



## *Golden National School*

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# School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

## **Introduction: The Focus of this Evaluation**

This self-evaluation focuses on **Wellbeing Promotion** in Golden National School over an eight week period from **27<sup>th</sup> September to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021**.

It was decided that our School Self-Evaluation would be used to support the introduction and implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* set out by the Department, where we will focus on the setting up and embedding of wellbeing initiatives in Golden National School.

Schools play a vital role, in the promotion of children and young people's academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development. Our aim is to equip children with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deal with challenges that may impact on their wellbeing.

Children learn more effectively and have better academic outcomes if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves and feel acknowledged and supported in school. National and international research highlights that the wellbeing of our children is critical to their success in education and in life. It is clear from the research, which includes feedback provided by young people, that there are areas where improvements can be made. Identifying these areas within the school community of Golden N.S is paramount to successfully promote wellbeing initiatives.

## **Policy Statement**

This SSE Plan aims to provide an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in this area. Its implementation is an ongoing process that will ensure the necessary focus on supporting children in having a sense of purpose and fulfilment, and the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges.

Evaluation and measurement of success in the area of Wellbeing Promotion is a challenge. However, Golden N.S are supported via the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* to identify targets for development and track success in implementation through use of statements of effective practice. This approach is aligned to the already familiar school self-evaluation process.

## **Key Principles**

The development of this SSE Plan 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 are a central focus of this policy. This requires us to respect and value the voice of children and foster their belonging and connectivity 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 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, school staff, families and school communities. This means that practices will vary across schools and centres for education and from student to student.
- **Evidence-informed:** This SSE Plan 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 plan promotes continuous improvement practices and the use of data relating to outcomes to guide practice in our school 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 all stakeholders in our school community is key to ensuring that this plan is effective.

## **What do we Mean by Wellbeing?**

There are many definitions of wellbeing. It is important that any definition of wellbeing communicates its multi-dimensional nature and draws on the insights of psychology, philosophy and sociology (O'Brien & O'Shea, 2016).

Wellbeing does not necessarily mean the absence of stress or negative emotions in life or the absence of mental health difficulties. It is important that all members of our school community understand that everyone experiences vulnerability and a need for care at some stages in their journey through life. All children may be vulnerable at different stages of their development, and their sense of wellbeing may vary from time to time.

Developing, nurturing and sustaining our wellbeing is a lifelong process. Wellbeing is comprised of many interrelated aspects including being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware (DES & NCCA, 2017). The following definition of Wellbeing aims to take account of its multi-dimensional nature (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2001).

*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.*

## **School Context**

Golden National School is a co-educational school, with pupils ranging from Junior Infants to Sixth class. Currently, we have an enrolment of 95 pupils. S.E.N teaching is organised with a mixture of in-class support and some withdrawal from class.

This SSE Plan recognises that wellbeing education occurs throughout life and in a variety of settings. While many factors which influence wellbeing are located in the home and the community, the school can be a powerful context for healthy development in enhancing protective factors and minimising risks.

A 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. Adopting this approach has been found internationally to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for children and young people.

Embedded in the whole school approach and in line with the Department's Continuum of Support is the recognition that members of the school community can 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 members at the universal level.

## **Whole School Approach: Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion**

The Department advocates a multi-component approach to wellbeing promotion to ensure that all of the key areas that contribute to wellbeing promotion in schools are given a focus.

### **Culture & Environment**

- Mission and ethos
- School & classroom climate & culture
- Quality & use of school buildings & grounds

### **Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)**

- Extra-curricular learning
- Co-curricular learning
- Planning supports
- Monitoring

### **Policy & Planning**

- All policies relevant to wellbeing
- All plans relevant to wellbeing
- School & centre self-evaluation
- Continuing professional development

### **Relationships & Partnerships**

- Student & staff relationships
- Peer relationships
- Student voice
- Partnership – staff, children and young people, parents/carers
- Partnerships with other schools
- Community partnerships
- External supports

## **Key Areas: Indicators of Success**

### **Culture & Environment**

- Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Focus groups and our Amber Flag Committee have commenced 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 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, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community by interacting through Parent-Teacher meetings, completing surveys etc.
- 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.

## **Findings for School Self Evaluation**

### **Identification of Focus Area for School Self-Evaluation**

In order to identify our focus for the school self-evaluation process, the staff of Golden National School focused on wellbeing in Golden National School during a Croke Park meeting at the beginning of the year.

To begin our evaluation of wellbeing in the school community, school staff completed a *Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire* to reflect on how our school was performing in this area.

Children from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, consisting of 62 pupils in total, completed a *Pupil Wellbeing Questionnaire* which focused on eight separate categories of wellbeing.

This survey gave a pupil perspective on wellbeing in our school. The questionnaires were analysed to assess what we are doing well and areas that we could improve on. Teacher collaboration, discussion amongst staff members and feedback from our newly formed Amber Flag Committee were used as methodologies to assess our strengths and areas for improvement to promote wellbeing in Golden National School.

## **Key Area 1: Culture and Environment**

According to the *Staff Wellbeing Questionnaires* returned so far, staff rated the school as performing above average in these areas:

### **Strengths**

- The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to our school's ethos/mission statement and it is recognised by school leaders and management and all members of staff that the entire school community has a role to play in supporting learning for and learning about wellbeing.
- There is a positive approach to discipline where issues are resolved with care, respect and consistency. This is clearly outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The school building, grounds, classrooms, bathrooms and work spaces are well maintained and appropriately furnished, creating a welcoming, safe and warm environment.
- Staff and children are welcoming and inclusive of those from different cultural backgrounds, those with additional needs and all sexual orientations. These areas are covered through SPHE lessons each school year.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- The physical environment could be modified to meet the needs of children with additional and/or complex needs. The following are available if applicable:
  - Sensory room
  - Room for meeting with parents, visiting professionals
  - Specialist technology
  - Extra space in classrooms
  - Circulation area

## **Key Area 2: Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

According to the *Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire* returned so far, staff rated the school as performing above average in these areas:

### **Strengths**

- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend CPD courses to meet the ever-changing needs of the school and are encouraged to engage in collaboration. Two members of staff have recently completed a course which focused on the area mental health and wellbeing promotion in schools.
- Teachers use opportunities to promote wellbeing across the curriculum. This is evidential in the teaching of all subjects, in particular PE and Art.
- The school deploys resources based on individual learning, behavioural, social and emotional needs under the Special Education Teaching Allocation model.
- There are opportunities for training and on-going practice support and guidance for SNAs to further build their capacity to support children and young people with additional needs.

### **Key Area 3: Policy and Planning**

Based on *Staff Wellbeing Questionnaires* returned so far by staff members, staff rated the school as performing above average in these areas:

#### **Strengths**

- The wellbeing of the whole school community underpins all school policy and plans.
- Schools have appropriate wellbeing policies in place (i.e. Anti Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Critical Incident Policy)
- The school engages in a collaborative problem-solving process to support a child/young person's needs, identified through the school's continuum of support.
- A student support file is used to plan, record and review progress.
- The school has mechanisms in place for identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people in the event of a critical incident.

### **Pupil Wellbeing Questionnaire**

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Thoughts &amp; Feelings</u></b> How you think and feel?	18-25	83%	
	11-17	13%	
	0-10	4%	

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Life Satisfaction</u></b> How you think and feel about your life.	18-25	85%	
	11-17	13%	
	0-10	2%	

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Vitality</u></b> How strong, active and energetic you are.	18-25	78%	
	11-17	18%	
	0-10	4%	

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Optimism</u></b> How hopeful and confident you feel about your future.	18-25	78%	
	11-17	18%	
	0-10	4%	

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Resilience</u></b> How quickly can you recover from difficulties.	18-25	88%	
	11-17	11%	
	0-10	1%	

<b><i>Wellbeing Category</i></b>	<b><i>Score Band</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Support for Wellbeing</i></b>
<b><u>Personal Autonomy</u></b>	18-25	82%	

How much you can make decisions for yourself and your own life.	11-17	15%	
	0-10	3%	

<b>Wellbeing Category</b>	<b>Score Band</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Support for Wellbeing</b>
<u>Meaning and Purpose</u>	18-25	78%	
How much you feel that your life has meaning and is important.	11-17	18%	
	0-10	4%	

<b>Wellbeing Category</b>	<b>Score Band</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Support for Wellbeing</b>
<u>Relationships</u>	18-25	83%	
How connected you feel to other people.	11-17	12%	
	0-10	5%	

### **Analysis (to date)**

From our analysis of pupil surveys, we noted that our pupils value their school community and school is important to them.

Pupils reported a positive relationship with their teachers and we feel that these positive relationships should be used to increase pupils' self-esteem.

Almost 4% of pupils surveyed were in the scoring band 0-10 across all eight categories. This conveys an inner unhappiness and discontent both within school and their individual lives.

An average of 13.5% of pupils surveyed were in the scoring band 11-17 across all eight categories.

Almost 82% of children surveyed were in the scoring band 18-25 across all eight categories.

### **Evaluation (to date) / Targets**

Upon review of data collated from pupil surveys, we noted that 78% of our students from second to sixth class were in the scoring band 18-25 in the wellbeing categories '**Vitality**' and '**Optimism.**'

Our target is to increase this figure from 78% to 85% at our review stage later in the year. It is envisaged that this increase will be as a result of more structured lessons and awareness regarding Wellbeing. Furthermore, increased activities such as a block of yoga and/or meditation sessions for each class grouping provide a secure environment for children to strengthen their inner confidence and ambition.