

Geashill NS

**Wellbeing
Policy**

Rationale

Schools and centres for education in Ireland 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. (Wellbeing Framework for Practice 2019)

Geashill National School seeks to promote and support all aspects of the children's wellbeing as a core value of our ethos. We strive to ensure that all our students can flourish in an environment that is nurturing, supportive and progressive. We are guided by our mission statement, the aim of which is to ensure that each child, through confidence and self-belief may achieve their full potential and we believe that this can be achieved when wellbeing is present. Our understanding of *wellbeing* is in keeping with the World Health Organisation definition of wellbeing being 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)

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).

Geashill NS has already developed innovative approaches to wellbeing promotion supported by strong leadership and quality teaching and learning. We aim to further support children by optimising opportunities to learn about their own wellbeing. As well as being a place of academic learning, our school provides opportunities to develop friendships and social networks, to respectfully encounter diversity and to access support structures. We aim to cultivate an environment that enhances wellbeing for all who learn, work and visit here. Staff wellbeing is an essential element in the culture of a progressive school. We aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for all staff members whereby people feel valued and connected to the school community as a whole.

This policy documents existing and developing work in wellbeing promotion in Geashill NS. Its implementation is an ongoing, reflective and self-evaluative process.

Introduction

As part of the Third Cycle of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) 2022-2026, schools have been asked to initiate and review a wellbeing programme. We surveyed all members of the school community with regards to Key Areas identified in the Wellbeing Framework for Practice (Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Policy and Planning, Relationships and Partnerships) and identified areas of strength and potential for development.

This policy sets out the vision and ambition of Geashill NS to ensure that the experience of our children from the early years throughout their primary education will be one that promotes, enhances, 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. We adopt a preventative, multi-component, continuum of support approach to the promotion of wellbeing with the provision of both whole school and targeted interventions that promote school-based protective factors and reduce school-based risk factors. We are committed to the ongoing review and development of the four key areas and indicators of successful wellbeing promotion as outlined above. This involves all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process to identify, consolidate and improve specific areas of school life that impact on wellbeing.

Our Wellbeing Policy is:

- **Child-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 young people and foster their belonging and connectedness to our school community.
- **Fair and inclusive:** All children receive fair and inclusive opportunities to develop their wellbeing in ways that are responsive and suitable to their particular needs and contexts. Practices are tailored and relevant, building on the existing strengths of children, 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 school in relation to the promotion of wellbeing for all children.
- **Collaborative:** The wellbeing of our children is a shared responsibility. Working in partnership with parents, guardians, school staff and external agencies is key to ensuring this policy is implemented.

Documents which have informed our Wellbeing Policy planning:

- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2018)
- Schools for Health in Ireland: Framework for Developing a Health Promoting School (HSE, 2013)
- Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES, Inspectorate, 2022)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH & HSE, 2015)
- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)

Wellbeing Protective and Risk Factors

Risk and protective factors relating to wellbeing promotion that are specific to our school setting have been identified. 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).

In Geashill NS, we implement a preventative wellbeing promotion process that has a focus on strengthening school-based protective factors and minimising school based risk factors.

In Geashill NS 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 our school through the creation of 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, emotional regulation, relationships, responsible decision making and problem solving 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
- 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
- Wellbeing of school personnel and professional development for teachers and staff in our school setting

Wellbeing Risk Factors include:

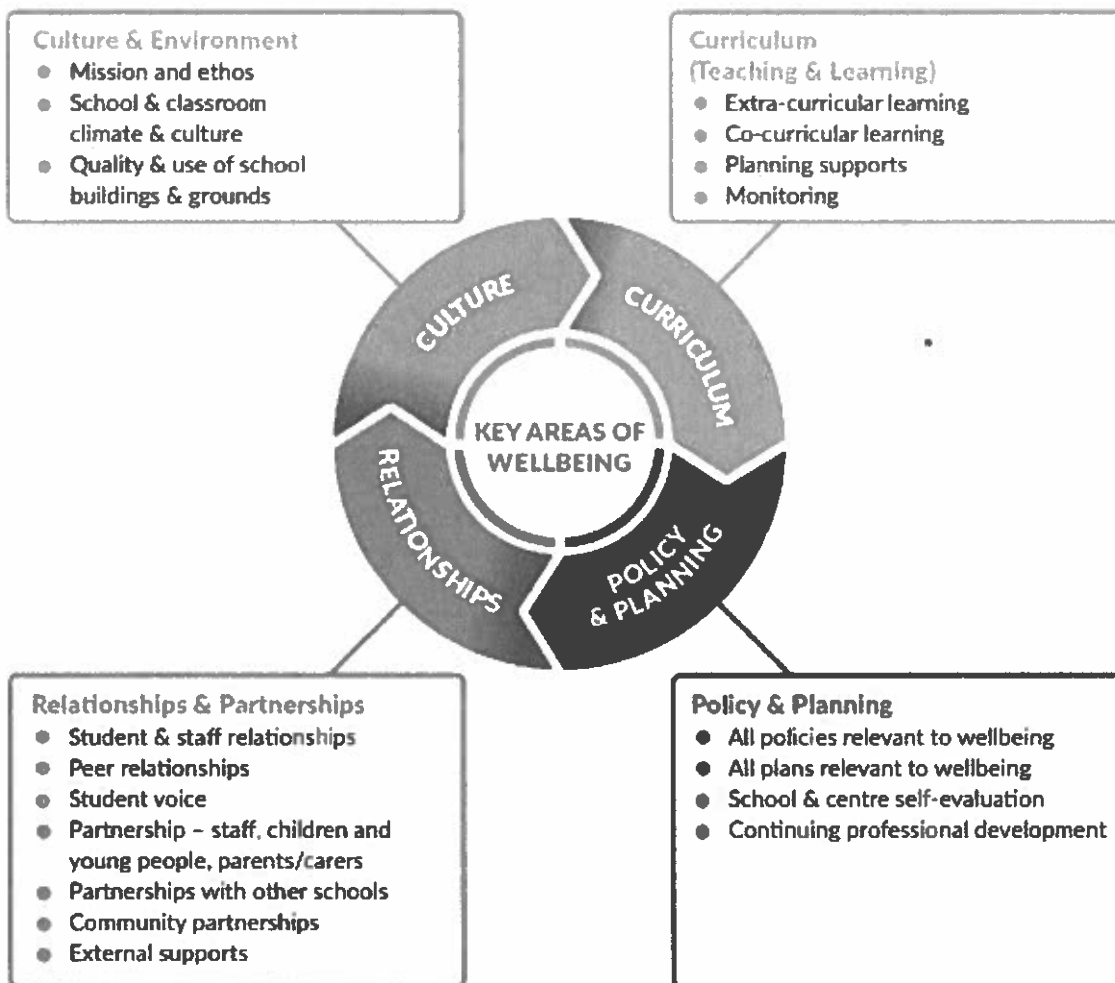
- Disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation
- Bullying and relationship difficulties
- Low achievement/learning difficulties/special educational needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs
- Cultural differences
- School transitions
- Poor connection between family and school
- Inconsistent discipline
- Lack of opportunity to develop social and emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills

The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher has been found to be paramount to children's wellbeing and reaches beyond teaching and learning. The relationship that teachers develop with the child has a key influence on wellbeing development. Access to 'one good adult' that can guide and support a young person at a vulnerable time is an identified protective factor. The presence of one supportive adult is critically important to the child's wellbeing, sense of connectedness, self-confidence and ability to cope with difficulties. Teachers are sometimes that 'one good adult' acting as a protective force in a child's life. The classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education. It is essential that all staff continue to develop their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. 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. (Wellbeing Framework for Practice 2019)

The teachers of Geashill NS strive to nurture and support all children in their care and to fulfil their role as a 'protective factor' in situations where their guidance and support is critical to a child's wellbeing. Teachers, SNAs and SET teachers collaborate to ensure all aspects of wellbeing are addressed for vulnerable children. Teachers and SNAs who have engaged in CPD regularly share new expertise in group planning sessions or staff meetings. Examples of shared practice in Geashill NS are the modelling and subsequent adoption of the *Restorative Practice* model in conflict resolution and *Incredible Years* strategies for behaviour intervention. The curricular elements of wellbeing promotion are explicitly taught through SPHE programmes such as Weaving Wellbeing and Stay Safe.

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

Geashill NS 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.

Geashill NS 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 Geashill NS. Our In-School Management team 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 school building and the setting in which our students can safely learn and be active. The grounds and building are well maintained and regular enhancements are undertaken.

Key Area 2- Curriculum

Wellbeing promotion is central to all areas of teaching and learning in Geashill NS. Teaching and learning is democratic, 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 Geashill NS 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 as Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, RSE, Bí Folláin, Walk Tall
- 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).

Literacy:

Children that engage with reading are three times more likely to have high levels of mental wellbeing than those who do not (UK National Literacy Trust, 2018).

Geashill NS 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, Book Talk, Swap a book, visits from authors, Book Week, World Book Day etc into our programme for literacy. We use a range of assessment tools to carefully monitor each child's progress in reading attainment and to provide additional supports where needed.

Aistear: *The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework encompasses four themes - Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking.*

Much of children's early learning and development takes place through play and hands-on experiences. Through these, children explore social, physical and imaginary worlds. These experiences help them to manage their feelings, develop as thinkers and language users, develop socially, be creative and imaginative, and lay the foundations for becoming effective communicators and learners. (NCCA, 2009)

Geashill NS has adopted aspects 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.

Physical Education:

Through physical education the child can experience the joy of physical exertion and the satisfaction of achievement while developing skills and positive attitudes that enhance self-esteem. Physical education provides opportunities to develop desirable personal and social attributes: the concept of fair play, the acceptance of success and failure, and the ability to co-operate in group situations. These opportunities contribute to the understanding and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Physical education, as an integral part of the total curriculum, provides vital opportunities for the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the child. (Primary School Curriculum)

Geashill NS has a vibrant programme for PE which is delivered primarily by class teachers but also by specialist providers. We maintain strong links with local sports clubs and organisations such as Raheen GAA Club, Offaly Sports Partnership and Tullamore Rugby Club and participate in their in-schools training programmes. Geashill NS is represented in inter-school competitions such as the FAI 5-a-side competitions (soccer), Cumann na mBunscol (GAA), Cross Country, Colin Dunne Memorial Track & Field (Tullamore Harriers AC) Regional Athletics (Offaly Sports Partnership) and Killeigh Sports (Community Games).

We encourage walking, cycling or scooting to school as part of our Active School and Green School programmes.

Religious Education:

Geashill NS is inclusive of children of all faiths or no faith. Our religious programme, Grow in Love, is taught across all classes. General themes around respect, the environment, community welfare etc are taught at an appropriate class level. The school, parish of Killeigh and parent body work together in preparing children for sacraments while children not preparing for sacraments engage in activities suited to their age and interests.

