice will be implemented.
- The school has an established system for gathering information which is conducted in partnership with parents/ carers, children and young people and teachers in order to support the child/young person's needs.
- The school has an established system for gathering information on children and young people at points of transition and uses the Education Passport (NCCA) for children and young people transitioning to post primary school.
- Family and child/young person confidentiality is respected at all times and staff follow school guidelines for the appropriate sharing of confidential information.
- Records about individual children and young people are stored securely.
- The school has a system in place for gathering information on levels of school risk factors such as bullying; absenteeism; truancy; disruptive behaviour.
- There is a comprehensive CPD plan to ensure all teachers have the necessary training to **promote** wellbeing on a whole class basis and through SPHE.
- Staff are encouraged to share expertise and learning garnered from CPD by having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative working.
- The school adheres to DES circular on the use of programmes and/or external speakers.
- At post primary level, the whole school Guidance Plan sets out how Student Support Teams will operate.
- The school identifies and participates in specific national or local initiatives for wellbeing promotion.

### Statements of Effective Practice for Some and Few

- The school's COS policy specifically lays out how the screening, gathering of information and planning of interventions for children and young people with additional and/or complex needs is undertaken.



- School-based information is used in conjunction with reports from external professionals which set guidelines and recommendations for individualised supports.
- The school engages with collaborative problem-solving to support a child/young person's needs, identified through the NEPS Continuum of Support.
- A student support file is used to plan, record and review progress.
- The COS policy identifies a range of evidence-based strategies and programmes for groups at 'further risk' of developing mental health difficulties.
- The school's assessment policy outlines how additional school-based screening and intervention tools are used to assess social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The school's COS policy and plan sets guidelines for individualised supports to help those with complex needs understand and engage with school policies e.g. bullying, code of behaviour.
- The school has mechanisms in place for identifying vulnerable students in the event of a critical incident.

#### Key Area 4 - Relationships & Partnerships

##### Statements of Effective Practice for All

- Relationships between teachers, children and young people and parents/carers are characterised by openness, respect and listening.
- Relationships and partnerships are supported through a range of agreed formal and informal structures, for example, student councils, prefect systems, buddy systems, mentoring systems, assemblies and newsletters.
- The views of all staff and children and young people are sought, listened to and respected.
- The views of parents/carers are accessed through questionnaires, focus groups, parent councils and feedback from parent-teacher meetings.
- Parent-teacher meetings are convened on a mandatory basis, to discuss children and young people's progress.
- The board of management promotes the establishment of a parents' council in the school, and co-operates with the council as needed.
- Staff receive recognition and support from management.
- All staff members are aware of the Employee Assistance Service.
- The school establishes links with feeder schools.



- The school establishes strong working relationships with other schools and engages in sharing of best practice.
- The school promotes professional networks for principals and subject teachers.
- The school establishes good links with Department support services, community-based statutory and voluntary support services and other external agencies.
- There are clear referral pathways and the roles and responsibilities of agencies are agreed and understood by all.
- The school supports extra-curricular activities by linking with sports clubs, dance clubs and bands, scouts, work experience placements, charity organisations etc.

#### Statements of Effective Practice for Some and Few

- Mentoring systems are in place whereby more senior teachers offer practical and social support to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and/or new staff members.
- Staff receive individualised support from management in times of difficulty or during personal crisis and are given information and contact details for the Employee Assistance Service.
- Mentoring systems are in place whereby more senior young people mentor younger children offering practical, social and/or emotional support.
- Befriending and buddy systems are in place for children and young people who require support to interact with peers.
- Efforts are made to build positive relationships with children and young people who are experiencing challenges, and with their parents.
- They may have a 'named staff member' allocated to them to act as the 'one good adult'.
- Children and young people and their parents/carers are included in collaborative problem solving and decision making with regard to individualised support and interventions.
- Children and young people have access to one to one meetings with qualified members of staff to support their personal and social, educational and career development, and at moments of personal crisis.
- The primary school links with the feeder post primary schools and holds sixth class transfer review meetings, for those children and young people with additional and/or complex needs.
- Primary schools link with the local Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) to support the transition of children with additional and/or complex needs into the primary setting.



- Centres of education link with other training centres and employees to ensure successful transfers from the centre.
- The school attaches a high value to support networks for guidance counsellors and SEN teachers.
- The school has established working relationships with DES support services and other agencies and services involved in supporting the mental health of children and younger people.

Please see

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well-Being-in-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion.pdf> for self-evaluation questionnaire for staff and parents/guardians for support for SSE process. Please see

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well-Being-in-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion.pdf> for My Thoughts About School Checklist from the NEPS

Continuum of Support (2010b)