



Ballyowen Meadows Special School

Wellbeing Policy

This policy has been formulated by Ballyowen Meadows Special School to assist with the development of wellbeing within the school. The policy provides a structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in this area. Its implementation is an ongoing process that will ensure the necessary focus on supporting pupils to have a sense of purpose and fulfilment, and to help them to build the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Mission Statement
3. What is wellbeing?
4. Rationale
5. Wellbeing Protective and Risk Factors
6. The Role of the Teacher / Staff
7. A Whole-School Approach to Wellbeing
8. Measuring Success
9. School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process
10. Staff Wellbeing
11. Wellbeing in our school

1. Introduction:

Ballyowen Meadows is a special school catering for autistic pupils from 4 to 12 years. In addition, Ballyowen Meadows Special School provides two Department of Education and Skills approved Early Intervention Classes for children with a diagnosis of autism and who are aged between 3 and 5 years. We are currently conducting a School Self Evaluation in the area of Wellbeing.

2. Mission Statement:

Ballyowen Meadows Special School is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a broad and balanced education. Every child will be supported, guided and encouraged to become successful, confident, happy and autonomous learners by addressing their academic, social, emotional and personal development. We aim, through a comprehensive individual education programme, to provide a safe environment for all pupils so they gain the skills and knowledge to grow and learn.

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.

“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)

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. As set out in circular 0056/2022 the requirement is that all schools will use the SSE process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle by 2025.

Pupil Centred

The wellbeing needs and the best interests of our pupils are a central focus of this policy. This requires us to respect and value the voice of our pupils and foster their belonging and connectedness to the school community. This ensures a sound developmental base for present and future wellbeing.

Equitable, fair and inclusive

Our pupils 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 the child. This means that practices will vary across the school 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 for one pupil may not be appropriate or feasible for 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 pupils. 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 pupils is a shared responsibility. Working in partnership with other departments agencies and the pupils' families is key to ensuring this policy is Implemented.

5. Wellbeing Protective and Risk Factors:

- positive relationships with peers and teachers - including positive classroom management strategies and a sharing of positive behaviour management practices within classroom teams and with parents.
- staff trained in Safety Intervention. Safety Intervention is for those who need to prevent and/or intervene in crisis situations. The programme focuses on prevention and the emphasis is always on the de-escalation of situations.
- a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school atmosphere and participation in school and community activities.
- opportunities for social and emotional learning including the development of attention, self-awareness, self-management, relationship and responsible decision-making skills.
- opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills providing a sense of accomplishment.
- 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 schoolwork.

Wellbeing Risk Factors include:

- disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation.
- lack of external support from state organisations.
- 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.
- poor connection between family and school.
- inconsistent behavioural management and support.
- 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 and SNAs develop with the pupil is a key influence on wellbeing development. The teacher and SNA have a powerful impact on influencing a pupil'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/SNA, 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.

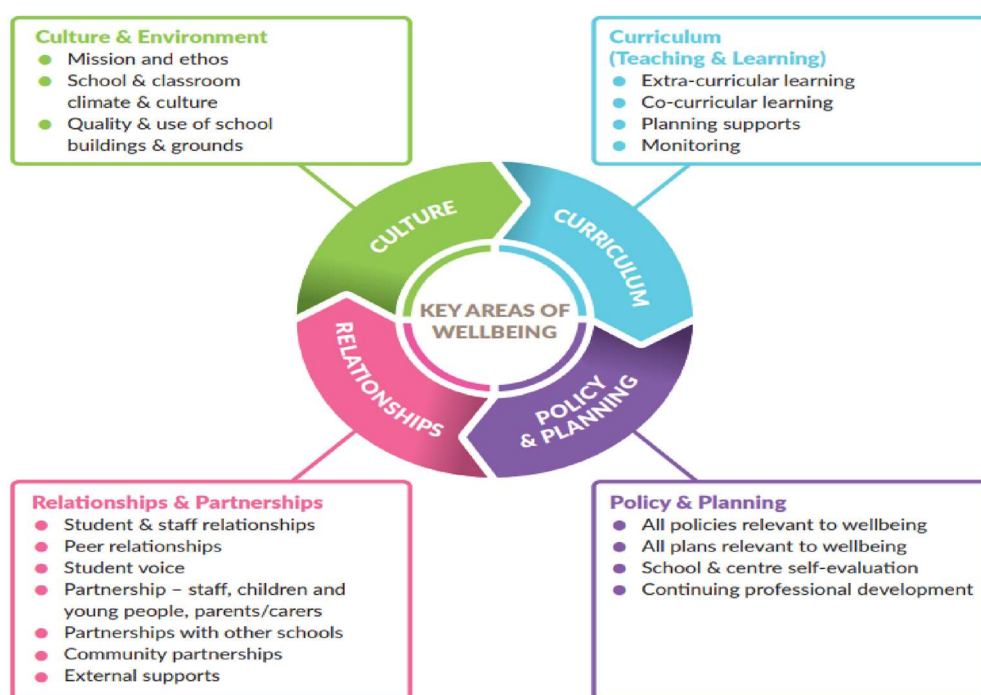
The role of the school is now understood as a place which develops the 'whole child.' Continuing professional development (CPD) is essential for staff to enhance their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. Staff should share their expertise and learning and having opportunities to 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. Zippy's Friends / Zippy's Friends for SEN.

6. A Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

At Ballyowen Meadows Special School, we view the wellbeing of our whole 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.

The IEP/PPP process recognises that individual children 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 pupils 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 pupils. Some children will still require additional support from specialist support services external to the school.

