



**Parke N.S.  
Parke  
Castlebar  
Co. Mayo  
094 9031310**

## Wellbeing Policy

### Rationale

The vision and ambition of the Department of Education and Skills in relation to Wellbeing Promotion sets out to ensure that by 2023:

- the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education
- all schools and centres for education will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to promote the wellbeing of all their children and young people
- Ireland will be recognised as a leader in this area

To implement this policy every school and centre for education is required by 2023, to use the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle. Children and young people learn more effectively and have better academic outcomes if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves and feel acknowledged and supported in their schools. National and international research highlights that the wellbeing of our children and young people is critical to their success in education and in life. It is clear from the research, which includes feedback provided by young people, that there are areas where improvements can be made. (Well-being Policy Statement Framework for Practice 2018-23)

### Key Principles

The development of this policy has been guided by key principles, which in turn will guide its implementation and monitoring:

- **Child/Young person-centred:** The wellbeing needs and the best interests of our children and young people are a central focus of this policy. This requires us to respect and value the voice of children and young people and foster their belonging and connectedness to the school community. This ensures a sound developmental base for present and future wellbeing, as well as academic achievement.
- **Equitable, fair and inclusive:** All children and young people need access to equitable, fair and inclusive opportunities to develop their wellbeing in ways that are responsive and suitable to their particular needs and contexts. Practices need to be tailored, responsive and relevant, building on the existing strengths of children and young people, school staff, families and school communities. This means that practices will vary across schools and centres for education and from student to student.

- Evidence-informed: This policy promotes the use of evidence-informed practice, which brings together local experience and expertise with the best available evidence from research. It acknowledges that what works in one context may not be appropriate or feasible in another.
- Outcomes focused: This policy promotes continuous improvement practices and the use of data relating to outcomes to guide practice in our schools in relation to the promotion of wellbeing for all children and young people. This policy and framework for practice will ensure the use of a self-reflection process for the identification, monitoring and review of outcomes.
- Partnership/Collaboration: The wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared responsibility. Working in partnership with other departments and agencies is key to ensuring this policy is implemented.

## What is Wellbeing?

### Definition of Wellbeing

Wellbeing is defined as “The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.” Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community. (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017)

Schools have a central role to play in supporting and promoting students’ learning about wellbeing and for wellbeing. They learn about wellbeing through specific areas of the curriculum and various wellbeing events and initiatives that are organised to develop awareness, knowledge and skills about wellbeing. Through the Wellbeing programme students will be learning the knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others. Thinking about learning for wellbeing requires that we consider not only what students learn but also how they learn it. Learning for wellbeing can be nurtured in all subjects and by all teachers.

Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community. (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017, p. 17). The goal of Wellbeing in education is human flourishing for all. When children and young people are ‘flourishing’ they are not only curious and eager to learn, they are: creative and imaginative, connected and empathetic, good team players, confident about who they are, resilient and persistent, positive about themselves and see themselves growing into better people.(NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017, Growing Great Kids p. 11)

There are many definitions of wellbeing. It is important that any definition of wellbeing communicates its multi-dimensional nature and draws on the insights of psychology, philosophy and sociology (O’Brien & O’Shea, 2016). **Wellbeing does not necessarily mean the absence of stress or negative emotions in life or the absence of mental health difficulties. It is important that all members of the education community understand that everyone experiences vulnerability and a need for care at some stages in their journey through life. All children and young people may be vulnerable at different stages of their development, and their sense of wellbeing may vary from time to time. Developing, nurturing and sustaining our wellbeing is a lifelong process.**

Wellbeing is comprised of many interrelated aspects including being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware (DES & NCCA, 2017). The following definition of Wellbeing aims to take account of its multi-dimensional nature (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2001). Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.

### **Mission Statement**

Wellbeing education occurs throughout life and in a variety of settings. Promoting the wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared community responsibility and is everybody's business. While many factors which influence wellbeing are located in the home, the school, situated within the community can be a powerful context for healthy development in enhancing protective factors and minimising risks.