SESE:

Social, environmental and scientific education (SESE) provides opportunities for the child to explore, investigate and develop an understanding of the natural, human, social and cultural dimensions of local and wider environments; to learn and practise a wide range of skills; and to acquire open, critical and responsible attitudes. SESE enables the child to live as an informed and caring member of local, national, European and global communities. (Primary Curriculum)

Geashill NS adopts an active 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. In addition to the core curriculum Geashill NS participates in field trips to places of historical and geographical interest, hosts specialist workshops and STEAM activities and maintains a school garden. Geashill NS promotes an interest in, and respect for the natural environment in a cross curricular way.

Arts Education:

Arts education enables the child to explore alternative ways of communicating with others. It encourages ideas that are personal and inventive and makes a vital contribution to the development of a range of intelligences. A purposeful arts education at primary level is life-enhancing and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability. It emphasises the creative process and so ensures that the child's work is personal and has quality. Attempts at artistic expression are valued, self-esteem is enhanced, spontaneity and risk-taking are encouraged and difference is celebrated. It is this affirming aspect of the creative arts that makes participation such a positive experience. Arts education is integral to primary education in helping to promote thinking, imagination and sensitivity, and arts activities can be a focus for social and cultural development and enjoyment in school. Arts education encompasses a range of activities in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature. (Primary Curriculum)

Geashill NS has a rich tradition of 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 Geashill NS participates in a range of Arts related experiences which include, but are not limited to:

- Seachtain na Gaeilge (Céilí)
- Feelgood Friday-Whole School Dance
- School Christmas Play
- Participation in Art competitions

Key Area 3- Policy and Planning

Geashill NS 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

Key Area 4- Relationships and Partnerships

Geashill NS continues to develop strong partnerships with parents/guardians and the wider community, which is a central part of the wellbeing process. We effectively engage with appropriate agencies and specialist services to advise, support and contribute to health and wellbeing, teaching and learning.

The following stakeholders meet and collaborate regularly throughout the school year:

- Parents/Guardians
- Teacher groups
- Board of Management
- In-School Management Team
- Parents Association
- Student Committees
- Local school leaders
- Voluntary/sports/arts groups
- State agencies
- Community groups
- Support services

Two-tiered Approach to Wellbeing Promotion

In Geashill NS 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 and improvement to enhance 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 a culture of positive, pro-social behaviour, a feeling of inclusion, optimum learning experiences, strong social cohesion, increased social capital and ultimately, a strong foundation for mental health and wellbeing.

In Geashill NS, 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
- 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

Geashill NS 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
- Incredible Years
- SPHE Curriculum (Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, RSE, Bí Folláin, Walk Tall)
- Building Bridges to Understanding
- Continuum of Support Model
- Student Committees: Student Council, Green School Committee, Active School Committee
- Student Council-Our student council is a representative structure working under the guidance of a teacher. 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:-Fun activities organised throughout the year to celebrate holidays and special occasions e.g. ;lunchtime leagues, Easter egg hunt, fundraising initiatives to raise the pupils' awareness of others' needs
- Wellbeing Displays, Art Projects
- Project based learning
- Outdoor learning
- Partnership with the local Sports providers
- External PE coaches e.g. GAA, soccer, rugby
- Healthy Eating policy
- Amber Flag
- Mindfulness Monday
- Wellbeing Wall
- Active School Flag
- Coding and Robotics programme
- School teams
- Active weeks/Sports Days
- Themed weeks (e.g. Maths Week, Science Week etc)
- Promoting the Arts – Christmas Concerts, school musical instruments, choirs, entry into art competitions, Art Gallery walls established within the school
- Playground games, whole school Friday dance organised by the Active School Committee
- Wellness Team undertake a variety of initiatives throughout the year to promote wellbeing in our school community.

Programmes and External Facilitators

The use of programmes and external facilitators can play a role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned comprehensive approach to wellbeing promotion.

Programmes and external facilitators that are accessed in Geashill NS

- are part of a whole school approach and address an identified need
- are delivered to class groups with the involvement of school staff and the appropriate involvement of parents/guardians
- enhance protective factors which predispose students to positive outcomes in the face of adversity such as: facilitating supportive adult-pupil relationships, strengthening life skills, helping students believe in their capacity to overcome hardship and building a sense of mastery over life circumstances
- adopt a planned implementation process, for example, incorporate needs analysis, use evidence informed programmes and track and evaluate outcomes for students
- are implemented and used in our school in a sustained way over a number of years in order to bring about lasting effects and benefits

These include: Fire safety awareness 3rd class, Cycle Safety 6th class, Tidy Towns workshops, Gardening workshops, Making the transition to Secondary School 6th Class, online safety workshops for pupils, parents and staff.

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 1: Continuum of Support



The Continuum of Support recognises that individual children and young people 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 children and young people in their class-based groups.

Children and young people with additional needs and vulnerable groups are particularly at risk in the area of wellbeing (NCSE, 2014). The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports schools in promoting the wellbeing and mental health of all children and young people. While supporting all, NEPS prioritises support for those at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs.

The Student Support Team

The Student Support Team (SST) consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals and SET Co-ordinator - who provide one to one and group support to pupils with identified needs. The purpose of the SST is to provide for students who have a greater need for a higher level of intervention from the school community. The SST meets regularly to discuss the needs of pupils in the school as a whole, under the continuum of support model. Children may be identified through this process that would benefit from further support in school, at home and/or from external agencies.

Objectives and Rationale for the Student Support Team

Students who experience difficulties in life will find it difficult to have cognitive space for learning. Therefore the rationale of the SST is to strive to care in a genuine way to improve the lives of students and thereby ensure access to the curriculum and learning.

The SST undertakes the following:

- To liaise with external professionals about the welfare of the child
- To liaise with the parents/ guardians of the child
- To share information in a confidential setting
- To coordinate a targeted response to the needs of a student
- To review and monitor the students with care needs

Referral to the School Support Team

All staff members of the school community have a responsibility to be observant of the needs of our students.

The process of referral to the school support team is as follows:

- The class teacher will refer a student directly to the Special Education Co-ordinator
- The Special Education Co-ordinator will forward information to the Principal
- A parent may also raise concerns regarding their child to the class teacher, Principal or Deputy Principal

Once a student is referred to the Student Support Team:

- the teacher may call home to arrange a meeting with the parents/guardians to discuss concerns
- a classroom support or school support plan may be initiated for the child
- Intervention plans and individual targets are developed
- Specific needs may be discussed with external agencies or professionals such as National Educational Psychology Service (NEPs), HSE personnel (Primary Care Team, Assessment of Need Team, Early Intervention Team, School Age Team), TUSLA/National Educational Welfare Board, National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Student support plans are reviewed and updated throughout the school year

Documentation and Communication of School Support Plans

- Support plans are drafted, shared with parents for consultation, and then finalised before a programme of support commences
- Support plans are uploaded to the child's Aladdin documents
- Information regarding additional support is included with the handover documents which are shared between teachers at the commencement of each school year
- Any confidential information or information which evokes the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy are dealt directly by the Designated Liaison Person – DLP, (or Deputy DLP in their absence), and communicated with parents/guardians

External Agencies and Specialist Support Services

- Some children will require additional support from specialist support services external to the school. In the event of a child presenting with mental health concerns, which are above and beyond the capacity and ability of the school to provide adequate support, the school may decide upon either of the following courses of action:
- Follow existing policies which enable staff to access and refer directly to an external service. In Geashill NS, we have established essential relationships with local agencies and have names and contact details readily available for onward referrals.
- When deemed necessary, the school team, with the consent and collaboration of parents/ guardians, may recommend a referral to the local General Practitioner (GP) or other appropriate professionals who can advise on referral pathways. For children with mental health difficulties, the referral will likely be made to the local HSE Psychology Service/Primary Care Team or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Indicators of Success

In Geashill NS, we use 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 achieve this by accessing the opinions and views of all stakeholders throughout the process. To date we have sought opinions and suggestions from all stakeholders with regard to indicators of wellbeing specific to Geashill NS, prioritised on the basis of additional measures that would improve wellbeing for all or for children with specific needs, and reviewed our progress. We are committed to regularly reviewing practices affecting the four key areas of wellbeing using the Wellbeing Indicators of Success outlined below.

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.

(Framework for Practice 2019)

These Indicators of Success in the four key areas of wellbeing are further expanded upon as Statements of Effective Practice (See Appendix A) which provide a set of standards for wellbeing practices across the Continuum of Support at the whole school preventative level (Support for All) and also at the targeted and more individualised levels (Support for Some and Few). These Statements of Effective Practice form the basis of the school's self-reflective Wellbeing Promotion Process. They enable us to identify strengths and areas to target and therefore plan the next stage in the improvement journey.

Suggested Measures of Success:

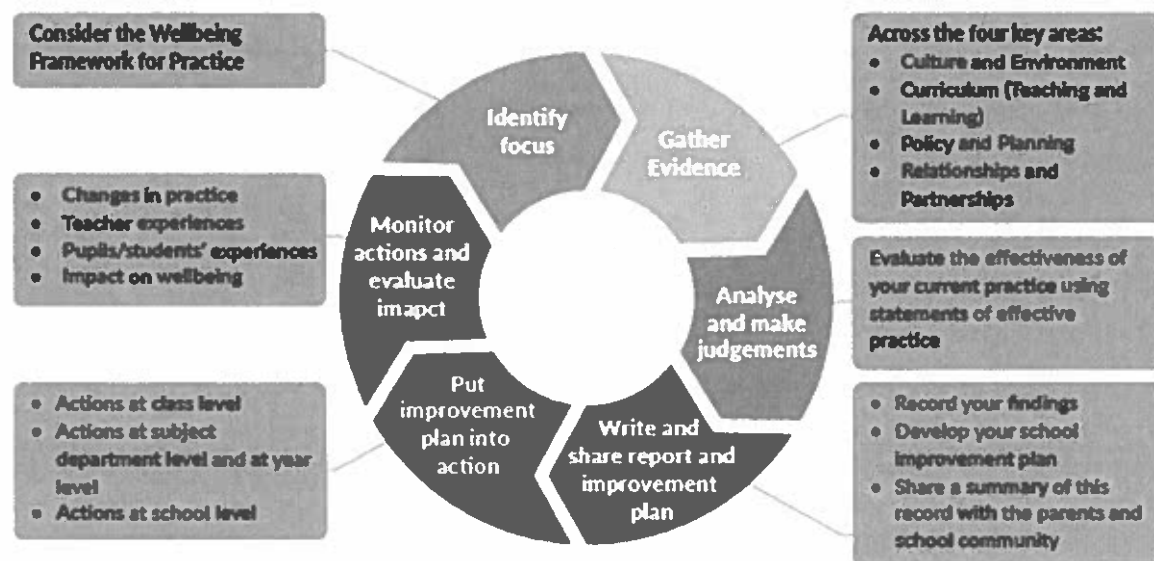
- Student attendance
- Successful school completion
- Successful transition of pupils
- Data gathered in school e.g. surveys, interviews, checklists
- Data gathered through consultation with children, parents, teachers and other staff members
- Information from inspectorate reports

School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process

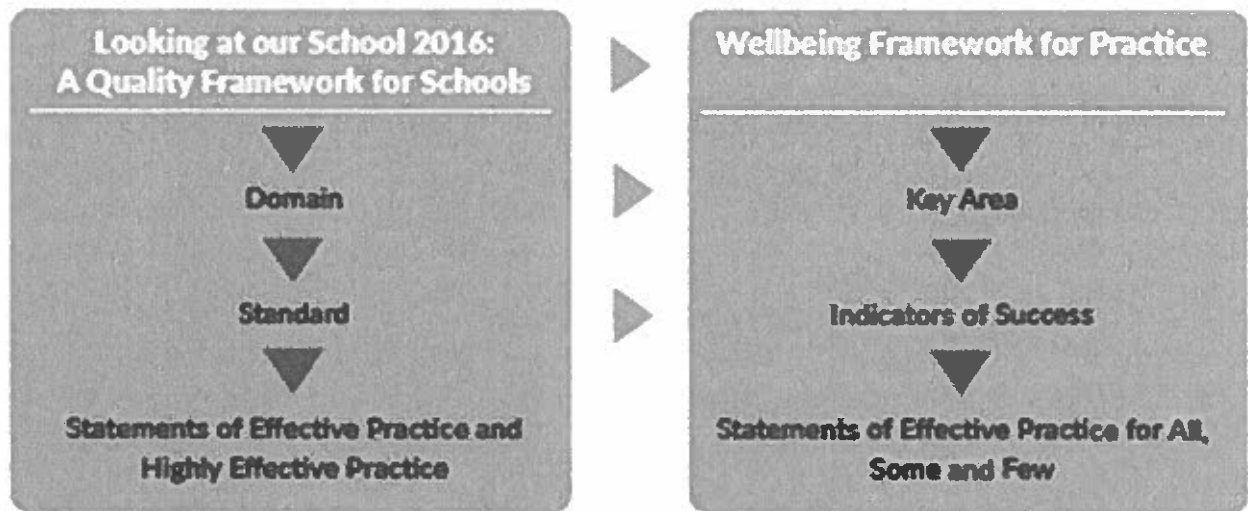
Geashill NS is currently developing this policy using the six-step School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process together with the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

We have considered our existing provision for wellbeing under each of the four key areas (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships), and identified areas in which enhanced structures could be put in place (eg Student Council) or improvements can be made (eg strengthening of whole-school approach to mentoring).

In devising and implementing the improvement plan, we will refer to the Statements of Effective Practice in key areas and information gathered through consultation with key stakeholders, including staff, pupils and parents/guardians. This information was essential in highlighting positive aspects and strengths in our collective practice and identify areas for development – the analysis and judgement stage. This analysis will inform actions for wellbeing in a selected area. At an intervention stage, appropriate school interventions and strategies will be generated and agreed. We will incorporate these actions into our School Improvement Plan (SIP). Steps will be put in place to implement the agreed actions. At the monitoring stage, actions will be reviewed on an ongoing basis which will assist us in evaluating impact and tracking our progress in this process of continuous improvement.



Using the SSE process with the Wellbeing Framework for Practice



Linking Looking at our Schools and the Wellbeing Framework for Practice

Supporting the Implementation of the Wellbeing Promotion Process

The Department has made available a suite of Wellbeing Resources to provide practical tools and information to support the Wellbeing Promotion Process.

These Wellbeing Resources include:

- Evaluation Tools: Parent/Guardian, Pupil and Staff Surveys
- Focus Group Guidelines to facilitate access to the voice of key stakeholders
 - Revised Circular for schools to provide strengthened guidance on the use of programmes/external facilitators in school wellbeing promotion.

Continuous Professional Development

In Geashill NS, the school management team prioritises professional development for school staff in wellbeing promotion for staff and students. Whole-staff professional development for our school includes a focus on the following:

- Identifying and building upon existing good practice in the whole-school implementation of SPHE
- Providing a shared understanding of the wellbeing of children
- Developing an understanding of child development
- Exploring the factors that impact both positively and negatively on wellbeing
- Providing opportunities for reflection on the school environment, classroom and whole school practice to establish and maintain healthy patterns of relationships
- Raising awareness of the importance of consistency between home and school environments in the implementation of strategies and programmes which promote wellbeing
- Considering the implementation of supportive practices in addressing and resolving conflict and other issues arising between children
- Raising awareness of the links between risk taking behaviours, bullying and the development of mental health problems
- Exploring strategies to develop children's skills, attitudes and behaviours in dealing with peer pressure, bullying situations or situations involving risk
- Equipping teachers to develop their personal capacity and that of the children, for resilience, self-control and coping in a variety of social situations.

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 proactive and effective members of the school community.

Geashill NS is a safe and supportive environment for the people who work here. All staff members are supported in maintaining their personal health and wellbeing. We benefit from communally reflecting on our own wellbeing and general attitudes to mental health. All staff members have a role in promoting attitudes and modelling behaviour that is supportive of our collective wellbeing.

We strive to create an inclusive, connected and caring setting for permanent, temporary and visiting staff.

- A collaborative approach to curricular planning, peer-mentoring systems, SET assistance and team teaching help ensure that teachers and SNAs feel supported in their classroom work.
- School leaders endeavour to assist and advise staff members when required.
- Our Social committee works hard to generate a variety of inclusive and enjoyable social events throughout the year.
- All staff members are made aware of supports for wellbeing which may be accessed through 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.

Employee Assistance Service: Free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 or text 'Hi' to 873690010 - available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

This policy was ratified at the meeting of the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School Self Evaluation process.

Appendix A: Statements of Effective Practice

Key Area 1 - Culture and Environment

The indicators of success in the four key areas of Wellbeing are further expanded upon as statements of effective practice below.

For Key Area 1 Culture & Environment the indicators of success are:

- 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.

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

- The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to the school's ethos/mission statement and school leaders and management actively promote wellbeing.
- The school communicates with parents about the supports that are in place regarding the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people.
- 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.
- The relationship between academic achievement and a child/young person's wellbeing is understood by all children and young people and staff in the school.
- There is a positive approach to discipline where issues are resolved with care, respect and consistency.
- The school recognises that wellbeing is as important for the staff as for the children and young people. Appropriate supports are available for staff wellbeing.
- Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are provided to teachers to ensure that they have the relevant knowledge and understanding to promote wellbeing and to create a positive classroom environment.
- Opportunities are provided for children and young people, staff and parents to have an active voice in decisions relating to school improvement.
- The school building, grounds, classrooms, bathrooms and work spaces are well maintained and appropriately furnished, creating a welcoming, safe and warm environment.
- The indoor space displays the work, talents and accomplishments of children and young people.
- The school building is accessible for all children and young people and accommodation is modified to meet the needs of all.
- School leaders and management understand the link between physical activity and wellbeing and facilitate physical activity and movement breaks within the school environment.
- Indoor and outdoor space is provided to facilitate social interaction and physical activity and quiet time.
- The school environment is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices. Drinking water is freely available and rewards other than food are used to motivate children and young people.

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

- The school demonstrates commitment to identifying, including and providing targeted supports for children and young people experiencing barriers and challenges to wellbeing and learning.
- Staff, children and young people are welcoming and inclusive of those from different cultural backgrounds, those with additional needs and all sexual orientations.
- Schools are proactive in meeting the professional development needs of teachers, who attend relevant CPD and can identify signs and triggers in vulnerable children and young people, and recognise the need for early intervention.
- The physical environment is modified to meet the needs of children and young people with additional and/or complex needs. The following are available if applicable:
 - Sensory room/sensory gardens
 - 'Safe' room/space for distressed/anxious children and young people
 - Room(s) for meeting with parents, visiting professionals
 - Room(s) for individuals and small groups requiring targeted intervention and support
 - Lifting equipment
 - Specialist technology
 - Buddy bench
 - Nurture Room

*This list is not exhaustive

Key Area 2 - Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

The indicators of success in the four key areas of Wellbeing are further expanded upon as statements of effective practice below.

For Key Area 2 Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) the indicators of success are:

- 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.

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

- Teachers' preparation for teaching and learning explicitly references teaching, learning and assessment approaches that promote collaborative learning, peer and self-assessment and a sense of achievement.
- Teachers design and prepare teaching/learning approaches and assessment of learning outcomes which are differentiated for children and young people, providing adequate access, challenge and opportunities for success.
- Teachers use various teaching and assessment methods that promote a sense of achievement and differentiate their expectations to promote full participation and achievement for all children and young people.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend relevant CPD to meet the needs of the school population and are encouraged to incorporate and model learnings in their practice and engage in collaborative working.
- Teachers use opportunities to promote wellbeing across the curriculum.
- Throughout primary, and in post primary up to Junior Cycle, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum is implemented on a mandatory basis. An SPHE Programme that has been planned in consultation with children and young people and parents is taught to every class up to Junior Cycle, in accordance with the required time allocations.
- There is an integrated curriculum planning approach to the provision of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE) and SPHE as part of the 400 hour curricular wellbeing programme at Junior Cycle (post primary only).
- Universal, evidence-based programmes are chosen and guided by Circulars 0042/2018 (primary) and 0043/2018 (post primary) to teach core social and emotional competence and to help children and young people develop coping skills to manage challenges.
- Where an extra-curricular programme is provided, the school links with community-based clubs and organisations to ensure that it is broad, accessible and inclusive.
- Schools are guided by Circulars 0042/2018 and 0043/2018 on the use of programmes/facilitators when guest speakers are invited to contribute to wellbeing promotion in the school.
- Where an extra-curricular programme is provided, children and young people and parents are invited to actively participate in planning the programme.
- A broad range of children and young people's success is rewarded and celebrated to demonstrate the value the school places on all types of achievement.
- Children and young people's enjoyment in learning is evident and is linked to a sense of making progress and of achievement. Children and young people are motivated to learn, and see themselves as learners,

demonstrating this in their positive approach to classwork and homework.

- **Wellbeing promotion within the school develops children and young peoples' awareness of mental health difficulties and information is shared about when to seek help and who to go to when distressed.**

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

- **Teachers design and prepare for differentiated teaching methods and assessment of learning outcomes for children and young people at risk or with additional and/or complex needs so that they experience a sense of achievement.**
- **Teachers attend CPD and deliver specialised and targeted programmes, selected in line with best practice and grounded in research and evidence, to individuals and/or small groups.**
- **The school deploys resources based on individual learning, behavioural, social and emotional needs under the Special Education Teaching Allocation model.**
- **A dedicated team (for example, Student Support Team and/or Pastoral Care Team) supports all teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to implement appropriate strategies for children and young people with additional and/or complex needs, including those recommended in professional reports.**
- **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.**
- **Where extra-curricular activities are planned, children and young people with additional and/or complex needs and their parents are actively involved in planning and evaluating the programme.**

Key Area 3 - Policy and Planning

The indicators of success in the four key areas of Wellbeing are further expanded upon as statements of effective practice below.

For Key Area 3 Policy and Planning the indicators of success are:

- 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.

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

- The wellbeing of the whole school community underpins all school policy and plans.
- The voice of children and young people, parents and staff informs the development, review and updating of school policies.
- Schools have appropriate wellbeing policies in place (for example, Anti Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Critical Incident Policy) and are made available to staff, children and young people, parents and relevant school community partners.
- Policies and plans set out how inclusive practice will be implemented in a way that fosters school connectedness, acceptance and celebration of diversity.
- The school uses the Education Passport (NCCA) for children and young people transitioning to post primary school.
- The school gathers information on risk factors such as bullying; absenteeism; truancy and disruptive behavior to inform wellbeing programme planning.
- There is a comprehensive CPD plan to ensure all teachers have the necessary training to incorporate wellbeing promotion in their teaching practice to meet the particular needs of the school population.
- School leaders and management recognise the importance of staff wellbeing and the particular challenges that can occur in a school environment and have systems in place to support all members of staff.

Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

- **The school has regard to the Department's policies and circulars that outline how to support children and young people with additional and/or complex needs.**
- **School-based information is used, in conjunction with reports from external professionals, to set guidelines and recommendations for individualised supports for children and young people with additional needs.**
- **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.**
- **At times of transition, information is gathered and transfer review meetings are held for those children and young people with additional and/or complex needs.**
- **The school has regard to the Department's policies and circulars that outline how to identify a range of evidence-based strategies and programmes for groups at 'further risk' of developing mental health difficulties.**
- **The school's assessment policy outlines how additional school based screening and intervention tools are used to assess social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.**
- **The school ensures that children and young people with complex needs will be supported to understand and follow school policies such as bullying and the school code of behavior.**
- **The school has mechanisms in place for identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people in the event of a critical incident.**
- **Appropriate structures are in place so that early intervention is promoted for children and young people who are 'at risk' e.g. those who do not attend school regularly or those at higher risk of developing mental health difficulties.**
- **The school has a procedure for gathering, storing and sharing confidential information which is guided by data protection regulations and which is conducted in partnership with parents, children and young people and teachers to inform programme planning.**

Key Area 4 - Relationships & Partnerships

The indicators of success in the four key areas of Wellbeing are further expanded upon as statements of effective practice below.

For Key Area 4 Relationships & Partnerships the indicators of success are:

- 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 Statements of Effective Practice for All

- School staff model openness, respect and listening in their interactions with each other, children and young people and parents.
- Relationships and partnerships are supported through a range of agreed formal and informal structures, such as, student councils, prefect systems, buddy systems, mentoring systems, assemblies, newsletters, student journals and through teaching and learning.
- The board of school leaders and management promotes the establishment of a parents' council in the school, and collaborates with the council as appropriate.
- School leaders and management acknowledge the importance of staff wellbeing and promote this in a variety of ways including recognition of the value of staff contribution and their work.
- School leaders and management ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are put in place for staff wellbeing and details of the Employee Assistance Service and other relevant supports are made available to staff.
- The school establishes links with feeder schools and fosters strong working relationships to engage in sharing of best practice.
- The school promotes professional networks for principals and teachers.
- The school establishes good links with Department support services, community-based statutory and voluntary support services and other external agencies.

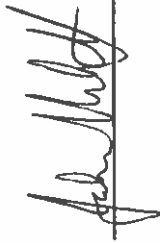
Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

- Mentoring systems are in place whereby more senior teachers offer practical and social support to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and/or new staff members.
- Staff receive individualised support from school leaders and management in times of difficulty or during personal crisis and are given information and contact details for the Employee Assistance Service.
- Systems are in place whereby more senior young people are supported in mentoring younger children.
- Befriending and buddy systems are in place for children and young people who require support to interact with peers.
- Relationship building for children and young people who are experiencing difficulties can be achieved through a variety of initiatives including having a 'named staff member' allocated to the child/young person to act as the 'one good adult'.
- Children and young people and their parents are invited to engage in collaborative problem solving and decision-making with regard to their individual needs and the interventions to support them.
- Children and young people have access to one to one or small group support as appropriate with qualified members of staff to support their personal and social, educational and career development, and at moments of personal crisis.
- At times of transition schools link with other education settings, including early childhood care and education settings, crèches, other primary/post-primary schools, Youthreach, Community Education Centres to ensure successful transfers.
- The school promotes teachers' engagement in networks for teacher collaboration.
- The school establishes good links with Department support services, community-based statutory and voluntary support services and other external agencies (for example, the HSE) to support the needs of students with additional and/or complex needs.

Ratification & Review

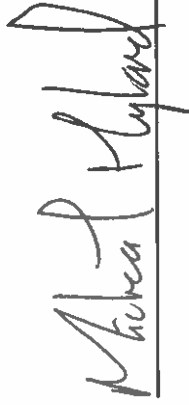
This policy was ratified at a board of management meeting on 18th September 2024. It will be reviewed in the 2027/28 school year.

Signature:



John Hackett

Chairperson, Board of Management



Micheál Hyland

Principal

Geashill NS

**Self-Evaluation Report
and
School Improvement Plan**

Self-Evaluation Report

2022-2023

1. Introduction

This document records the findings of our evaluation of teaching and learning focused on the area of wellbeing and our current improvement plan, including targets and the actions we will implement to meet these targets.

1.1 The Focus of this Evaluation

We undertook self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Geashill School from September 2022 to June 2023. Consensus was reached by the staff that School Self Evaluation would be used to support the introduction and implementation of the Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice where we will focus on the setting up and embedding of wellbeing initiatives in Geashill NS. We looked at the four-key area; culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning and relationships and partnerships as part of the wellbeing framework for schools. We completed CPD and after receiving student, staff and parental feedback, we evaluated and analysed the data, found areas of highly effective practice as well as areas for improvement.

