



Maynooth Educate Together National School

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Maynooth Educate Together National School

The Wellbeing Policy

This policy has been formulated by Maynooth 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.

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School Name	Maynooth Educate Together National School
Date of Commencement	

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1. Introduction:

Maynooth 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:

Our mission is to provide the best possible education, combining the Irish Primary School curriculum and the Educate Together ethos, which fosters development of children's talents, abilities and personalities. We support children in developing attitudes which will enable them to become open minded, creative, respectful, responsible and caring members of society.

3. What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is experienced at a personal level but is associated with and connected to a broad range of risk and protective factors that exist at the individual, relational, community, cultural and societal levels. Our personal wellbeing and that of our local community is connected to the wider world.

“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.”
(World Health Organisation, 2011)

The following definition of Wellbeing aims to take account of its multi-dimensional nature (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2001). For the purpose of the context of school systems, wellbeing 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.”

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



4. Rationale:

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.

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. 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 recommended.

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
- 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 and 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 and emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills

6. The Role of the Teacher / Staff:

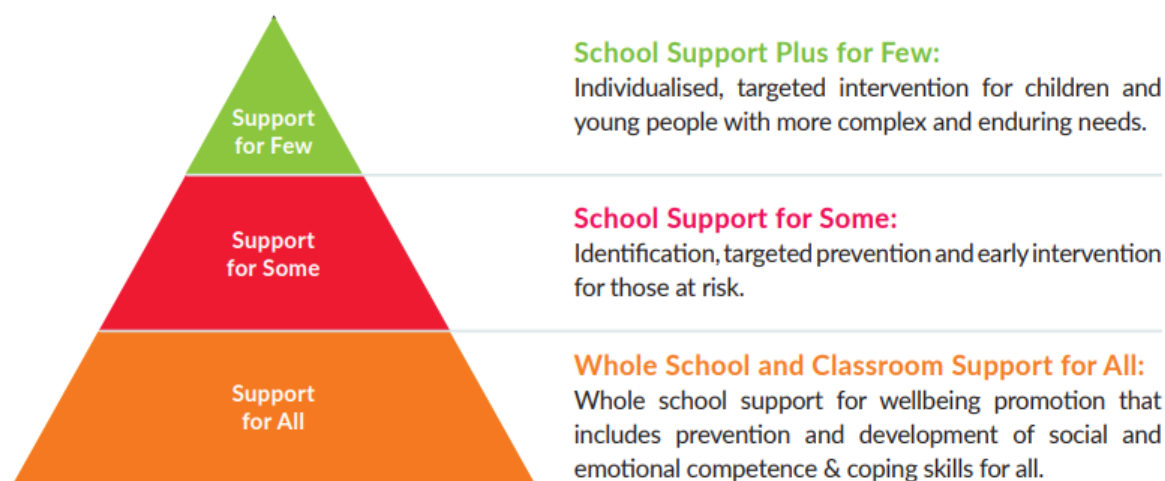
The role of the teacher has also been found to be paramount to children and young people's wellbeing (OECD, 2017), and reaches beyond teaching and learning. The relationship that teachers develop with the young person is a key influence on wellbeing development. The qualified classroom teacher is the best place 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 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 and 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. Friends for Life.

7. A Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

At Maynooth Educate Together, we view the wellbeing of our school community to be essential. A whole school approach includes members of our school community engaging in a collaborative process of change to improve specific areas of school life that impact on wellbeing. Approaches that are taken to improve wellbeing include preventative approaches. Embedded in the whole school approach and in line with the Department's Continuum of Support is the recognition that members of the school community can have different needs at different times.

Continuum of Support:



The Continuum of Support recognises that individual 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 and young people in their class-based groups. Research advocates for the inclusion of both universal and targeted approaches and there is evidence that both universal (support for all) and targeted group support (support for some & few) in schools can effectively prevent and address anxiety and low mood for many children and young people. Some children will still require additional support from specialist support services external to the school.

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



1. Culture and Environment

Maynooth Educate Together aims to promote a culture, an environment and climate that has enhances wellbeing for all in the school community. The school goal is to foster happy, confident, responsible and resilient students who feel connected to Maynooth 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 and 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:

- 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 and 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

Maynooth 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:

- Aistear
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- SPHE
- Science
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Child Safeguarding
- Critical Incidents
- Health Promotion Policy
- Anti-bullying
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Educational Needs

4. Policy and Planning

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

8. Measuring Success

Culture and Environment

- Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- 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.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.
- Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.

Policy & Planning

- Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.
- Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community.
- 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.

Potential ways to measure success

- Student attendance
- Successful school completion
- Successful transitions of students
- Data gathered in school and centre for education e.g. via survey, interview, checklists)

- Data gathered through consultation with children and young people, parents, teachers and other staff members
- Information from Inspection Reports

9. School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process

To implement this policy our school is required by 2023, 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.

Figure 6: Using the SSE process with the Wellbeing Framework for Practice



10. Staff Wellbeing

Support for the wellbeing of staff is also an essential element in wellbeing promotion, and crucial to sustaining teacher/staff engagement, enthusiasm and the 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.

Maynooth Educate Together is a safe and supportive environment for staff members. All staff members are supported in maintaining their personal health and wellbeing. Our staff benefit from reflecting on our own wellbeing and general attitudes to mental health. Members of staff are made aware of supports available for wellbeing through email and signage in the staffroom.

The service gives advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict and mediation. It also provides advice and support to school leaders and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace. Where appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family members. A family member includes a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home.

Managing stress:



For more information on wellbeing, visit

<https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Teacher%20Wellbeing%20Combined%20Workbook%20Revised%202016.17.pdf>

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.

Approved by the Board of Management:

Date:

Signature: