

Newtownwhite Educate Together NS

Ballysakeery,

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*Newtownwhite
Educate Together
National School
Wellbeing Policy*



The Wellbeing Policy

This policy has been formulated by Newtownwhite Educate Together National School to assist with the development of wellbeing within the school. The policy provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in this area. Its implementation is an ongoing process that will ensure the necessary focus on supporting children in having a sense of purpose and fulfilment, and the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges.

Contents

1. Introduction

Newtownwhite ETNS is currently developing a Wellbeing Promotion Process within the school, which is supported by the Department of Education and Skills along with the Health Service Executive. Wellbeing is an integral part of the school's overall development.

2. Mission Statement

In our small school with big hearts and big dreams, we nurture happy children in a warm, playful, and positive atmosphere filled with grá. We celebrate diversity and inclusion, ensuring a voice for all in a safe, welcoming space where every child is accepted, valued, and supported. Rooted in kindness and community, we help each child grow with confidence and joy - where learning and wellbeing go hand in hand.

3. What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is a personal experience but is influenced by a wide range of risk and protective factors that operate at individual, relational, community, cultural, and societal levels. Our individual wellbeing and that of our local communities are linked to the broader world.

According to the World Health Organization (2011), wellbeing is achieved when a person fulfills their potential, effectively manages everyday stresses, maintains their physical health, and feels a sense of purpose, connection, and belonging to a larger community. It is a dynamic state that requires ongoing care and attention.

The following description of wellbeing seeks to reflect its complex and multi-faceted nature (World Health Organization, 2001). In the context of school systems, wellbeing can be understood as:

"the existence of a supportive culture, ethos, and environment that fosters the continuous growth and flourishing of everyone within the school community. It includes various aspects such as relationships, meaning, emotions, motivation, purpose, and achievement. Additionally, it emphasizes high-quality teaching and learning that addresses all aspects of healthy living—whether cultural, academic, social, emotional, physical, or technological—with a strong focus on building resilience and coping skills."

Wellbeing is comprised of many interrelated aspects including being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware.

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4. Rationale

The creation of this policy has been shaped by key principles that will also guide its implementation and evaluation:

Child/Young Person-Centred

This policy places the wellbeing needs and best interests of children and young people at its core. This approach requires acknowledging and valuing their voices, while also promoting their sense of belonging and connection to the school community. Such a foundation supports both their current and future wellbeing, as well as their academic success.

Equitable, Fair, and Inclusive

It is essential that all children and young people have access to fair, inclusive, and equitable opportunities to enhance their wellbeing, tailored to their unique needs and circumstances. Practices should be adaptable, relevant, and build on the strengths already present in children and young people, school staff, families, and school communities. As a result, approaches may differ between schools and educational centers and from one student to another.

Evidence-Informed

The policy emphasizes the importance of evidence-informed practices that integrate local knowledge and expertise with the most reliable research findings. It also recognizes that what proves effective in one setting might not be practical or suitable 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.

5. Wellbeing Protective and Risk Factors

Risk and protective factors relating to wellbeing promotion that are specific to the school/educational setting have been identified. Within the school context, implementing a preventative wellbeing promotion process that has a focus on strengthening school-based protective factors and minimising school-based risk factors is recommended.

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Wellbeing Protective Factors include:

- Positive relationships with peers and teachers - including positive teacher classroom management strategies & 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
- Opportunities to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to school work

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 & behavioural needs
- Lack of recognition of, or respect for, cultural differences
- School transitions
- Poor connection between family and school
- Harsh and inconsistent discipline
- Lack of opportunity to develop social & emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills.

6. The Role of the Teacher / Staff

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. The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students. The teacher has a powerful impact on influencing student's attitude, values and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education. 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

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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. 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 & emotional skills to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is essential for staff to enhance their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. Staff should share their expertise and learning, and having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative working. The curricular elements of wellbeing promotion are delivered by staff who are trained for this purpose having completed the relevant CPD training e.g. Nurture training.