1.2 School Context

Geashill NS is a co-educational primary school in a village setting. Currently we have 130 pupils in multi-stream classes with 5 mainstream teachers and 3 special classes and 3 SEN teachers. SEN teaching is organised with a mixture of in-class support and withdrawal from class. We have 6.83 SNA positions.

2. Findings

We collected information from parents, pupils & teachers to gather evidence for this report. We created surveys using the DES Wellbeing Guidelines, analysed attendance & test results and formed teacher and student focus groups.

2.1 This is effective / very effective practice in our school

The main strengths of the school in wellbeing are:

- our school is welcoming and accessible to all.
- the school values and sees health and wellbeing as a priority.
- the indoor school space is very welcoming and used effectively to promote children's achievements.
- both staff and parents/guardians are satisfied with the teaching and learning of SPHE.

2.2. This is how we know

Student Survey

- 99% of pupils agreed they learn that we are all special and that it is okay when people are different.
- 90% of pupils said they do SPHE in class.
- 96% of pupils said they had friends at school.
- 86% of pupils feel the adults in our school praise and encourage us to work hard and try our best.
- 82% of pupils said they know who to speak to in school if they are worried or sad about anything.

Student Focus Group

- Pupils stated they felt safe in school, had friends, opportunities for physical activity and had good relationships with adults in our school.

Parent/Guardian Survey

- 100% of parents/guardians believe that our school is welcoming and accessible to all pupils and parents.
- 96% of parents/guardians agree that their child can participate in a range of activities at school.
- 98% of parents/guardians feel that the school and staff promote and facilitate healthy eating choices.
- 96% of parents/guardians feel the school values and sees health & wellbeing as a priority.
- 96% of parents/guardians feel the school promotes and encourages pupils to be physically active
- 94% feel parent views are sought and listened to in school planning and policy development.
- 92% of parents/guardians feel teachers communicate respectfully with them both when issues arise and when things are going well.

Staff Survey

- 100% of staff believe that our school is welcoming and accessible to all pupils
- 100% of staff believe the school environment is used to display pupil work and talents to celebrate pupil achievements.
- 100% of staff believe the school has an ethos of respect and acceptance of difference where all are valued
- 100% believe the school delivers the SPHE curriculum including RSE, Stay Safe and other programmes.
- 100% of staff think teachers communicate respectfully with parents when issues arise and when things are going well.

2.3 This is what we are going to focus on to improve our practice further

Make learning more interesting and fun

Student Survey

- 43% of pupils believe the adults in our school make learning interesting and fun.

Increase pupil voice in policy decision making

Student Focus Group

Children had concerns that their voice was not always heard when decisions were made.

Student Survey

Only 53% of the pupils believe that they are asked for their ideas when the school is deciding on policies.

Improve positive relationships between pupils

Student Survey

66% of pupils believe that children in our school are kind and friendly to each other.

Teacher Survey

46% of teachers feel that the school promotes older children supporting younger pupils in areas such as mentoring and buddy systems.

Increase emphasis on staff wellbeing

Teacher Survey

46% of staff feel they consider and prioritise their own health and wellbeing.

3. Our improvement plan

On the next page we have recorded:

The **targets** for improvement we have set.

The **actions** we will implement to achieve these.

Who is responsible for implementing, monitoring and reviewing our improvement plan.

How we will measure **progress** and check **outcomes** (monitor & evaluate).

As we implement our improvement plan we will record:

The **progress** made, and **adjustments** made, and **when**.

Achievement of targets (original and modified), and **when**.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Sept 2022 to June 2024

Targets	Actions	Person/Groups Responsible	Monitor & Evaluate	Progress & Adjustments	Targets Achieved
1 <i>Make learning more interesting and fun.</i>	a. Teachers must plan for a variety of engaging lessons using a wide range of teaching methodologies.	All teachers and Mr. Hyland (Principal).	•Staff and pupil survey •Cuntais Míosúla		
	b. Provide more opportunities for teachers to share ideas, examples of engaging resources and successful lessons.	All teachers	•Feedback •Croke Park/Staff Meeting agendas		
2 <i>Increase pupil voice in policy decision making</i>	a. Facilitate at least 1 Student Council meeting per term with the principal.	Ms. Walsh (Student Council Co-ordinator) & Mr. Hyland (Principal)	•Pupil feedback •Pupil survey		
	b. Consult with the Student Council when school policies are being reviewed and formulated.				
3 <i>Improve positive relationships between pupils</i>	a. Increase pupil-led structured activities for all classes during lunchtimes.	Ms. A. Walsh & Active School Committee	•Pupil feedback		
	b. Set up lunchtime leagues for both Junior and Senior classes	Ms. F. Walsh & Student Council	•Pupil Survey		
	c. School wide Random Act of Kindness awards /certificates	All teachers & classes			
4 <i>Increase emphasis on staff wellbeing</i>	a. Ensure staff are aware of professional wellbeing supports available.	Mr. Hyland (Principal)	•Staff focus group		
	b. Review Dignity at Work policy to ensure staff are working in an environment of mutual respect.	All Staff & Board of Management	•Staff survey		
	c. Increase opportunities for staff social activities	School management			

Ratification & Review

This policy was ratified at a board of management meeting on 18th September 2024. It will be reviewed in the 2027/28 school year.

Signature:

John Hackett

Chairperson, Board of Management

Mícheál Hyland

Principal