

Wellbeing Policy Statement

Cloonakilla National School, Bealnamulla, Athlone, Co. Roscommon

Introduction:

Cloonakilla National School seeks to promote healthy lifestyles and the wellbeing of our school community, in a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment. Through its policies, procedures, activities and structures the school aim to create an environment in which:

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- There is respect, tolerance and fairness
- People in difficulty are supported
- There is open and honest communication
- Effort is recognised
- Difference and diversity are valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted
- Initiative and creativity are stressed.

These aims are implemented in the daily transactions between management, staff, students and the wider school community.

Context:

This is a whole school policy which is informed by other policies, including the following:

- School Ethos and Mission Statement
- Code of Behaviour and Discipline
- SPHE Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN Policy
- Homework Policy
- Digital Wellbeing Framework Statement
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Critical Incident Policy

Mission Statement:

- **Growth:** We are dedicated to the Spiritual, emotional and intellectual development of each child
- **Openness:** We aim to provide a positive, inclusive atmosphere and environment based in the mutual co-operation of all involved in its activities
- **Special:** We recognise that each person is created in the image of God
- **Prayer:** Prayer forms a part of our everyday school life
- **Encouragement:** We encourage the children to grow within the Catholic faith
- **Learning:** We provide support for all children to learn
- **Valued:** Each pupil and member of staff is valued for the contribution they make to school life
- **Acceptance:** We accept and respect the religious beliefs of others
- **Love:** We aim to live according to Jesus' command "Love one another as I have loved you"
- **Unique:** We recognise that each pupil has individual needs and abilities and that each develops at a different rate
- **Experience:** We are open to our responsibilities and links with our parish
- **Society:** Our aspiration is to educate our pupils so that they will be fully integrated members of society

Definition of Wellbeing:

This policy is guided by 5 key principles as outlined by the "Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 Revised October 2019". These principles are that a Wellbeing Policy be ...

1. Child/Young person-centred
2. Equitable, fair and inclusive
3. Evidence-informed
4. Outcomes focused
5. Partnership/Collaboration

The Wellbeing Policy document recognises that Wellbeing does not necessarily mean the absence of stress or negative emotions in life or the absence of mental health difficulties and that everyone experiences vulnerability and a need for care at some stages in their journey through life.

(Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 Revised October 2019)

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.

(Adapted from the World Health Organisation (WHO) mental health definition, also adapted for the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines definition developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).



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.

This year, our SSE has focused on Wellness and the development of and implementation of our Wellness policy. We have used the Indicators of Success as outlined in the "*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 revised October 2018*" to develop questionnaires provided to parents and staff, and a focus group for pupils, as means of identifying our strengths and weaknesses as a starting point on our wellness journey.

Parents and staff were provided with questionnaires to ascertain the attitudes and opinions to Wellbeing in our school. A focus group was held with pupils representing classes from 3rd to 6th to ascertain pupil views on wellbeing at our school. The Action Plan resulting from the results of these is available in *Appendix A*.

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

"Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 revised October 2018"

Indicators of Wellbeing:

Six indicators of Wellbeing have been identified. They are:

- **Active:** Being physically active is an important element in staying well.
- **Responsible:** Each person must take responsibility for their own choices and make decisions which promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.
- **Connected:** It is important, for our wellbeing, to be connected to other people and to interact with others in a positive way. We should also appreciate the implications of our actions for those around us and further afield.

- **Resilient:** Everyone goes through challenges in their life. By building resilience, we hope to give our students the skills to cope with difficult situations.
- **Respected:** Feeling respected, listened to and cared for are key aspects of feeling well. Positive, respectful relationships are also central to maintaining our wellbeing.
- **Aware:** To stay well, we need to be aware of our thoughts, our emotions and our limitations. We should also be aware of those around us, conscious of how our actions might impact on their wellbeing.

Ten Actions to Promote the Wellbeing of a School Community:

1. Developing and maintaining a safe, caring culture and climate within the school where a sense of belonging and connectedness is fostered.
2. Building positive relationships between teachers and children to promote participation, social interaction and pro-social behaviour.
3. Adopting a whole-school approach to health promotion, where health is promoted by all and not just by a few members of staff.
4. Actively involving children, their parents/guardians and the wider community in developing and implementing school policies to support mental health and health promotion.
5. Supporting and implementing a well-planned, consistent and integrated SPHE curriculum to enable children enhance their coping, resilience, communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills.
6. Developing whole-school systems and structures to support the early identification of children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.
7. Actively involving, supporting and encouraging children's participation in extra-curricular activities.
8. Fostering a whole-school ethos that accepts and values diversity within the pupil and staff population.
9. Providing easy access to information for pupils and staff on supports available to them within the school and wider community.
10. Facilitating access to continuing professional development for school staff on the promotion of the mental health and well-being of children.