Schools play a key role in developing and enhancing young people's wellbeing as they spend a large proportion of their time in school during their formative years. Many schools and centres for education have already developed innovative approaches to wellbeing promotion supported by strong leadership and quality teaching and learning. Schools and centres for education are also well placed to further support children and young people by optimising opportunities to learn about wellbeing. As well as being a place of academic learning, schools and centres for education provide opportunities to develop friendships and social networks, to respectfully encounter diversity and access support structures.

There is a recognised connection between the cognitive and the emotional world of children and young people. In the school environment social and emotional skills do not exist in isolation but interact with cognitive skills development. The role of the school is now understood as a place which develops the 'whole child', who should leave school with a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of the 21st century (OECD 2014).

Hargreaves, Shirley, Wangia, Bacon & D'Angelo (2018) identify the mutually supportive relationships between wellbeing and achievement and emphasise the importance of the reciprocal relationship between wellbeing and the accomplishments of children and young people. Schools are important settings for preparing children and young people to develop wellbeing and positive mental health, where emotional wellbeing may be understood as an educational end in and of itself.

Risk and protective factors relating to wellbeing promotion that are specific to the school/educational setting have been identified. In the school/educational setting wellbeing protective factors include:

- positive relationships with peers and teachers - including positive teacher classroom management strategies and a sharing of positive behaviour management practices with parents
- a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities

- opportunities for social and emotional learning including the development of attention and planning,

self-awareness, self-management, relationship and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL 2015)

- opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills providing a sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Shonkoff et al, 2015)
- fostering expectations, recognising contributions, effort and achievement and providing opportunities for success
- wellbeing of school personnel
- protocols and support systems that proactively support children and their families should difficulties arise
- opportunities to develop the necessary skills to cope with using online technology in a safe and appropriate way (The schools AUA policy is also relevant here as is the school's anti-bullying policy which will also be reviewed as part of this SSE process).
- opportunities to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to school work

### **School setting**

In the school setting wellbeing risk factors include:

- disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation
- violence/aggression, bullying and relationship difficulties
- low achievement/learning difficulties/special educational needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs
- cultural differences
- school transitions
- poor connection between family and school
- harsh and inconsistent discipline
- lack of opportunity to develop social and emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills

Protective factors have been found to promote positive outcomes for children and young people ,even when they have been exposed to risk factors (Cooper, Jacobs, 2011). Within the school context ,therefore, implementing a preventative wellbeing promotion process that has a focus on strengthening school-based protective factors and minimising school-based risk factors is important.

Parke N.S. welcomes students with diverse abilities and talents. In keeping with our Catholic ethos, we seek to recognise and develop these varied gifts and to promote in our students a sense of self-confidence, tolerance and respect for others. We foster learning within a secure and happy environment, so that our students may mature to their fullest potential in personal, social, physical, aesthetic, spiritual and academic skills. We see parents as being essential partners in this process and look to them for support and reinforcement. Our school structures, curriculum and special events are all designed to reinforce these values and this vision.

As such Parke N.S. has a duty to provide the best quality and the most appropriate education and infrastructure in order to promote the wellbeing of our students

Coherent policy and planning at a whole school level is needed to ensure the successful delivery of a wellbeing promotion process in schools. School leaders (Principal, Deputy and ISM team) play a critical role in implementation, including in the review and development of school structures to support that implementation.

Collaborative cultures emerge when schools engage in reflective practices including appreciative inquiry (Cooperider, 2016, n.d.) to consider the implications of policy from the perspective of their own school systems and the systems in their communities. Such models are noted to enhance professional development through shared learning, to give voice to creativity and to build shared ownership by creating internal and external networks. The development of structures within our schools and the use of reflective practices will help us to engage in collaborative practice and to consider our own systems from within. Organisational and management factors are as essential to a successful whole school approach to wellbeing promotion as are curricular and extra-curricular factors (NICE, 2009).

