



Firhouse Educate Together National School

Wellbeing Policy 2021

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| DES Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework | 4 |
| Protective Factors and Risk Factors for Pupil Wellbeing | 5 |
| Pastoral Care Team (PCT) | 7 |
| School-based Initiatives to Promote Pupil Wellbeing | 8 |
| Staff Wellbeing | 11 |
| Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme | 12 |
| Managing School Community Wellbeing during Covid-19 Closures | 14 |
| Monitoring the impact of this policy | 15 |
| Ratification and review of the policy | 16 |

Introduction

Wellbeing has been described by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2001) as follows:

“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.”

The Board of Management of Firhouse Educate Together N.S. recognises the importance of the promotion of wellbeing throughout our entire school community, particularly that of pupils and staff.



Source:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/wellbeingineducation/catalogue-of-resources-for-primary-schools.pdf>

Rationale:

Firhouse Educate Together N.S. fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect children and support their wellbeing in the school and community. We aim to encourage self-confidence and self-esteem in a happy atmosphere and secure environment. Success in education and wellbeing are inextricably linked.

“Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community” (cf NCCA Guidelines for Wellbeing 2018).

This is a whole-school policy for the school community. 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. There is substantial evidence that wellbeing programmes in schools, when implemented effectively, can produce long-term benefits for children. Firhouse Educate Together N.S. recognises the importance of developing the whole person; emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. A supportive school environment where high expectations and aspirations are the norm for all children can of itself contribute significantly to lifelong health and wellbeing.

Our school provides a range of supports and interventions that address the emotional, mental, spiritual and physical needs of our students. These have informed our aims for this policy:

Aims of this policy:

- Develop and maintain a safe, caring culture and climate within the school where a sense of belonging and connectedness is fostered.
- Build positive relationships between teachers and children in promoting participation, social interaction and constructive social behaviour.
- Adopt a whole-school approach to health promotion, where health is promoted by all members of staff.
- Actively involve children, their parents/guardians and the wider community in developing and implementing school policies to support mental health and physical health promotion.
- Support and implement a well-planned, consistent and integrated SPHE curriculum to enable children enhance their coping, resilience, communication, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.

- Develop a whole school system and structure to support the early identification of children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.
- Actively involve, support and encourage children's participation in extracurricular activities.
- Foster a whole school ethos that accepts and values diversity within the pupil and staff population.
- Provide easy access to information for pupils and staff on supports available to them within the school and wider community.
- Facilitate access to continuing professional development for school staff on the promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of children.

DES Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework

In creating this policy, the staff of Firhouse Educate Together N.S. drew on several sources. Principal among these sources was the Department of Education and Skills' document '*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*' (2019).

In particular, the DES document states:

The vision and ambition of the Department of Education and Skills in relation to Wellbeing Promotion sets out to ensure that by 2023:

- *the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education*
- *all schools and centres for education will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to promote the wellbeing of all their children and young people*

Firhouse Educate Together N.S. commits to keep these goals at the forefront of our culture and practice.

Protective Factors and Risk Factors for Pupil Wellbeing

The Department of Education and Skills (DES, 2018) identified a range of both protective factors and risk factors with regards to pupil wellbeing. Firhouse Educate Together N.S. recognises the importance of considering the factors below when promoting whole-school wellbeing.

Protective Factors:

- 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

Risk Factors:

- 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

Pastoral Care Team (PCT)

The Pastoral Care Team is part of the pastoral care system in the school. That system encompasses a range of supports that cater for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of students. The team meets regularly in response to issues that arise with regards to pupils' additional learning needs or behavioural needs. More information on the latter is available in the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

Members of the team include:

- Collette Dunne: Principal
- Paul O'Dwyer: Deputy Principal
- Lynne McCullagh: Assistant Principal
- Conor Finnerty: Assistant Principal
- Alison Walker: SEN Co-ordinator

Other staff members (e.g. class teachers and ISAs) may attend as necessary. Outside agencies are also invited to this weekly meeting as appropriate.

The team is a pupil-focused mechanism put in place in order to:

- Co-ordinate the support available for pupils in the school
- Facilitate links to the community and other non-school support services
- Enable pupils with additional support needs to continue to access an education appropriate to their abilities and needs
- Assist staff to manage pupils effectively.
- Ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to pupil wellbeing and support.
- Advise school management on the development and review of effective pupil support policies and structures.

School-based Initiatives to Promote Pupil Wellbeing

Firhouse Educate Together N.S. runs a range of programmes and initiatives across the different levels of the school to promote wellbeing. The list below lists many of these initiatives but it is not an exhaustive list.

- Ethos-based education (Learn Together curriculum)
- Continuum of Support Model
- Weekly assemblies
- PGTA
- Curriculum Areas that specifically support wellbeing
 - SPHE (including Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE)
 - P.E.
 - Learn Together ethical education curriculum,
 - Aistear
- School-based programmes
 - Friends Programme: Fun Friends, Friends for Life
 - Roots of Empathy
- School-wide initiatives with pupil-led committees
 - Green School
 - Active School
 - Amber Flag
 - Student Council
 - Yellow Flag
 - Forest schools
- Promotion of and engagement in Sport
 - Partnerships with external sport bodies and clubs (e.g. FAI - Futsol; St Anne's GAA; Leinster Rugby; South Dublin County Council - Marathon Kids and athletics meets)
 - External coaches for different strands of the PE curriculum (e.g. rugby, cricket, GAA)
 - Swimming lessons for pupils in 1st - 4th Class
 - Active School Flag programme
- Themed activities, weeks and days (e.g. Space Week, Science Week, Engineers Week, Maths Week, World Book Day, Self-Expression Day, Wellbeing Week)
- Safer Internet Day
- Restorative practice
- Traffic Lights display in each classroom for emotional regulation
- Buddy bench created in 2015.