7. A Whole-School Approach to Wellbeing

As a school, we believe to best support a whole school approach is to follow the Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion. These are outlined below.

1. Culture and Environment

Newtownwhite Educate Together aims to promote a culture, an environment and climate that enhances wellbeing for all in the school community. The school goal is to foster happy, confident, responsible & resilient students who feel connected to Newtownwhite Educate Together. As a school, we want to encourage a positive school climate and environment whereby individuals are valued, cared and respected. A positive climate will contribute to effective teaching & learning and to genuine communication, both within and outside of the school.

This is achieved by:

- Building positive communication within the school
- Catering for individual needs
- Creating a health-promoting physical environment.
- Developing democratic processes
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity Fostering inclusive and respectful language
- Developing effective communication between home and school
- Developing a school approach to assessment.

2. Curriculum

Wellbeing promotion is central to all areas of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning is democratic, inclusive, engaging and differentiated. We deliver an integrated curriculum that recognises the richness and uniqueness of the individual and the importance of the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Wellbeing promotion is addressed across the curriculum through:

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- Aistear: It encompasses the four themes of Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communication & Exploring and Thinking.

SPHE: *Social, personal and health education (SPHE)* provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and wellbeing of the child and to help him/her create & maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. It enables the child to develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills. -

Physical Education

- Learning Together
- Science

3. Relationships and Partnerships

Newtownwhite Educate Together regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils that are in accordance with the school aims, philosophy, vision and ethos. All aspects of the school planning and self-evaluation process in our school incorporate a health and wellbeing dimension. Wellbeing promotion is addressed in school policies and plans including but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aistear• Physical Education• Religious Education• SPHE• Science• Positive Behaviour Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Safeguarding• Critical Incidents• Health Promotion Policy• Anti-bullying• Acceptable Use Policy• Special Educational Needs
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4. Policy and Planning

Newtownwhite Educate Together continues to develop strong partnerships with parents/guardians and the wider community, which is a central part of the wellbeing process. We efficiently engage with appropriate agencies and specialist services to advise, support and contribute to health and wellbeing, teaching and learning.

The following stakeholders collaborate regularly:

- Parents/Guardians
- Board of Management
- Patronage
- Parents Teacher Association
- Student Committees
- Local schools

5. The Continuum of Support

- Voluntary/sports/arts groups
- State agencies
- Community groups
- Support services

The Continuum of Support recognises that children can have different needs at different times. Those at greater risk and with greater needs may require more specific and targeted support, in addition to the support provided to all children.

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There are three levels of Support:

- Whole School and Classroom Support for All
- School Support for Some
- School Support Plus for a few

School Based Initiatives that Promote Well Being:

Newtownwhite ETNS implements a number of programmes and initiatives that support the wellbeing of our pupils, including but not limited to:

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
SPHE Curriculum (Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, RSE, Walk Tall)
- Continuum of Support Model
- Student Committees: Student Council, Green School Committee
- Wellbeing Displays, Art Projects and Kindness Tree
- Project based learning
- Outdoor learning
- Partnership with the local Sports providers
- External PE coaches e.g. GAA, soccer, rugby, tennis
- Healthy Eating policy
- Arts week
- Celebrating Multi-culturalism, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability & Citizenship
- Active weeks/Sports Days
- Nurture Training
- Regular class-group assemblies
- Themed weeks e.g. Maths Week, Science Week etc.)
- Promoting the Arts - Christmas Concerts, Children's Choirs, purchase of school musical instruments, entry into art competitions, Art Gallery walls in the school, etc.
- After School Clubs
- Internet Safety courses

8. Members of the School Support Team for Wellbeing

The core School Support Team is made up of staff and professionals that have direct involvement in the care issues of pupils and various other members depending on the students being discussed.

The following is a list of the initial core members:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Assistant Principal 1: who has responsibility for the SPHE curriculum
- Continuum of Support Team and SET.

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Essential elements of the Student Support Team

- Child centered / advocate for the student
- Non- judgemental
- Solution focussed as opposed to problem focused
- Supported by staff senior management and the BOM
- Optimistic and hopeful
- Accountable through record keeping

9. Measuring Success

Measuring the success of our Wellbeing Policy involves assessing various qualitative and quantitative indicators. Here are some potential ways to measure the success of our policy. This is not an exhaustive list.

Student & Staff Surveys

Regular wellbeing surveys to assess student and staff happiness, stress levels, and overall mental health. Feedback on access to support services (e.g., counselors, peer mentoring).

Attendance & Engagement

Tracking attendance rates to identify improvements or ongoing issues related to wellbeing. Monitoring engagement in wellbeing initiatives (e.g., participation in mindfulness programs, extracurricular activities).

Behaviour & Discipline Records

Reduction in bullying incidents, conflicts, and behavioral issues. Improved classroom behaviour and fewer disciplinary actions.

Academic Performance

Examining whether students' academic performance improves alongside wellbeing interventions. Checking if students feel less pressure and more supported in their learning.

Staff Retention & Absenteeism

Evaluating teacher and staff retention rates as a sign of a supportive working environment. Monitoring staff absences due to stress or mental health issues.

Use of Wellbeing Services

Analyzing the usage rates of counseling services, mental health resources, and peer support groups. Ensuring accessibility and effectiveness of these services.

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Parental & Community Feedback

Conducting parent surveys to gauge their perceptions of student wellbeing. Engaging with the wider community to support student & staff mental health. Inspection reports.

Policy Reviews & Adjustments

Regularly reviewing and updating the wellbeing policy based on collected data & feedback. Implementing changes to address emerging wellbeing challenges.

10. School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process

To implement this policy our school is required by 2025, to use the six-step School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process with the Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice, to consider their existing provision for wellbeing under each of the four key areas (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships), and to devise and implement a plan for improvement in one key area, as appropriate for the school. In devising and implementing the improvement plan, we should refer to the statements of effective practice in key areas as relevant to the specific focus they have chosen.

The SSE process provides a framework for schools when gathering and analysing evidence, identifying needs and setting targets for achievable outcomes. It is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review, focused on school improvement. The six-step process enables schools to gather and use evidence to identify meaningful and specific targets and actions for improvement. It enables them to create and implement improvement plans, to measure their progress, and to identify their achievements.

11. Staff Wellbeing

Supporting the wellbeing of staff is a vital part of promoting overall wellbeing and is key to maintaining teacher and staff engagement, enthusiasm, and their ability to demonstrate resilience. Enhancing staff wellbeing helps build their capacity to handle challenges and adapt to change, creating an environment that encourages and motivates them to perform effectively.

Newtownwhite Educate Together provides a safe and supportive workplace for all staff members. Employees are encouraged to maintain their personal health and wellbeing and benefit from opportunities to reflect on their own wellbeing and attitudes towards mental health. Information about available wellbeing supports is shared through email and displayed in the staffroom.

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The service offers advice to employees on a variety of topics, including wellbeing, legal and financial matters, bereavement, conflict resolution, and mediation. It also provides guidance and support to school leaders and organizes interventions to help them manage health and wellbeing challenges in the workplace. When appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family members. A family member is defined as a spouse, civil partner, or dependent aged 18 or older who resides at the family home.

12. Links with other Policies

- Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cinealta
- Critical Incident Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Continuum of Support Policy
- Dignity at Work
- AUP/ Phone Free Childhood
- Learn Together

13. Review

Plan for reviewing the policy:

This Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed and evaluated regularly and any training needs arising from implementing such a policy will be addressed.

This policy is a whole school document and a work in development.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 24th October 2025.

Signed:

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:

(Principal)

14. Appendix

1. Wellbeing Framework - Statements of Effective Practice for All
2. Continuum of Support
3. Safeguarding