

Cabra Central National School

Health and Wellbeing Policy

Rationale

The promotion of wellbeing is central to the Department's mission to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. Schools play a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing through a range of activities and approaches to support the academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of all children and young people. Our education system is key to equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deal with challenges that impact on their wellbeing (Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, 2018).

In the school environment, social and emotional skills do not exist in isolation but interact with cognitive skills development. 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 (OECD 2014). Schools play a key role in developing and enhancing young people's wellbeing as they spend a large proportion of their time in school during their formative years. Children and young people learn more effectively and have better academic outcomes if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves and feel acknowledged and supported in their schools. National and international research highlights that the wellbeing of our children and young people is critical to their success in education and in life (Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, 2018).

Cabra Central National School has chosen wellbeing promotion as a focus for our School Self-Evaluation (SSE). This will involve the development, implementation and review of wellbeing promotion in our school, which includes tracking impact.

Introduction

This policy sets out the vision and ambition of Cabra Central National School to ensure that the experience of our children throughout their primary education will be one that enhances, promotes, values and nurtures their wellbeing. Key to this ambition is building on the good practice already in place and the capacity of our school to assess, understand, evaluate and promote the key factors that will lead to optimal promotion of student wellbeing in our school setting.

Key Principles

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.
- **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.
- **Partnership/Collaboration:** The wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared responsibility. Working in partnership with parents, guardians, school staff, other departments and agencies is key to ensuring this policy is implemented.

What is Wellbeing?

“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, 2001)

Wellbeing is multidimensional:

1. Physical
2. Social
3. Mental
4. Emotional
5. Spiritual

The Mental Health Foundation (2002) suggests that children who are mentally healthy possess the ability to:

- develop psychologically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, spiritually
- initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships
- use and enjoy solitude
- become aware of others and empathise with them
- play and learn

- develop a sense of right and wrong
 - resolve (face) problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them
- (Alexander, 2002)

Wellbeing Protective and Risk Factors

Risk and protective factors relating to wellbeing promotion that are specific to the school or education setting have been identified.

In the school/educational setting 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.

In the school/ education setting, *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.
- 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

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.

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. Weaving Wellbeing.

Two-tiered Approach to Wellbeing Promotion

In Cabra National School we adopt a preventative, two-tiered approach to wellbeing promotion, with interventions at both universal whole school and individual targeted levels.

1. Whole School Approach

Our whole school approach involves all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process of change to improve specific areas of school life which impact on wellbeing. By adopting a whole school approach, we aim 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 and wellbeing. In Cabra Central National School we embrace School Support for All as a whole school approach that focuses on promoting wellbeing for all members of the school community. School Support for All is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching, early identification and intervention for children who are showing mild or transient signs of difficulty. Students flourish where there is a whole school approach to supporting their growth and wellbeing.

Our Whole School Approach involves:

- Raising awareness of wellbeing promotion.
- Regular review and development of policies relating to wellbeing such as critical incidents, bullying, child protection etc.
- Encouraging professional development for school staff in wellbeing promotion.
- implementing the SPHE curriculum which includes a focus on whole school approaches to wellbeing and health promotion
- Implementing universal evidence based programmes and interventions.
- Establishing school structures for supporting staff and students including the school support team.
- Establishing mechanisms such as student councils to ensure that the voices of children are heard.
- Planning, collaborating and appropriate sharing of information between schools when children are making the transition into primary school or moving into post-primary school.
- Liaising with appropriate external agencies and services eg NEPS psychologists, NCSE etc.

Benefits of a Whole School Approach

- Adopting a whole school approach has been found internationally to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for individual children including:
- Better learning results for pupils.
- Increased pupil self-esteem.
- Improved behaviour.
- Lowered incidence of bullying.
- Increased inclusion.
- School environment is safer and more secure.
- Improved relationships within the school.
- More involvement of parents/guardians.
- Better use of outside agencies ..
- More proactive in promotion of staff wellbeing

Whole School Initiatives that Promote Wellbeing

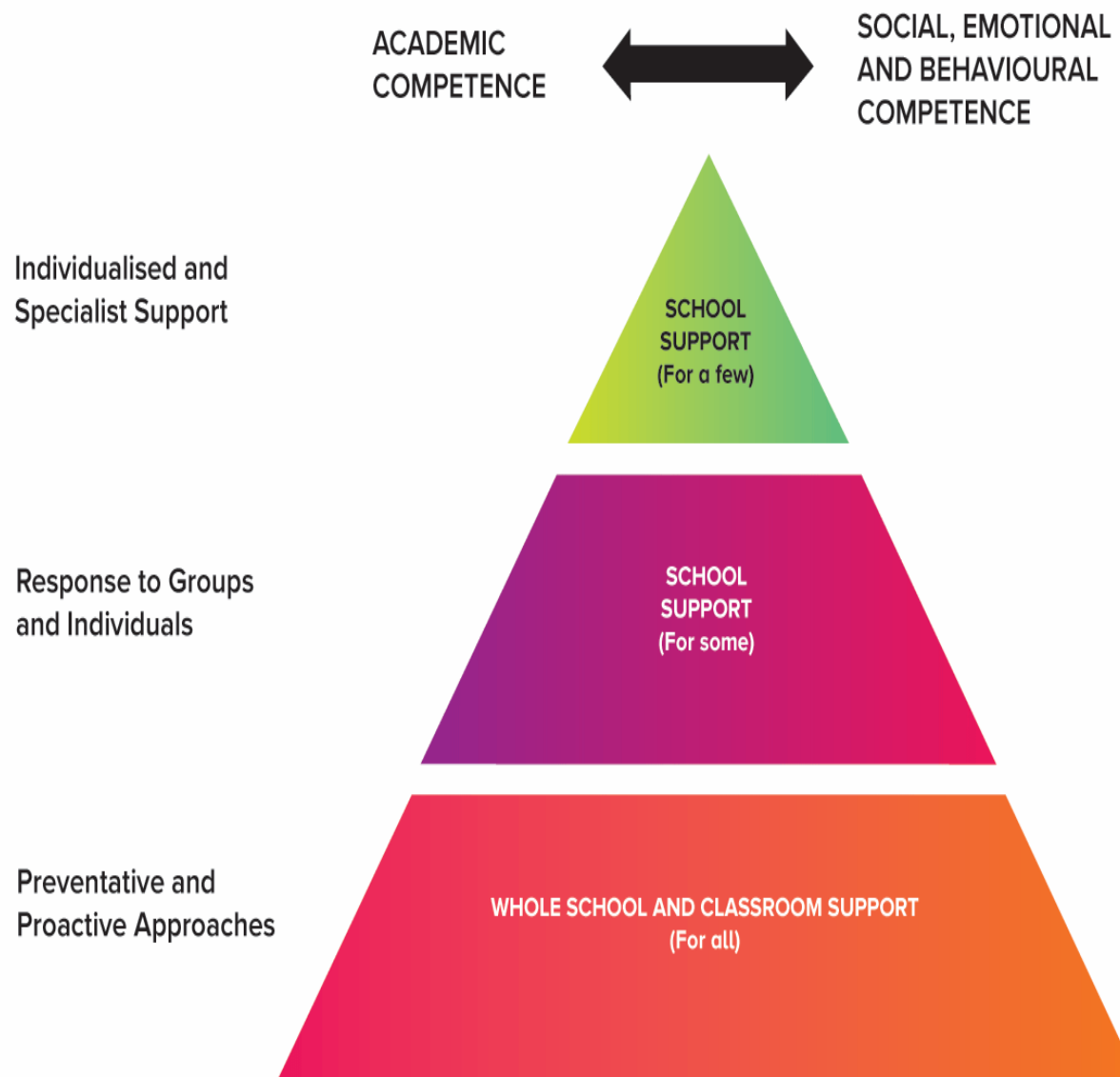
Cabra Central National School implements a number of programmes and initiatives that support the wellbeing of our pupils, including but not limited to:

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- SPHE Curriculum, RSE Modules, Stay Safe module.
- Continuum of Support SEN Model
- Student Council, Green School Committee,
- Internet Safety
- Healthy Eating Food Dudes Programme
- Project based learning
- Outdoor learning
- External PE coaches e.g. tennis
- School Swimming lessons
- Sports Days
- Child friendly, bright classrooms
- Use of a communal quiet zone
- Buddy benches in the playground
- Movement breaks
- Rainbow moments (Weaving Wellbeing)
- Park and Stride Mornings
- Weekly whole-school assemblies
- Themed weeks (e.g. Maths Week, Science Week etc)
- Promoting the Arts – Christmas Concerts, purchase of school musical instruments
- Entry into art competitions (Texaco & Credit Union)
- Killinkere Cross Country competition
- School discos, beetle drives and cake sales
- Links with NCSE
- Links with NEPS
- Links with local sports organisations

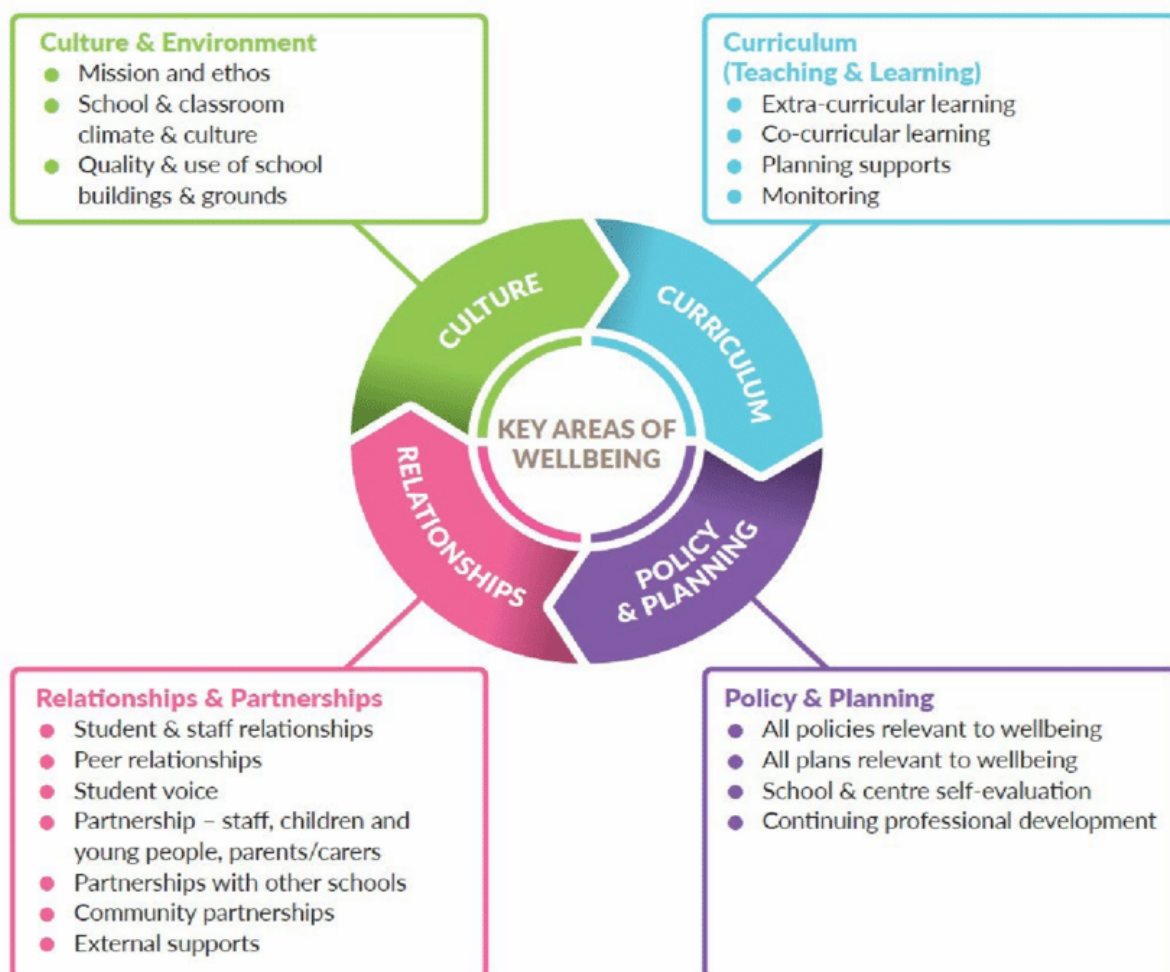
2. Individual and Targeted Support

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 the wellbeing needs of our pupils.

Table 3: Continuum of Support



The Department of Education and Skills Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice assist schools in ensuring that wellbeing promotion is embedded within the school's existing practice. They advocate a multicomponent approach to wellbeing promotion to ensure that all of the key areas that contribute to wellbeing promotion are given a focus.



Key Area 1-Culture and Environment

Cabra Central National School aims to cultivate an environment that enhances wellbeing for all who learn, work and visit. Our school environment is one that consciously fosters warm relationships, encourages participation, develops pupil and teacher autonomy and provides clarity of boundaries, rules and positive expectations. Cabra Central National School 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 provide a climate in which positive relationships, respect and consideration for others prosper, and where individuals are encouraged to make a vital contribution through their personal skills and qualities. Our school leaders actively promote wellbeing in our school, in which we strive to create a culture and climate which is accepting and supportive for students, staff and parents. Through nurturing quality relationships within the school we facilitate the wellbeing of students and staff members as well as fostering a shared responsibility for promoting positive wellbeing. We are proud of our building and the spacious, rural setting in which our students can safely learn and be active. The grounds and building are well maintained and regular enhancements such as our additional outdoor classroom are carefully planned and applied for.

Key Area 2- Curriculum

Wellbeing promotion is central to all areas of teaching and learning in Cabra Central National School. Teaching and learning is child centred, inclusive, engaging and differentiated. We deliver an integrated curriculum that recognises the richness and uniqueness of the individual through a differentiated approach, and the importance of high quality teaching and learning experiences for all. Wellbeing promotion is addressed across the curriculum through:

- SPHE
- Literacy
- Aistear
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- SESE subjects
- Arts Education.

SPHE:

Social, Personal and Health Education is central to pupil development in its broadest sense and is an essential part of a school's curriculum. The SPHE curriculum in Cabra Central National School strongly supports the social and emotional wellbeing of our pupils, by placing an emphasis on progressing children's social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and learning. SPHE encompasses the development of emotional literacy which is the ability to understand emotions, listen to others and empathise. This includes provision of safe, secure and comfortable environments that enable children to share their concerns. Key characteristics of the SPHE programme delivered in our school:

- It is viewed as a continuous and developmental process.
- It comprises of high quality programmes such RSE, Walk Tall and aspects of Weaving Wellbeing.
- We acknowledge a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community in ensuring children's wellbeing.
- It is based on the needs of the child.
- It is effective and consistent in delivery.
- It has been developed in an integrated and cross-contextual way.
- It engages children in activity based learning (NCCA 1999)

Aistear: Cabra Central National School has adopted as the four themes: Identity and Belonging, Communication & Exploring and Thinking of the Aistear programme into our Infant Education programme enabling our youngest students to engage playfully with activities and role play which foster language, communication and social skills development.

Literacy:

Cabra Central National School consistently advocates for the lifelong benefits associated with reading with both students and parents. We strive to foster a love of reading and provide opportunities for a culture of reading to flourish in our school through explicit

literacy teaching and the integration of Literacy Lift-Off, Story Time, DEAR time, Library time, Talk, Building Bridges, links to local libraries, visits from authors and World Book Day into our programme for literacy. We explore issues around diversity, emotional regulation, bereavement and empathy through high quality picture books in our library. We carefully monitor each child's progress in reading attainment and provide additional supports where needed.