- Role of our school garden - the school recognises the value of learning about and in nature.
- Outdoor learning - a schedule has been established for use of the picnic tables by all classes during lesson times.
- Movement breaks between lessons and for the benefit of pupils with ASN.
- School Policies that promote wellbeing
 - Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment: This identifies risks to the children when in school and outlines the procedures the school has in place to address and to minimise these risks.
 - Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP): The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.
 - Anti-Bullying policy: recognises the risk Bullying poses to wellbeing and outlines procedures to be followed for reporting and dealing with incidences of Bullying.
 - Code of Positive Behaviour: A purpose of this code is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. The policy lists the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community, as well as sanctions that may be taken to ensure the well-being of all is protected.
 - Attendance Statement: This statement of strategy outlines Firhouse ETNS's approach to good attendance, as absenteeism is listed as a risk factor to pupil's wellbeing.SPHE Policy: The promotion of the child's personal wellbeing is listed as an aim of our SPHE education.
 - Communications policy: This policy recognises that "good communication is essential to maintaining a positive working and learning environment. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect in a happy, caring and supportive environment means that people feel included, consulted and informed."
 - Healthy Eating policy: promotes Healthy Eating to encourage the physical wellbeing of the child.
 - Positive Language Policy: promotes use of positive thoughts and positive language when communicating with members of the school community.

Staff Wellbeing

The following practices, initiatives and resources are designed to foster good wellbeing among the team of Firhouse Educate Together N.S.:

- Communications Policy: clear, timely communication ensures all team members are kept informed of school activities, meetings, etc. Staff are reminded to contact one another within reasonable working hours in order to respect work-life balance.
- Role of the social committee: this committee organises events and initiatives such as gift exchange (e.g. Kris Kindle), birthday buddies, staff nights out, etc.
- Acknowledgement of major events: the staff of Firhouse ETNS mark life events in colleagues' lives such as marriages, births, etc.
- Access to leave etc: Staff are involved in the discussion around policies which relate to leave in a democratic, open manner (e.g. the development of the school's Career Break Policy, 2020).
- 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 (e.g. meetings, forms/surveys, casual conversations, etc).
- Welcome pack for staff: new members of the team are inducted by management and provided with copies of essential policies (e.g. Safeguarding, Code of Positive Behaviour, etc).
- Counselling: Staff are made aware by the school management of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service/Spectrum.Life (further information is provided on the next page).
- Support for staff: a buddy system is being developed to pair all staff with a colleague with whom they can check in regularly in the event of an issue arising or staff feeling run down or overwhelmed.
- Staff check-in at the start of meetings: Staff are encouraged to pause and reflect on their energy levels/emotions at the start of meetings.

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 Inspire Workplace Services, provided by DES. They can be contacted by Freephone at 1800-411-057 or by email at support@carecallwellbeing.ie.

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>

Managing School Community Wellbeing during Covid-19 Closures

The staff of Firhouse Educate Together N.S. recognises that the school closure due to Covid-19 has caused unique challenges and stress for all families, to different degrees. In response to this challenge, we are implementing the following response:

- Care calls: class and SET teachers, along with ISAs, contact all families in the school to check in on the wellbeing of pupils and their families.
- ICT loans: the school made families aware of the availability of laptops and iPads to borrow during the period of home learning to bridge the digital divide and to maximise pupil participation.
- Connection over content policy: From January 2021, the Board of Management and staff of the school adopted the practice of 'connection over content' in recognition of the fact that many pupils needed more face-time with their teacher and classmates rather than an abundance of written work to complete independently.
- ICT policies re Zoom: the school employs good practice in the use of Zoom as a learning tool. Password and meeting IDs are changed weekly in all classes and are sent by email only and not published on the school website. Pupils must be identifiable by video or voice or they cannot participate in calls; this is to ensure teachers do not inadvertently admit a non-pupil. The teacher/ISA uses the Zoom waiting room to control entry to the meeting. All meetings must have two staff members minimum present.
- Whole school initiatives/ theme each week: this practice has been continued in order to boost morale. This ties in with work on school initiatives such as Active School Flag, Amber Flag, etc.
- Celebration of talents: pupils' work is spotlighted at assemblies and pupils are encouraged to participate (e.g. performing music, reciting poetry, etc).
- Feedback from teachers on work: Pupils receive individual written or audio feedback on several items of work per week.
- Vulnerable families: meetings and conversations between the ISM team, SET teachers, ISAs and class teachers help to identify families who may require additional support (e.g. work posted home, additional support in use of ICT, etc).
- SET: the SET team continue to help class teachers provide additional support in the areas of numeracy and literacy to pupils identified as most in need.

Monitoring the impact of this policy

Culture and Environment

- Regular meetings of the Student Council and other pupil committees will be held so that the voice of the child is heard and is central to driving change within the school.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend meetings of the PGTA to ensure a close connection between parents/guardians and staff members.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Teachers and ISAs will provide a variety of curricular activities to promote pupils' physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.
- The Active School Flag and Amber Flag committees (among others) will work in conjunction with teachers and ISAs to meet the goal above.

Policy and Planning

- Teachers will be surveyed annually about the success of this policy and their views will be sought on areas for improvement.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Families will be made aware of supports available to them in the community that support pupil and parent/guardian wellbeing.
- Where necessary, the school will link families in with external agencies (e.g. NEPS, HSE, Tusla).

Ratification and review of the policy

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Firhouse Educate Together National School on 10th May 2021.

It will be reviewed by the Staff and Board of Management once every two years.

Date of next review: May 2023.

Signed: _____

Francis Fullen,
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Collette Dunne,
Principal

Date: _____