



WELLBEING POLICY

Rathcoole ETNS

Sept. 2022

Introductory Statement:

Rathcoole ETNS is currently developing a Wellbeing Promotion Process within the school, which is supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DoE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE). It is strongly supported by the “Health Promoting Schools” Model.

“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.” (WHO), 2001).

Rationale:

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are as important as physical health to lead a happy and fulfilling life. We recognise that children’s mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. Within their school career

all children will experience ups and downs and some may face significant life events. The Department for Education recognises that: 'in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.

Key Principles (as written in the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, DES, 2017-2023)

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.
- *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.

Aims:

At Rathcoole ETNS we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers). We pursue this aim by using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable children.

This policy describes the school's approach to positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and it is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It should be read in conjunction with our SPHE policy, Child Protection Policy, Anti Bullying Policy, SEN policy, Code of Behaviour policy, and Safeguarding policy, in relation to prompt action and wider concerns of vulnerability.

The Policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to children suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Whole School Approach:

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 Rathcoole ETNS. 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 wellbeing. By adopting a whole school approach Rathcoole ETNS aims 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 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 Rathcoole ETNS 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. Rathcoole ETNS aims 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. The school is responsible for providing an environment that nurtures and supports students.

Benefits of promoting pupil well-being in RETNS

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

- Better learning results for pupils
- More done to promote staff health
- A co-ordinated 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

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

Environment

Rathcoole ETNS aims to foster an environment that enhances competence and wellbeing; one that consciously fosters warm relationships, encourages participation, develops pupil and teacher autonomy and cultivates clarity about boundaries, rules and positive expectations. Rathcoole ETNS 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. Rathcoole ETNS 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 Rathcoole ETNS aims to be democratic, inclusive, engaging, differentiated, fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunity for success. The *SPHE curriculum* in Rathcoole ETNS 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. The *Learn Together Programme* promotes a philosophy of education in which no child is considered an outsider; which promotes the fullest development of ability irrespective of gender, class or stereotype and which encapsulates this ethos in a democratic partnership uniquely combining the involvement of parents with the professional role of teachers. 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. (Please refer to Continuum of Support Policy for further information). Rathcoole ETNS

adheres to statutory requirements and is accessible to all pupils. We provide challenges for pupils and staff through a wide range of physical, academic, social and community activities.

Role of teachers

It is essential that all staff continue to develop their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. The qualified classroom teacher 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 wellbeing education. 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. The curricular elements of well-being promotion will be delivered by staff who are trained for this purpose having completed relevant CPD.

School Based Initiatives that Promote Well-being

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

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) which encompasses four themes, Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking.
- SPHE Curriculum (RSE, Stay Safe, Friendship and Anti-Bullying)
- Ethos Curriculum (Learn Together) • Nurture Room
- Zippy's Friends (1st and 2nd class)
- Restorative Practice
- Buddy Bench in Yard
- Zones of Emotional Regulation
- Movement Breaks/Use of Sensory Room
- Continuum of Support Model
- Sitting Frog Mindfulness
- Student Committees: Student Council, Green School Committee, Well-being Committee, Active School Committee.
- Outdoor Learning
- Internet Safety Workshop
- External teachers for different strands of PE to promote active living e.g. GAA (weekly), rugby, gymnastics.
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Active School Flag
- Amber School Flag
- Health Promoting Schools Initiative
- Monthly assemblies and whole-school performances

- Themed Weeks (e.g. Maths Week, Science Week, Engineers Week, Book Week, Climate Action Week etc.)
- Promoting the Arts – whole-school Christmas performance, Seachtain na Gaeilge performances, Grandparents Day performances, Sports Day, Active Active Schools Week, music lessons- tin whistle
- After School Clubs (vary each term)
- Smart Moves
- Communicating with National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to gain SNA access for pupils
- Links with HSE personnel e.g. Primary Care Team, School Age Team, Early Intervention Team, Assessment of Need Team.

Rathcoole ETNS well-being protective factors

In Rathcoole ETNS 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 decisionmaking 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

Well-being risk factors

In our school setting, well-being risk factors include:

- absenteeism
- bullying and relationship difficulties

- low achievement/learning difficulties/special educational needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs
- school transitions
- poor connection between family and school

Link with other policies in the school:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Critical Incident Policy.
- Enrolment Policy.
- Continuum of Support Policy.
- SPHE Policy.
- Staff Induction.

Staff wellbeing

The following practices, initiatives and resources are designed to foster good wellbeing amount the team in Rathcoole ETNS,

- Communication – Clear, timely communication ensures all team members are kept informed of school activities, meetings etc.
- Role of Social Committee: this committee organizes events and initiatives such as gift exchange (Kris Kindle), birthday buddies, staff nights out etc.
- Treat Friday Rota: Organised by AP2
- Acknowledgement of major events: the staff of Rathcoole ETNS mark life events in colleagues' lives such as marriages, births etc
- Access to leave – Staff are involved in the discussion around policies which relate to leave in a democratic and open manner (eg. The development of the career break policy)
- Staff involvement in decision making: school management recognises the importance of the staff voice being heard regarding the running of the school in various fora eg. Meetings, Google forms, surveys
- Welcome Pack for New Staff: New members are inducted by management and provided with copies of essential policies (Child Safeguarding Statement)
- Welcome pack for Substitute Teachers
- Counselling – Staff are made aware by school management of the availability of the Employee Assistance Scheme/Spectrum life (Appendix 1)
- Support for Staff – A Buddy system is implemented at the beginning of each school year to pair all staff with a colleague with whom they can check in regularly.

- Wellbeing Notice Board in the staff room
- Staff Check Ins at the beginning of Staff Meetings

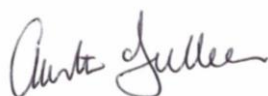
Wellbeing and School Self Evaluation (SSE):

The school keeps its policies, curriculum and procedures under ongoing review. The school will use the SSE process to reflect on how we promote wellbeing in the school. The SSE process will allow us to examine our strengths and weaknesses in this area and consider areas for improvement. This will involve the views of all stakeholders. In line with Circular 0042/2018 we will use the SSE process to develop and implement our wellbeing process.

It is hoped that of September 2022 SSE in our school will focus on Wellness and the implementation of our Wellness policy we aim to use the Indicators of Success as outlined in the “*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 revised October 2018*” as means of identifying our strengths and weaknesses as a starting point on our wellness journey.

Ratification and Communication

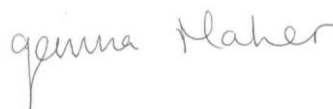
This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on: 20.06.2023



Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 20.06.2023



Signed: _____

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 20.06.2023

Appendix 1 Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Staff wellbeing is promoted and staff are encouraged to be proactive and look after their own wellbeing. Student wellbeing is influenced by the wellbeing of the adults around them. Students pick up on the stress of others so it is important that adults model positive ways of coping with change (for instance around the return to school following Covid 19-related closures).

School staff can access counselling from Spectrum Life Services, provided by DES. They can be contacted by Freephone at 1800 411 057.

Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Centre for School Leadership

(CSL), as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An [Occupational Health Strategy](#) is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.life. They are providing this support under the banner of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, mediation etc. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers 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. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is also provided to employees.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available offering a host of online services with access to live chats, videos, podcasts and blogs on topics around mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is also provided to employees. The platform is available via Web, iOS App or Android App.

- Sign up link at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=yVIIU17>
- organisation code will be pre-populated. If not, organisation code is yVIIU17
- Log in thereafter at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>
- Access the Wellbeing Webinar Calendar via the online portal at <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/personal/my-company>