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



Culture and Environment

Ballyowen Meadows Special School aims to promote a culture and environment that enhances wellbeing for all in the school community. The school goal is to foster happy, confident and resilient students who feel connected to Ballyowen Meadows Special School. As a school, we want to encourage a positive school climate and environment whereby individuals are valued, cared for and respected. A positive climate will contribute to effective teaching and learning and positive connections and 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
- Having effective communication between home and school
- Developing a school approach to assessment

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Wellbeing promotion is central to all areas of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning is 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 woven through the curriculum but addressed specifically through:

-Language and Communication:

In Ballyowen Meadows we understand that finding an appropriate means of communication is essential for our pupils. Our staff are trained in PECS and LÁMH. Staff liaise with SLTs to facilitate the use of augmented communication devices and all staff are trained to use visual timetables and First and Then Cards. Staff are being trained in Floor Time techniques to promote interaction and communication skills. Increasing interaction and communication skills helps to promote wellbeing in our pupils.

-SPHE:

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and wellbeing of our pupils and to help them create and maintain supportive relationships. It enables them to develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills. All pupils follow the SPHE curriculum. They participate in the Stay Safe Programme, Food Dudes and Amber Flag activities. It is planned to introduce Zippy's Friends as the core material for a structured Wellbeing programme within our school.

-Physical Education:

PE offers valuable opportunities for physical learning, alongside social, affective, and cognitive learning. PE plays a vital role in a child's overall development, including their wellbeing. We currently offer a swimming programme for 8–12-year-olds. In line with the 1999 Curriculum, we timetable 1hr of structured PE per week, but our pupils are offered many more opportunities for physical activity integrated through the curriculum throughout their school day.

-The Arts:

Each child's learning journey is different, and so the curriculum provides agency and choice to teachers and school leaders as they support children in their development, ensuring equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

-The New Framework for Wellbeing will encompass SPHE and PE.

Policy and Planning

Ballyowen Meadows Special School regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils. 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:

- SPHE Plan
- Language and Communication Plan
- Physical Education Plan
- Arts Plan
- School Ethos, Mission Statement & Vision and Value Statement
- Child safeguarding statement & Risk assessment
- BMSS Anti-Bullying Policy
- Bí Cineálta
- BMSS Transport Policy 2022
- BMSS Code of Behaviour
- BMSS Health and Safety Statement Policy
- Critical Incident Plan
- BMSS Digital Media Acceptable Use & E-Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

Relationships and Partnerships

Ballyowen Meadows Special School 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

- CDNTs
- NEPS
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services / CAMHS ID
- Student Committees (Social Club, Green Schools Committee, Amber Flag Committee)
- Local Community (Swimming pool, Library, Shop, Bus service, Church, Playground, Park, Visiting dogs, community centre)
- DLRCoCo Sports Partnership and Creative Arts Partnership
- Floor Time Facilitator

8. Measuring Success

Culture and Environment

-Pupils and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

-Systems are in place so that the voice of the child, staff member and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

-Pupils experience positive, differentiated, quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.

-Pupils access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competencies which enhances their overall wellbeing.

Policy & Planning

Ballyowen Meadows Special School uses a Self-Evaluation Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.

Ballyowen Meadows incorporates wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.

Relationships and Partnerships

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

-All staff have an increased awareness of the importance of promoting wellbeing, including observing and listening to pupils and directing them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.

Potential ways to measure success

- Student attendance and participation
- Staff retention
- Reduction of incident reports
- Atmosphere within the school
- Data gathered during SSE survey of staff, pupils and parents.
- Information from Inspection Reports
- Evidence of wellbeing activities throughout the school

7. 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 our 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.

The data has been gathered and analysed and the improvement plan has been drafted.

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



9. Staff Wellbeing

Support for the wellbeing of staff is 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.

Members of staff are made aware of supports available for wellbeing through email and signage in the staffroom and toilets.

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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.

Staff Wellbeing Activities:

- Wellness sessions during Additional hours
- Charity coffee Mornings
- Celebrating birthdays
- WhatsApp groups for connection and support
- Walks/Sea swims
- Social Events
- Wellbeing notice board in staffroom

8. Planning for Wellbeing throughout our school day

Explicitly planning for wellbeing in the curriculum and assigning it space on the timetable communicates to students, parents and teachers that this area of learning is important – it makes the school's approach to wellbeing visible and confirms for students in a very recognisable way that their wellbeing matters.

SPHE	Language and Communication	Sensory	PE	Arts	Social Club
Curricular planning for SPHE	Visuals	Messy play	1 hour planned per week	Curricular planning for music, art and drama	Social club Games and Friendship/Social Skills Activities
Zippy's Friends for Pupils with SEN	PECS	Sensory room	swimming	Specialist music teacher	Social Club outings
Stay Safe	Lámh	OT Swing	Active School Week	Dance	Cookery

Amber Flag	Floortime	OT Room	Active Walkways	Mindful Colouring Activities	Practical Life/ independence skills
Food Dudes	Individual Communication Devices	Mindfulness breathing breaks	Walk around Ireland	Creative Arts Partnership	Shopping
Relaxation		Bubble Room	Yoga		Daily Affirmations
Emotions Chart		Sensory Pods	Movement breaks		
Healthy Eating		Ball Pool	DLRCoCO Sportability inclusive cycling programme.		
Worry Box		Trampoline	Active Schools Flag		
Gratitude Journals (Planned)		Blackout tents			
		Sensory Boxes - Sand, water, playdough, theraputty, rice, pasta, essential oils			
		Sensory Garden			

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.

RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on Date: 25 March 2025