(Well-being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion 2015)

In addition to these actions we also recognise the importance of providing opportunities to develop the necessary skills to cope with using online technology in a safe and appropriate way and as well as providing opportunities

to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to school work e.g. Homework policy etc.

(Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 Revised October 2019)

Cloonakilla NS has always placed a strong emphasis on the wellbeing of the school community. Through its policies and procedures, the school seeks to provide a safe, caring environment for all.



The school recognises the importance of addressing all educational needs through the Continuum of Support:

As well as the implementation of policies to support wellbeing, the school provides wellbeing spaces and organises a number of events each year, aimed at the wellbeing of our school community. These events are organised by various teachers over the course of the year. The following summarises some of these policies, initiatives and activities:

- Policies such as the Code of Behaviour and Discipline, Safeguarding Statement, Acceptable Internet Use Policy, Administration of Medicines Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy and Anti-Bullying Policy all support the wellbeing of pupils and are available on the school website.
- The school Safeguarding Statement is reviewed at regular intervals by the Board of Management.
- Children have access to a well-resourced Sensory Garden, Sensory Room and well-maintained outdoor and indoor recreation spaces.
- Movement and activity breaks are utilised by those who require them.
- Active School Week is organised annually to promote physical activity.

- Playground games, movement and activity breaks and WOW Days organised by the Active School Committee.
- The Student Council, Amber Flag Team and Active School Committee undertake a variety of initiatives throughout the year to promote wellbeing in our school community:

Student Council -Our Cloonakilla NS Student Council is a representative structure working under the guidance of the principal and other staff members. It introduces a system in which the pupils can have a voice in the school using democratic processes. The council is voted in by their peers and meets on a regular basis.

Some of the activities of the Student Council include:

- Mentoring programmes for younger students e.g. yard buddies
- Fun activities organised throughout the year to celebrate holidays and special occasions e.g. Fun sports day.
- Fundraising initiatives to raise funds for school equipment e.g. laptops. The items to be purchased are decided on by each year's committee
- Guest Speakers in areas such as Cyber Safety and the RSE programme
- Healthy lunches- treat only on Friday

Amber Flag Team - The Amber Flag Team in Cloonakilla NS is a group of student representatives from the senior classes, elected by their peers, under the guidance of a staff member, who meet regularly to organise activities throughout the year to promote positive mental health strategies and awareness of mental health.

Such activities include:

- Fundraising for Buddy Benches and demonstrating to younger pupils how to use the Buddy Bench
- Amber Buddies on the yard at the beginning of the year to mentor and support new pupils
- Fundraising for Wellbeing resources each year. The resources to be purchased is decided on by each year's committee.
- Organising other Wellbeing activities throughout the year e.g. Joke Days, Photography Competitions, Wellbeing Wednesdays, Quizzes, Wellbeing awareness events for the school community.
- Wellbeing Section on the school website
<http://www.cloonakillans.com/wellbeing/>
- Maintaining an Amber Flag Noticeboard.

- Applying for the Amber Flag annually.

Active Schools Committee- The Cloonakilla Active School Team is a group of pupils, under the guidance of staff, who meet regularly to plan activities throughout the year to promote physical activity and wellbeing.

Such activities include:

- School teams, blitzes and competitions- Gaelic football, soccer, basketball, athletics, rugby etc.
- Annual School Sports Day
- Maintain sports and P.E. equipment
- Maintain the Active School Noticeboard, celebrating the sporting achievements of students
- Participation in various active initiatives e.g. European Sports Week, Run around Europe Challenge and various in-school active competitions throughout the year.
- Plan WOW (Walk to school on Wednesday) days in conjunction with the Green School Committee.
- Arrange guest teachers and sports role models to visit the school.
- Applying for the Active Flag annually.

In addition to the above, the school seeks to promote an environment which is positive, affirming and true to our ethos. The school will endeavour to provide as many curricular and extra-curricular activities as possible, thereby giving our students the opportunity to enhance their wellbeing inside and outside of the classroom.

Class teachers, special education teachers, SNAs and parents work together with the leadership team, Board of Management and other stakeholders to provide an inclusive education experience for all pupils at Cloonakilla NS, in line with the school's SEN policy.

The school has a robust Anti-Bullying policy in place, along with various initiatives and programmes in the area of S.P.H.E. such as the R.S.E. programme, Stay Safe and various safety and wellbeing initiatives (further detailed in the S.P.H.E. whole school plan and relevant policies). A new 'Cycle Against Suicide' programme to aid the development of resilience will be piloted in the school in September 2023, to complement the current SPHE programmes already in place.