- The role of the teacher has also been found to be paramount to children and young people's wellbeing (OECD, 2017), and reaches beyond teaching and learning. The relationship that teachers develop with the young person is a key influence on wellbeing development. Access to 'one good adult' who can guide and support a young person at a vulnerable time is an identified protective factor.

Furthermore, support for the wellbeing of staff is also an essential element, and crucial to sustaining teacher/resource staff engagement, enthusiasm and ability to model resilience. It builds staff capacity to cope with challenges and adapt to change, and creates conditions to support and motivate staff to be effective.

### **Whole School Approach to Well-being**

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 Parke N.S.

Again Wellbeing is defined as "The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy." Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community. (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017)

Schools have a central role to play in supporting and promoting students' learning about wellbeing and for wellbeing. They learn about wellbeing through specific areas of the

curriculum and various wellbeing events and initiatives that are organised to develop awareness, knowledge and skills about wellbeing. Through the Wellbeing programme students will be learning the knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others. Thinking about learning for wellbeing requires that we consider not only what students learn but also how they learn it. Learning for wellbeing can be nurtured in all subjects and by all teachers.

This whole school approach involves all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process of change to improve specific areas of school life that impact on well-being. By adopting a whole school approach for Parke N.S. we aim to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for our pupils, including improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning, greater social cohesion, increased social capital and improvements to mental health.

This whole school approach supports the integration of systems within the school community. This creates the capacity to be reflective and responsive to the needs of our school and the individuals who are part of the school community. Central to this is the role of Parke N.S. staff and the importance of building professional capacity to engage in a reflective process to implement and sustain well-being policy and strategies from within.

St. Aidan's N.S. is in a unique position to promote well-being, and social and emotional learning, and ensures a whole school approach to well-being promotion and early intervention, especially when considering appropriate use of external supports and services. Students flourish where there is a whole school approach to supporting their growth and where there is a shared belief in their potential for development, learning and well-being. St. Aidan's N.S. is responsible for providing an environment that nurtures and supports students.

### **Benefits of promoting pupil well-being in Parke N.S.**

By implementing a whole school approach to well-being the benefits include;

- Better learning results for pupils
- More done to promote staff health
- A coordinated approach to social, physical and environmental needs
- Increased pupil self-esteem
- Lowered incidence of bullying
- School environment is safer and more secure
- Better understanding of schools' health aims
- Improved relationships within the school
- More involvement of parents/guardians
- Better use of outside agencies
- Pupils receive better quality education
- Access to a well planned SPHE programme in school

### **The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework**

The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice assists schools in ensuring that well-being promotion is embedded within the school's existing practice. The school's review and development process using the Wellbeing Policy Statement and

Framework for Practice provides guidance and practical resources to assist in the further enhancement of whole school approaches to well-being promotion in the areas of:

**Culture and environment**

**Curriculum (teaching and learning)**

**Policy and planning**

**Relationships and partnerships**



Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture & 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> </ul>
Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people experience 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 & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.</li> <li>• Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion in whole school policies and practices.</li> </ul>
Relationships & 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 centres for education have an increased awareness 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.</li> </ul>

The schools will consider measures such as student attendance, successful school completion, successful transition of students, data gathering (like in the Amber Flag Project 2021) consultations with children, parents and staff and information from inspection reports which are all indicative factors of well-being in school. The school recognises that some are at greater risk than others and may have greater needs for well-being. The school will use a multi component approach to well-being promotion conscious of the continuum of support being used to target children with additional needs.

The school will use the 6 step SSE process of wellbeing below to identify achievements used in consultation with the statements of effective practice as per the well-being framework document (Page 42-49 Wellbeing framework). This document will be used in conjunction with this policy.





## **Culture and Environment**

Parke N.S. 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.

Parke N.S. 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. 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.

