



# Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore NS

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## Wellbeing Policy

### Introductory Statement.

Here at Rathmore National School, we strive to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral, and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. Central to our ethos and to the holistic development of each child, is the promotion of **Wellbeing**. Rathmore National School is currently developing a Wellbeing Promotion Process within the school, which is supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DoE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE). It is strongly supported by the “Health Promoting Schools” Model. “

### Rationale

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

### What is Wellbeing?

*“Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.”* (World Health Organisation, 2001)

Developing, nurturing, and sustaining our wellbeing is a lifelong process. The definition of wellbeing is multidimensional in nature and needs to be considered less of a state of being and more of a process of well- becoming. The multi-dimensional components of wellbeing are:

- 1) Physical
- 2) Social
- 3) Mental
- 4) Emotional
- 5) Spiritual

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

- develop psychologically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, spiritually
- initiate, develop, and sustain mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships
- use and enjoy solitude
- become aware of others and empathise with them
- play and learn
- develop a sense of right and wrong
- resolve (face) problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them (Alexander, 2002)

### **Whole-School Approach: Four key areas of Wellbeing promotion**

At Rathmore NS we will adapt a *multi-component* approach to ensure wellbeing promotion in our school. The four key areas to Wellbeing are outlined in *Figure 1*: The Department advocates a multi-component approach to wellbeing promotion to ensure that all the key areas that contribute to wellbeing promotion in schools are given a focus. The Department considers the following four areas as key areas for action in wellbeing promotion:

- 1) Culture and Environment
- 2) Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- 3) Policy and Planning
- 4) Relationships and Partnerships

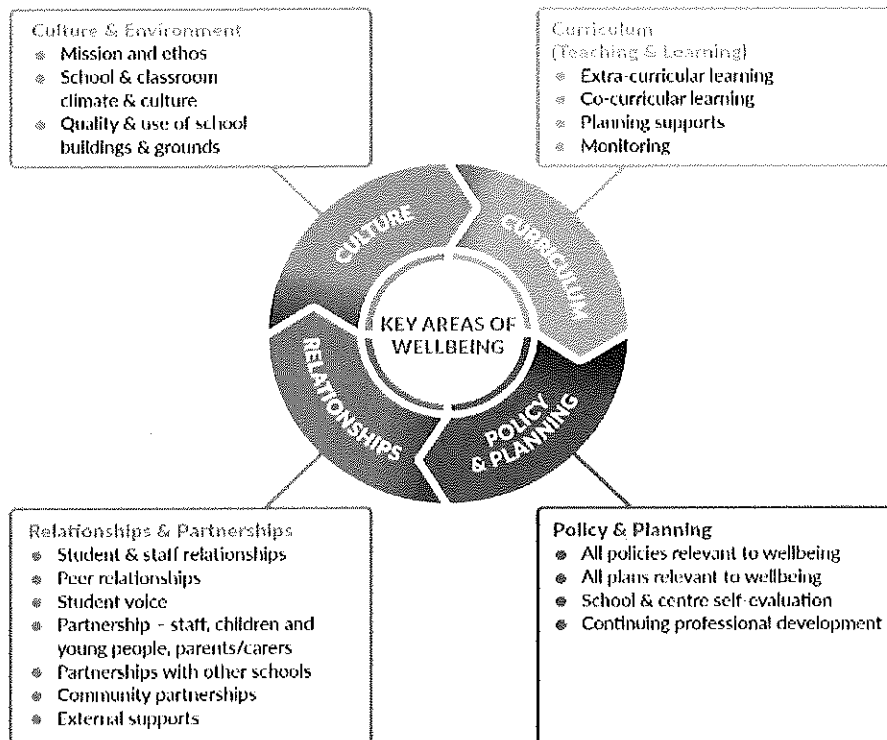


Fig 1: Four

key areas to wellbeing promotion

## 1. School Culture and Environment

Rathmore 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, adhering to school rules and positive expectations. Rathmore 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 Rathmore NS. Our In-School Management team strives to create a culture and climate which is accepting and supportive for staff, parents, and students. Through nurturing quality relationships within the school, we facilitate the wellbeing of staff members and students as well as fostering a shared responsibility for promoting positive wellbeing.

## 2. Curriculum

Wellbeing promotion is central to all areas of teaching and learning in Rathmore NS. Teaching and learning is inclusive, engaging and differentiated. We deliver an integrated curriculum that recognises the richness and uniqueness of the individual and the importance of the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Wellbeing promotion is addressed across the curriculum through: Aistear, SPHE, Physical Education, Religious Education, science and the Arts

**Aistear:** The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) encompasses four themes - Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking.

**Social, Personal and Health Education** is central to pupil development in its broadest sense and is an essential part of the school curriculum. The SPHE curriculum in Rathmore NS strongly supports the social and emotional wellbeing of our pupils, by placing an emphasis on children's social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviors and therefore learning performance. SPHE encompasses the development of emotional literacy which is the ability to understand emotions, listen to others and empathize. This includes the provision of safe, secure and comfortable environments that enable children to share their concerns.

Key characteristics of the SPHE programme delivered in our school:

- A lifelong process
- a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community based on the needs of the child
- spiral in nature
- effective and consistent in delivery
- developed in a combination of contexts
- engages children in activity-based learning (NCCA 1999).

## New primary Language Curriculum Framework 2023

- In Rathmore NS we will strive to foster and implement **'being well'** which is one of the eight key competencies, outlined in the new primary curriculum framework 2023. As stated in the new primary curriculum framework 2023 *'This competency develops children's understanding and appreciation of wellbeing and their ability to be as healthy as they can be – physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually'*.

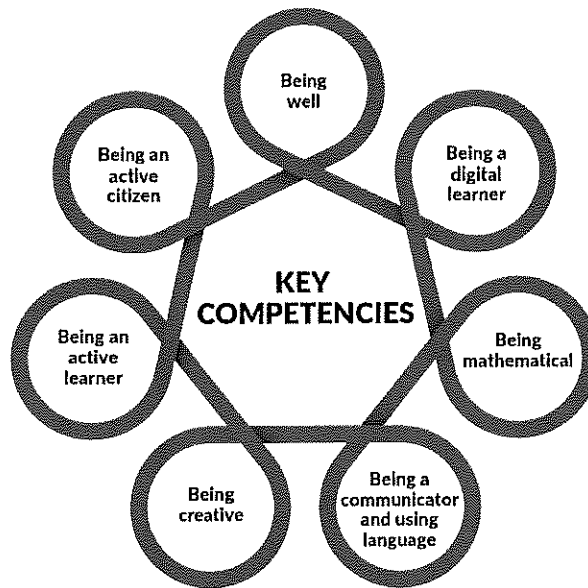


Fig 2: Key competencies

- The teaching and learning in Rathmore NS will uphold the following attributes associated with this key competency 'Being Well'.
  - Showing awareness of how to make good choices in relation to wellbeing
  - Participating with growing confidence and skill in physical activity
  - Being self-aware and resilient
  - Acting responsibly and showing care towards self and others
  - Being spiritual and having a sense of purpose and meaning
  - Being persistent and flexible in solving problems
  - Being able to assess risk and respond
- Rathmore NS will ensure to allocate 2 hours and 30 minutes of teaching and learning time to Wellbeing at junior level and then 3 hours at senior level, as outlined in the new primary curriculum framework 2023.

### 3. Policy and Planning

Rathmore NS regularly reviews our school policies for staff and pupils that are in accordance with the school aims, philosophy, 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:

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

### 4. Relationships and Partnerships

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

The following stakeholders collaborate regularly:

- Parents/Guardians
- Board of Management
- Patronage
- Parents Association
- Student Committees
- Voluntary/sports/arts groups
- State agencies
- Community groups
- Support services

## **Two-tiered Approach to Wellbeing Promotion**

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

### **1: A whole school Approach**

A multi-component, preventative, whole school approach to the promotion of well-being, with interventions at both universal and targeted levels, is the priority for Rathmore NS. This 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 well-being. By adopting a whole school approach Rathmore NS aims to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for our pupils, including:

- 1) Improved behaviour
- 2) Increased inclusion
- 3) Improved learning
- 4) Greater social cohesion
- 5) Increased social capital and improvements to mental health.

This whole school approach supports the integration of systems within the school community. This creates capacity to be reflective and responsive to the needs of our school and the individuals who are part of the school community. Central to this is the role of Rathmore NS staff and the importance of building professional capacity to engage in a reflective process to implement and sustain well-being policy and strategies from within. Rathmore NS aims to promote well-being, and social and emotional learning, and ensure a whole school approach to well-being promotion and early intervention, especially when considering appropriate use of external supports and services. Students flourish where there is a whole school approach to supporting their growth and where there is a shared belief in their potential for development, learning and well-being. The school is responsible for providing an environment that nurtures and supports students. The benefits of promoting wellbeing at Rathmore NS at a whole school level include:

- Better learning results for pupils
- More done to promote staff health
- A co-ordinated approach to social, physical and environmental needs
- Increased pupil self-esteem
- Lowered incidence of bullying
- School environment is safer and more secure
- Better understanding of schools' health aims
- Improved relationships within the school
- More involvement of parents/guardians
- Better use of outside agencies

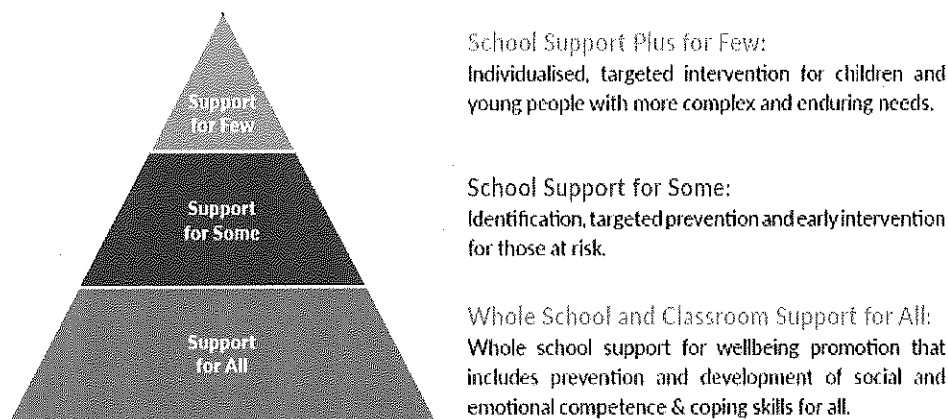
- Pupils receive better quality education

Our Whole School Approach involves:

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

## **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.



*Figure 2: Continuum of Support*

The Continuum of Support recognizes 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 to promote the wellbeing and mental health of all children and



young people. While supporting all, NEPS prioritizes support for those at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs.

The purpose of the Learning support team is to provide for students who have a greater need for a higher level of intervention from the school community. The learning support team meet regularly and discuss the needs of pupils in the whole school, under the continuum of support model. Children may be identified through this process who would benefit from further support in school, at home and/or from external agencies.

#### Objectives and Rationale for the Learning 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 Learning support and resource team 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 need

#### **Actions to Promote the Wellbeing of a School Community at Rathmore N.S**

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

9. Facilitating access to continuing professional development for school staff on the promotion of the mental health and well-being of children.

**Indicators of Success**

In Rathmore 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. The Wellbeing Indicators of Success, outlined in figure 2, are the broad outcomes to which the Department aspires and wants schools and centers for education to accomplish.

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.</li> <li>Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Policy & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.</li> <li>Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.</li> </ul>
Relationships & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>

*Figure 3: Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success*

**School Based Initiatives that Promote Wellbeing**

Rathmore NS implements several programmes and initiatives throughout daily school life that support the wellbeing of our pupils; the following list is not exhaustive

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) which encompasses four themes, Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking. This programme runs from Junior Infants to 2nd class.
- SPHE Curriculum (RSE, Stay Safe, Friendship and Anti-Bullying, Zippy friends (senior infants -1<sup>st</sup> class)
- Weaving Wellbeing (first class – 6<sup>th</sup> class)
- Student Committees: Student Council, Green School Committee, Well-being Committee, Active School Committee.
- Outdoor Learning
- Our School garden

- Project based learning from 3rd class to 6th class
- Promotion of thematic weeks: Friendship week, anti-bullying week, mental health week
- Internet Safety Workshop
- Partnership with Kildare Sports Development: Cycling- 5-week programme for 6<sup>th</sup> class
- External teachers for different strands of PE to promote active living e.g., GAA, Hurling
- School swimming lessons – 6-week block for Junior infants to 6th class pupils
- Healthy Eating week
- Active School Flag
- Health Promoting Schools Initiative
- Halloween witch walk
- Seasonal assemblies and whole-school performances
- Promoting the Arts – whole-school Christmas performance, Seachtain na Gaeilge performances, Grandparents Day performances,
- Active Schools week
- Creative school initiative
- Extra-curricular activities: Girls and boy's football and hurling
- Athletics
- Communicating with national council for special education (ncse) to gain sna access for pupils
- Links with HSE personnel e.g., primary care team, school age team, early
- Intervention team, assessment of need team

### **Staff Wellbeing**

Support for the wellbeing of staff is also an essential element in wellbeing promotion, and crucial to sustaining teacher/staff engagement, enthusiasm, and the ability to model resilience. It builds staff capacity to cope with challenges and adapt to change and creates conditions to support and motivate staff to be effective. Rathmore NS strives to be a safe and supportive environment for staff members. All staff members are supported in maintaining their personal health and wellbeing. As of September 2022, Rathmore NS has appointed a member of staff to act as a mentor for new staff members in the school. The role of the mentor is to ensure new staff members feel supported in their new teaching position. All staff are made aware of supports for teacher wellbeing and that individual teachers requiring additional support at a particular time may access the Employee Assistance Service (EAS). The service provided is known as 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile'.

The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, and mediation. It also provides advice and support to school leaders and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace. Where appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family members. A family member includes a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home. In addition, online cognitive

behavioral 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. As part of the EAS, a Mental Health Promotion Manager is also available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives.

### **School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process**

To implement this policy our school is required to use the six-step School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process with the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, to initiate a Wellbeing Promotion review and development cycle. We will consider our existing provision for wellbeing under each of the four key areas (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships), and devise and implement a plan for improvement in one key area, as appropriate for our school. In devising and implementing the improvement plan, we will refer to the Statements of Effective Practice in key areas relevant to the specific focus we have chosen.

### ***Ratified by the Board of Management***

Chairperson:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 20/6/23 \_\_\_\_\_