Staff Wellbeing:

The wellbeing of school staff is also of extreme importance. As a school, we aim to support staff wellbeing through our policies, procedures and practices. For example:

- The promotion of a safe, comfortable teaching environment
- An open door policy whereby staff can discuss issues of concern with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal in a confidential manner
- Regular staff meetings
- CPD is encouraged and supported by the Board of Management
- Classes are resourced as well as possible. Requests for extra resources are considered and authorised, as appropriate
- Provision of a mentoring programme for newly qualified teachers, through engagement with the Droichead programme, overseen by the school's Professional Support Team.
- Provision of an Employee Assistance Programme (Spectrum Life).
- Staff have the opportunity to develop their leadership capacity through various initiatives, committees and groups through a distributed model of leadership.

Signed: _____ Principal

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____ (To be revised in November 2024).

Appendix A

Improvement Plan:

Based on suggestions provided from Parents, Staff and Pupils and Survey Results

Improvements in Pupil Wellbeing:

<u>Improvement Strategy</u>	<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>
Children will be consulted in the development of school plans, activities and policies through their representation on the Student Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. O' Rourke • Ms. Kelly • Student Council Representatives
Staff will endeavour to communicate with parents when things are going well for their child.	All staff
More 'Wellbeing Spaces' will be provided for junior classrooms, as funds allow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Cronolly • Amber Flag Committee
Children will be encouraged to interact in a calm manner with staff and other pupils.	All staff, parents, guardians and pupils
Children in younger classes will be reminded on a termly basis of how to use the 'Buddy Benches' to encourage positive interactions on the yard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amber Flag Committee • Class teachers
Wellbeing Wednesdays for staff and pupils where wellbeing activities will be announced over the intercom for the entire school community to engage in.	Amber Flag Committee
Pilot of new 'Cycle Against Suicide' Wellbeing Programme Sept 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Cronolly • Class Teachers

Improvements in Staff Wellbeing:

<u>Improvement Strategy</u>	<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>
All staff will be encouraged to prioritise their own health and wellbeing in the following ways:	
At the beginning of each year, staff will be made aware of the Employee Assistance Service (Spectrum Life*) and details of this will be displayed on the Staff Noticeboard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. O'Rourke will draw attention to the details at beginning of year. • Each staff member has personal responsibility to look after their own wellbeing.
Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) will be given the opportunity to engage with the Droichead programme and will work with an experienced mentor.	Professional Support Team (Current trained P.S.T. members are Mrs. O'Rourke, Ms. Gately & Mrs. Cronolly) & N.Q.T.s
More regular opportunities for social events will be organised for staff e.g. lunches provided at school, social events outside of school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Committee volunteers at beginning of each year. • All staff members encouraged to make suggestions/organise events.
Teachers will be encouraged to collaborate with one another and engage in paired activities, shared planning and co-operate in organising various activities.	All teachers
Wellbeing Wednesdays for staff and pupils where wellbeing activities will be announced over the intercom for the entire school community to engage in.	Amber Flag Committee
Staff are encouraged to access relevant CPD and professional networking opportunities	All staff

***NOTE:** [Spectrum.Life](#) is the provider of the Employee Assistance Support for teachers.

Free phone **1800 411 057** or text 'Hi' to 087 145 2056 on SMS or 087 369 0010 on WhatsApp.

This employee assistance and wellbeing programme service provides teachers and their immediate family members with access to **confidential** counselling (supportive and solution-focused). It can assist teachers in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. The service is free and confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to teachers.

	High Level Actions and Sub-actions	Date Begin	Date Due	By Whom?
1	Strengthen and align current structures within the Department and between the Department and other relevant Departments to ensure the coordinated implementation of this <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .			
1.1	Consider and agree an optimal structural arrangement within the Department of Education and Skills for effective implementation of this <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .	Q3 2018	Q3 2018	DES
1.2	Establish a Wellbeing Implementation Working Group with a Wellbeing Coordinator to lead the work of supporting implementation of the <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .	Q3 2018	Q3 2018	DES
1.3	Develop a cross-departmental structure to facilitate consultative processes and protocols between the Department and the education partners, the DOH/HSE and DCYA/Tusla, and with other relevant departments, as appropriate.	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	DES
1.4	Convene a Wellbeing Implementation Advisory Group of key stakeholders including children and young people, and external experts, to advise on implementation of the <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .	Q1 2019	Q4 2023	DES

Wellbeing Implementation Plan 2018-2023

"Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 revised October 2018"