Physical Education

Cabra Central National School recognises the important role P.E plays in the primary school curriculum. PE is delivered both by specialist providers (swimming and tennis coaches) and class teachers. We encourage walking, cycling or scooting to school as part of our Green Flag initiative but understand this is difficult due to most pupils coming to school via bus. We incorporate movement breaks into our day and are fortunate to have the Forest Park nearby for nature walks and S.E.S.E topics.

Religious Education:

Cabra Central National School has a Church of Ireland ethos. We are inclusive of children of all faiths or no faith. Our SPHE programme is taught cross-culturally. General themes around respect, the environment, community welfare etc are taught at whole class level.

SESE:

Cabra Central National School adopts an active, topic learning approach to SESE subjects. Our aim is to foster curiosity, develop language and critical thinking skills and to enable children to acquire knowledge and skills through active participation and engaging learning experiences.

Arts Education:

Cabra Central National School enjoys celebrating creativity and fostering the development of the imagination through our Visual Arts, Music and Drama programmes. In addition to curricular provision for Arts subjects Cabra Central National School participates in a range of Arts related experiences which include, but are not limited to:

- Seachtain na Gaeilge
- Class based assemblies which include music/ dance/ poetry and story.
- Christmas Concerts
- Debating

Key Area 3- Policy and Planning

Cabra National School regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils to ensure that they are current and in accordance with the school's 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:

- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- SPHE
- RSE
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding
- Critical Incidents
- Health and Safety
- Anti-bullying
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Educational Needs
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Homework Policy

4. Policy and Planning

Cabra Central National 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
- Patronage
- Parents Teacher Association
- Student Committees
- Local schools
- 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.

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 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 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)
- 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 we 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.



Cabra Central National School “Wellbeing” Improvement Plan Summary 2023-2026

<i>Wellbeing Area</i>	<i>Agreed Action</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Success Criteria.</i>
Environment	Pupils will plant flowers and vegetables in the beds near the Infant yard and around the new outdoor	All Staff	2023-2024	Completed

	classroom.			
	Utilise the beautiful Dún an Rí Forest Park on our doorstep for wellbeing walks, S.E.S.E topics and nature trails.	All Staff and Green Flag Team	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.
	Organise a section within our library that is specifically for wellbeing and deals with issues such as bereavement / special needs/ anxiety/ new siblings etc.	All Staff	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.
Curriculum	Organise a Kindness/ Friendship Week to highlight the importance of wellbeing in our school.	Student Council and All Staff.	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.
	All classes will experience Internet Safety Day as part of their S.P.H.E programme.	All Staff	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.
Partnerships	Continue developing partnerships with Parents/ Guardians, Food Dudes,	All Staff	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.

	Sports Coaches, HSE Health Promotion Unit NEPS & NCSE.			
Policy & Planning	Develop Whole School Wellbeing Strategy	All Staff	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.
	Continue to develop other key policy areas with Wellbeing in mind such as Child Protection, Code Of Behaviour, Anti Bullying etc.	All Staff	2023-2026	Annual review and feedback.

Indicators of Success

In Cabra Central National School we used the Wellbeing Indicators of Success to identify our strengths and targets for improvement, and to actively monitor our progress and outcomes in relation to wellbeing promotion over time. We achieved this by accessing the opinions and views of all parents/ guardians, pupils and staff throughout the process. The Wellbeing Indicators of Success, outlined in Table 5, are the broad outcomes to which the Department aspires and wants schools and centres for education to accomplish.

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture & 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 & 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.

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.

Cabra Central National School aims to be 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. All staff are made aware of supports for teacher wellbeing and that individual teachers requiring additional support at a particular time may access the Employee Assistance Service (EAS). Spectrum Life was awarded the EAS contract in July 2020. The service provided is known as 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile'. The EAS provides 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. 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. The platform is available via Web, iOS App or Android App Web, iOS App or Android App.

As part of the EAS, a Mental Health Promotion Manager is also available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives. Spectrum Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools. Employee Assistance Service: Free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 or text 'Hi' to 0873690010 - available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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:

Chairperson's Signature:_____

Principal's Signature:_____