Parke N.S. 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 and Learning**

The teaching and learning in Parke N.S. aims to be democratic, inclusive, engaging, differentiated, fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunity for success. We place a deliberate focus on the development of emotional and social competencies, through many strategies and interventions, examples of which include, Friends for Life, Literacy lift off, Reading Recovery, and others.

The SPHE curriculum in Parke N.S. 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.

## **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 which is publicised amongst the entire school community on the school website and shared with parents for input through the parents association. Parke N.S. regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils that are in accordance with the school aims, philosophy, vision and ethos.

The whole school community of Parke N.S. will contribute to the wellbeing of our students and support their wellbeing through our culture, our policies, our relationships and in the curriculum. Students, parents and teachers all have a part to play ensuring that student wellbeing is at the heart of our schools vision. Policies and procedures that promote wellbeing are developed, carried out and reviewed as part of a whole school approach. This process is part of the overall provision for 'All'.

### **Policies include:**

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- SEN Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- SPHE/RSE policy
- School Enrolment Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Substance Abuse Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Homework & Study Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

### **Partnerships**

Parke N.S. continues to develop strong partnerships with parents/guardians through our parent association and wider general communication between partners including our social media presence which includes a school twitter account, school Aladdin app and website and the wider community, which includes a strong tradition of community support such as Grandparents day Christmas concerts and more. It also includes working with other organisations and having workshops and educational experiences involving local and national organisations, which is a central part of the well-being process.

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

### **Role of Teachers and SNAs**

It is essential that all staff continue to develop their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. The qualified classroom teacher and SNA is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of well-being education. The school secretary also plays a large role as her engagement with children/parents/staff on a daily basis through the office.

This can be achieved through accessing continuing professional development (CPD) which includes the sharing of expertise and learning, and having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative working. Staff are encouraged to continue their CPD annually.

### **Parke N.S well-being protective factors**

In Parke N.S. well-being protective factors include:

- positive relationships with peers and teachers - including positive teacher classroom management strategies and a sharing of positive behaviour management practices with parents
- a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities
- opportunities for social and emotional learning including the development of attention and planning, self-awareness, self-management, relationship and responsible decision-making skills
- opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills providing a sense of mastery and self-efficacy
- fostering expectations, recognising contributions, effort and achievement and providing opportunities for success
- well-being of school personnel
- protocols and support systems that proactively support children and their families should difficulties arise
- opportunities to develop the necessary skills to cope with using online technology in a safe and appropriate way
- opportunities to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to school work
- support to staff from leadership and BOM

### **Programmes and/or External Facilitators**

Use of programmes can play a role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned comprehensive approach to well-being promotion. Programmes accessed in Parke N.S.

- are part of a whole school approach and address an identified need
- are delivered to class groups with the involvement of school staff and the appropriate involvement of parents/carers
- enhance protective factors which predispose students to positive outcomes in the face of adversity such as: facilitating supportive adult-pupil relationships, strengthening life skills, helping students
- believe in their capacity to overcome hardship and building a sense of mastery over life
- circumstances

- adopt a planned implementation process, for example, incorporate needs analysis, use evidence
- informed programmes and track and evaluate outcomes for students
- are implemented and used in a school in a sustained way over a number of years in order to bring about lasting effects and benefits

### **Whole School Supports**

**At a Croke Park hour 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 this was reviewed by staff**

### **Staff considered the following:**

- 1) How does the school currently contribute to the well-being of children?
- 2) What are the items we could improve on?
- 3) Areas for development and recording of key items underway

Whole school/class/teacher supports include:

- Extra-curricular and co-curricular learning
- School Initiatives - The school will at all times seek to raise standards of behaviour by adopting a positive approach to school discipline. The work of students and their adherence to the school's Code of Conduct will be acknowledged, encouraged and rewarded in the following ways:
  - Citations at Assembly and small group assemblies
  - Involvement in extracurricular outings and tours
  - Achievement awards
  - Endeavour/effort awards
- Work displayed in school
- Principal congratulations and recognition to children
- One to one meetings with support teachers/regular SET reviews
- SET support
- Sticker

The goal of Wellbeing in education is human flourishing for all. When children and young people are 'flourishing' they are not only curious and eager to learn, they are:

- Creative and imaginative,
- Connected and empathetic,
- Good team players,
- Confident about who they are,
- Resilient and persistent,
- Positive about themselves

- See themselves growing into better people.

(NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017).

### **Staff Well-being**

In the development of this policy (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022) staff have been invited to contribute to how we can enhance the well-being of staff and the following decisions have been added:

What do new do currently to develop staff well-being

What would you like to see done ? Areas for development

It is vital that members of staff who are themselves responsible in contributing to the well-being of all are supported in their own well-being. The following are enabled to support staff in their roles

Leadership support-Principal open door policy

Regular staff meetings with staff input

Regular ISM meetings for school strategy

Regular communication

Recognition of staff work/achievements

Social celebrations at school break

Voice for all- all staff members are invited to input into all decision making where the school leadership team aim to listen to others, gather data around decision making with a vision to Consult, Collaborate and Choose. Staff are invited to input through the schools whatapp, letter from principal, email, staff meeting, call to office including informal discussions.

The staff have a whats app group which has both a work and social aspect

Staff food days

Staff Birthdays and significant events are always celebrated in the school canteen

### **School Programmes that promote well-being**

In contributing to school well-being the following are school initiatives that aim to enhance school well being

Anti-bullying – school staff ensure that any aspects of alleged bullying are investigated and acted upon

Amber flag (Add policy/info here)

Acceptance Use- To promote safe use of mobile devices

Friends programme

Amber Flag

Buddy Bench

## *PARKE N.S.*

### **AUDIT OF THE ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES ALREADY IN THE SCHOOL WHICH HELP TO PROMOTE AN ETHOS OF POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH:**

Below is a list of some activities that the staff and students have been actively engaging with in the classrooms and how we feel they support Positive Mental Health:

- **Active Breaks and Movement Breaks** – act as an energy release, a way of relieving stress and tension, a physical activity to focus the mind and body and aid concentration.
- **Mindful Colouring and Mindful Music** to encourage calmness and quietness in a busy classroom.
- **Breathing and Meditation Exercises** in the classroom as a way of dealing with stressful situations.
- **Introduction to Yoga** with a visiting yoga teacher as a way of centering the body and focusing on the benefits of breathing as a calming tool.
- **Daily affirmation phrases** to promote positivity and well being.
- **Positive reinforcement of students** in the classroom and on the yard and at whole school assemblies.
- Introduction of a **‘Buddy Bench’** to the Junior playground.
- **Highlighting random acts of kindness** and having a ‘RAK’ bulletin board in the school suggesting possible random acts of kindness.
- **Active Flag Initiative** promoting well-being, health and fitness in the school.
- **School Website** – Uploading photos and activities of work well done on to the school website to highlight major and minor achievements and encourage positive behaviour and activities.
- **SPHE Lessons (Walk Tall, RSE, Stay Safe Programmes)** focusing on building self-confidence and dealing with different emotions both positive and negative, developing coping strategies.

- **Anti-bullying Policy** in the school focusing on tolerance, acceptance of others and acknowledging that everyone is different and unique.
- **Webwise** and cyber awareness, focusing on internet safety.
- **Affirming good behaviour** by praise or sending to another teacher / Principal for further commendation.
- **Use of drama, brainstorming, story and debate** to start the conversation around feelings and emotions.
- **Reference Books:**
  - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion – Well-being in Primary Schools (HSE, Dept. of Ed., NEPS)
  - Mindfulness in the Classroom – Michelle Gallan
  - Webwise – Cyber Bullying



**Ratification of Policy:**

The policy was ratified by the staff and Board of Management on:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal