

2021

Junior Cycle **WELLBEING GUIDELINES**



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curacláim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

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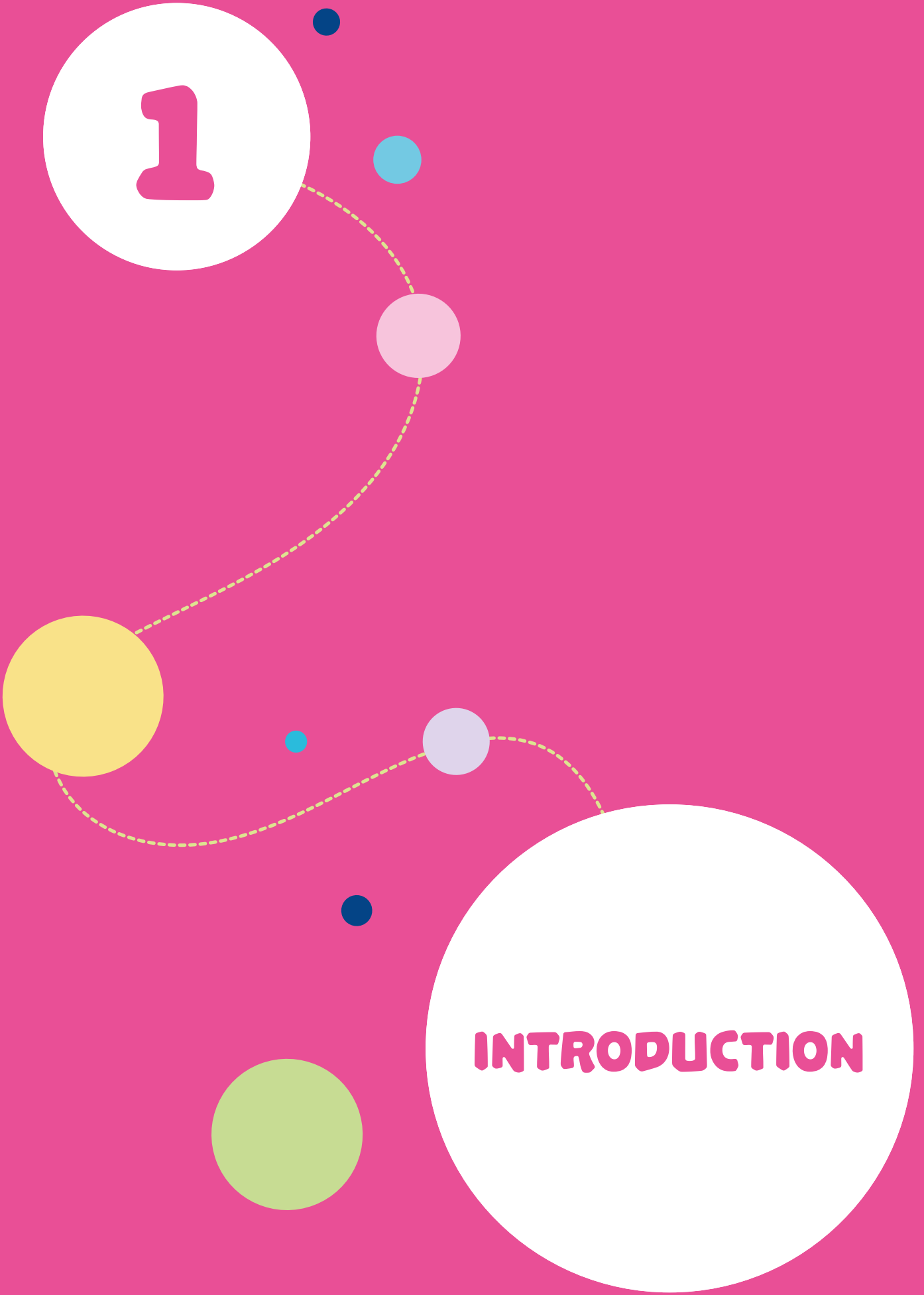
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INTRODUCTION




The *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) provides for an area of learning at junior cycle called Wellbeing. Wellbeing crosses the three years of junior cycle and builds on substantial work already taking place in schools in support of students' wellbeing. This area of learning makes the school's culture and ethos and commitment to wellbeing visible to students. It provides learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students. It supports students in developing important life skills and in building a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community.

These updated guidelines aim to support schools in planning and developing a coherent Wellbeing programme that builds on the understandings, practices and curricula for wellbeing already established in schools¹.

The disruption of normal school life brought about by Covid-19 has heightened awareness about the importance of wellbeing for all members of the school community. It has also brought into sharp focus the significant protective role that schools play in supporting young people's wellbeing. This is now more important than ever and the Wellbeing programme provides a unique space where many of the new and challenging circumstances brought about by the pandemic can be addressed.

There are six sections in the guidelines². Section 1 sets out why wellbeing matters as part of junior cycle education and the policy context for considering wellbeing within junior cycle education. Section 2 looks at the connections between wellbeing and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*. Section 3 considers the elements that contribute to a whole-school approach to wellbeing. Section 4 provides an overview of planning considerations for wellbeing with some examples of units of learning and sample Wellbeing programmes. Section 5 sets out suggestions for how schools can assess and report on student learning in this area. The final section, Appendices, provides tools for ongoing consultation, planning and evaluation of Wellbeing programmes.



WELLBEING IS PRESENT WHEN STUDENTS REALISE THEIR ABILITIES, TAKE CARE OF THEIR PHYSICAL WELLBEING, CAN COPE WITH THE NORMAL STRESSES OF LIFE, AND HAVE A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND BELONGING TO A WIDER COMMUNITY

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- 1 The guidelines use an upper case W to refer to the curriculum area or to the school's Wellbeing programme, and lower case w for wellbeing in general, as in 'student wellbeing'.
 - 2 The development of these guidelines has been informed by the work of Prof Maeve O'Brien in *Wellbeing and Post-Primary Schooling: a Review of the Literature and Research* (NCCA, 2008) and the background paper *A Human Development Framework for Orienting Education and Schools in the Space of Wellbeing* (NCCA, 2016) by Prof Maeve O'Brien and Dr Andrew O'Shea.

1.1

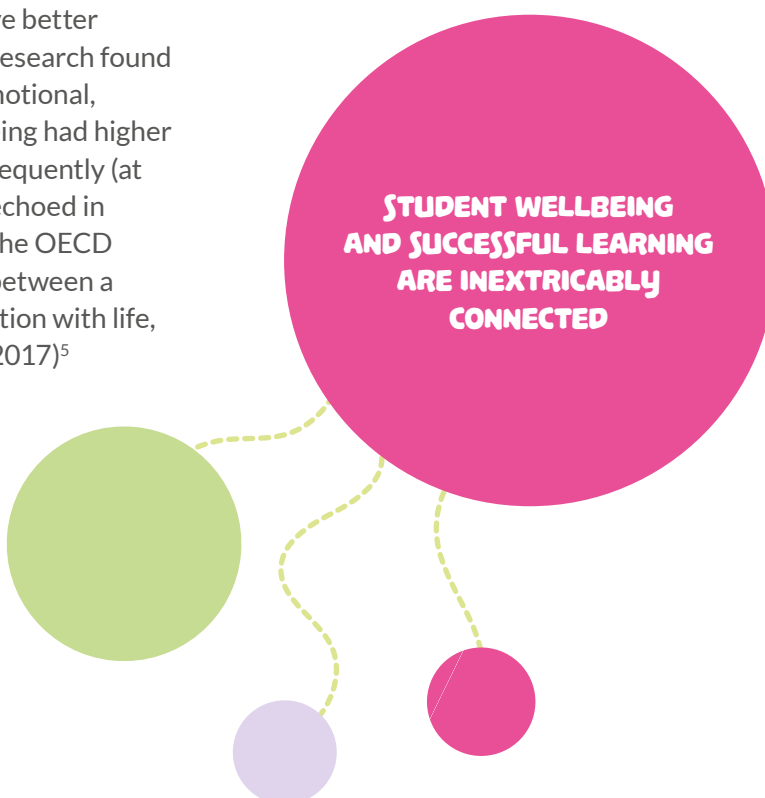
WHY DOES WELLBEING MATTER?

Wellbeing is gaining increased attention across many education systems. This is influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which emphasises children's right to achieve their full potential and participate in decisions that affect them. A rights-based approach to wellbeing is useful as it reminds us that wellbeing matters not simply because it leads to better educational outcomes or can influence young people's outcomes as adults. Wellbeing matters in the here and now. It is important in its own right because all students have a right to have their wellbeing supported and to feel cared for in school.

That said, we also know that students who have higher levels of wellbeing tend to have better academic outcomes in school³. Irish research found that 'children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social and school wellbeing had higher levels of academic achievement subsequently (at ages 11, 14, and 16)'.⁴ This finding is echoed in international research published by the OECD which reveals a positive correlation between a sense of belonging at school, satisfaction with life, and academic performance (OECD, 2017)⁵

Therefore, wellbeing and successful learning are inextricably connected.

It is vital that those who seek to promote high academic standards and those who seek to promote mental, emotional and social health realise that they are on the same side, and that social and affective education can support academic learning, not simply take time away from it. There is overwhelming evidence that students learn more effectively, including in their academic subjects, if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves, and feel school is supporting them.⁶



3 *Student wellbeing: Literature review*. (2015) Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: downloaded from https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/student_wellbeing_LR_AA.pdf

4 Smyth, E. (2015). *Learning in focus: Wellbeing and school experiences among 9-13-year-olds: Insights from the growing up in Ireland study*. ESRI/NCCA, Dublin (p. 4).

5 OECD (2017), PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): *Students' Well-Being*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

6 Weare, K. (2000). *Promoting mental, emotional, and social health: A whole-school approach*. London: Routledge.

There is also a large body of international research showing an association between the quality of relationships between teachers and students and a number of student outcomes, including socio-emotional wellbeing, engagement in schoolwork, feeling a sense of belonging in school, levels of disciplinary problems, and academic achievement.⁷ ‘Students in classes with supportive teachers are almost two times more likely to feel that they belong at school than those in classes without such teachers. This is relevant, as students who feel like an outsider at school are three times more likely to be unsatisfied with their life than those who do not’⁸. (OECD, 2017)

The *My World* survey 1 and 2⁹ identified key risk and protective factors¹⁰ to the mental health of young people. Among the 12-18-year-olds surveyed the most powerful predictor of good mental health was the presence in their lives of at least ‘one good adult’ – someone who knew them personally, believed in them, and was available to them. Those who could identify such an adult were found to have stronger self-esteem, optimism that they could cope with life’s challenges, and a sense of wellbeing. Those who could not identify any such figure in their lives were found to be at high risk for anxiety, depression, acting out and self-harm. For the majority of the adolescents surveyed, their ‘Good Adult’ was identified as a parent (most likely their mother), but for many it was a grandparent, older relative or teacher.

The philosopher, Nel Noddings, suggests that care is at the heart of human life and flourishing and should be viewed as the ethical ideal of education. Noddings proposes that from an educational

perspective, care ethics orients educators towards teaching students to care for themselves, each other, ideas and the world. In meeting the demands of caring for students, schools support both their academic and social/emotional needs.

The primary aim of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring.¹¹

Following on from Noddings, other care theorists have articulated this ethic of care in schools and suggested that the ways in which teachers model an ethic of care for their students strongly influences how students develop as learners and as young people.

Having said this, it must also be acknowledged that many of the factors that shape and affect the wellbeing of a student lie beyond the reach and influence of schools. Economic, political, environmental and social factors all have an impact on student wellbeing. The student’s particular family circumstances and context can also have a major influence on their experience of wellbeing. The links between poverty and poor physical and mental health are well-documented. Research also shows that countries that achieve excellence in education do so by attending to both social equity and child wellbeing. Therefore, it is not surprising that the top ranked countries for overall levels of child wellbeing are also amongst the top performers in the PISA rankings for academic achievement and that their governments have a strong commitment to social equality.¹²

Whilst acknowledging these external factors, it is important that the role of school in relation to

7 Smyth, E. (2015). *Learning in focus: Wellbeing and school experiences among 9-13-year-olds: Insights from the growing up in Ireland study*. ESRI/NCCA, Dublin (p. 3).

8 OECD, 2017 op cit

9 *My World Survey 1 and 2*, (2012,2019) UCD School of Psychology and Jigsaw comprises the largest and most comprehensive survey of young people’s mental health in Ireland

10 Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, schools or the larger society that, when present, increase the health and wellbeing of children and families.

11 Noddings, N. (1984). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, Teachers College Press, p. 172.

12 Andy Hargreaves, speaking in Dublin, February 2017 on *Ireland: Achievement and Equity*

wellbeing should not be underestimated. By optimising opportunities for young people to learn about wellbeing and by being aware of the protective factors that the whole school community can provide to enhance young people's sense of wellbeing, schools can make a significant difference.

Childhood can be seen as a process of 'well-becoming', where young people are gaining knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will sustain them throughout their lives¹³. This is a lifelong journey, but one where schools play an important part. The goal for wellbeing is human flourishing and flourishing rests on five pillars: **positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment**¹⁴.

When children and young people are 'flourishing', they are not only engaged in meaningful learning, they are

- creative and imaginative
- connected and empathetic
- good team players
- confident about who they are
- resilient and persistent
- positive about themselves and see themselves growing into better people.¹⁵

LEARNING ABOUT WELLBEING AND LEARNING FOR WELLBEING

Schools have a central role to play in supporting and promoting students' learning *about* wellbeing and *for* wellbeing. Students learn *about* wellbeing through specific areas of the curriculum and through special wellbeing events and initiatives designed to develop their awareness, knowledge and understanding of wellbeing, and which help them to promote their own wellbeing and that of others. They learn *for* wellbeing when their experience of school life and their day-to-day interactions, both within and beyond the classroom, are respectful and caring.

Wellbeing, as described in section 3 of these guidelines, is a whole-school endeavour. While some teachers will have a key role in teaching *about* wellbeing, all members of the school community can support learning *for* wellbeing. Students experience learning *for* wellbeing in classrooms where teachers are aware of the indicators of wellbeing and consciously endeavour to develop these behaviours. Thinking about learning *for* wellbeing requires that we consider not only *what* students learn but also *how* they learn it. Learning *for* wellbeing can be nurtured in all subjects and by all teachers. Seeing wellbeing through the lens of learning *about* wellbeing and *for* wellbeing enables all members of the school community to see themselves as having a role and responsibility in supporting students' wellbeing.

13 Awartani, M., and Looney, J. (2015). *Learning and well-being: An agenda for change*. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/files/esl/uploads/ad2346e.pdf>

14 Seligman, M. (2011). 'Happiness is not enough' Retrieved March 21 2016 from <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/newsletters/flourishnewsletters/newtheory>

15 *Growing great kids: helping young people to flourish in life*. Retrieved March 23 2016 from <http://growinggreatschools.com.au/growing-great-kids-helping-young-people-flourish-in-life/>

1.2

THE POLICY CONTEXT

The promotion of wellbeing is a government priority and the Department of Education and Skills has a key role to play in promoting the wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland, in collaboration with other government departments and agencies. Underpinned by a recognition of the importance of student wellbeing, *The Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) places students at the centre of teaching and learning. This focus on wellbeing is explicit in the principles of junior cycle, the key skills, the statements of learning, and in the inclusion of wellbeing as a distinct area of learning. It is implicit in the vision of teaching and learning and the broader understanding of assessment that the Framework encourages. The inclusion of wellbeing as a key consideration for schools in planning junior cycle education aligns with a number of government policy documents.

The National Children's Strategy¹⁶ *Our Children – Their Lives*, published by the Irish Government in 2000, sets out a blueprint for improving the lives of children in Ireland. It proposes a vision for an Ireland where:

children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.¹⁷

*Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing*¹⁸ sets out a similar vision for an Ireland where:

...everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.¹⁹

The National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, 2014-2020, also provides a clear message regarding the link between Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the promotion of wellbeing. Here, sustainable development is defined as

development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is characterised as a continuous, guided process of economic, environmental and social change aimed at promoting wellbeing of citizens now and into the future.²⁰

Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-primary Schools, School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (DES & Inspectorate, 2016) articulates a holistic view of learning in schools within which wellbeing is seen as both an enabler of learning and an outcome of learning. It emphasises the need for children and young people to develop a broad range of skills, competencies and values that foster active citizenship, lifelong learning and personal wellbeing. The framework asserts that in providing good quality learning experiences,

16 Department of Education and Department of Health. (2000). *The National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives*.

17 Ibid, p10

18 Department of Health (2013). *Healthy Ireland: A framework for improved health and wellbeing. 2013-2025*.

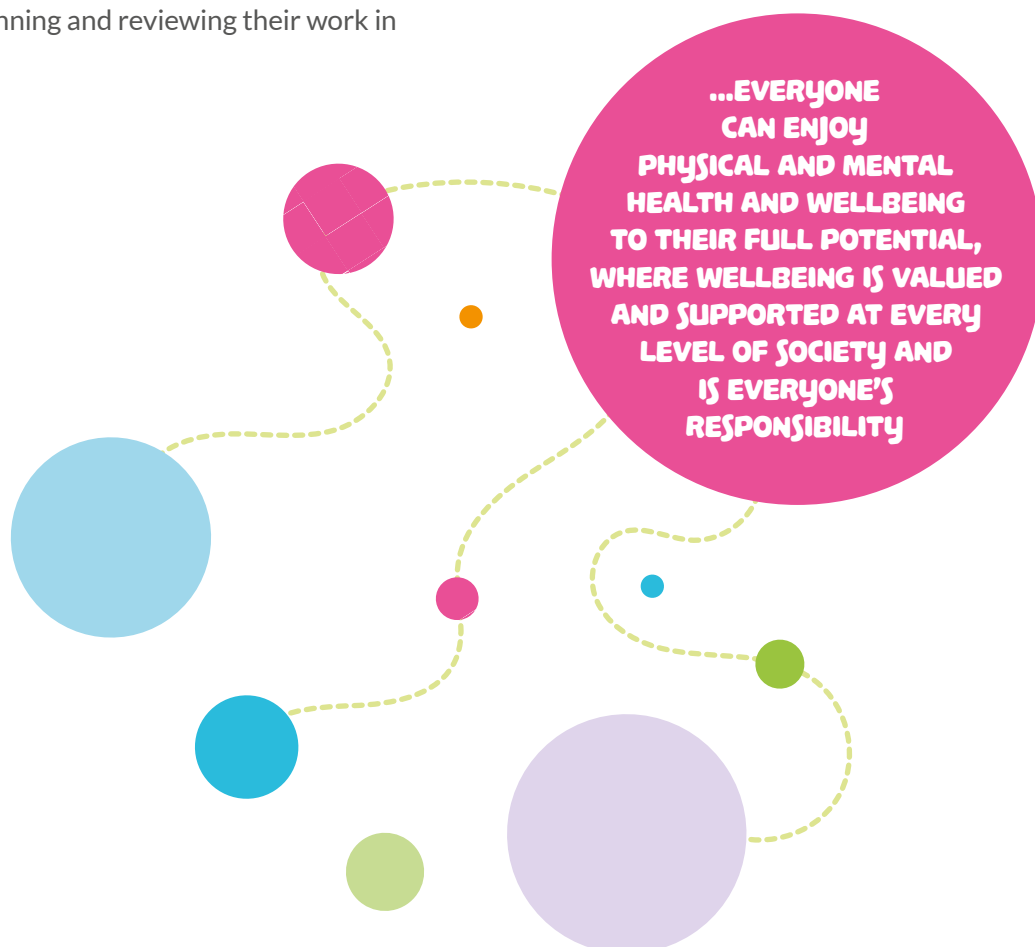
19 <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/hienglish.pdf> (p6)

20 <https://www.education.ie/en/publications/education-reports/national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development-in-ireland-2014-2020.pdf> (p6)

teachers need to also consider children and young people's wellbeing and that effective school leadership and management involves creating and maintaining a positive, secure and healthy culture where the holistic development of all children and young people is enabled.

More recently, the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*²¹ sets out the Department of Education's ambition and vision for wellbeing promotion at a whole school level, building on the guidelines and frameworks that are already available to support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. This policy statement and framework document provides an overarching structure to support both primary and post primary schools in planning and reviewing their work in

wellbeing promotion. Through use of statements of effective practice, it enables schools to identify their own targets for development and track their own success in implementing them. The policy requires that by 2023 a Wellbeing Promotion Process be developed and implemented in all schools through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process. These guidelines are aligned with the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* and can inform the development of a Wellbeing Promotion Process in the context of School Self-Evaluation (SSE).



21 DES, (2019) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-2018%E2%80%932023.pdf>

1.3

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT WELLBEING IN JUNIOR CYCLE

It is important that the whole school community shares a common understanding of wellbeing, especially of what we mean when we talk about student wellbeing. Wellbeing can mean different things to different people. Hence, teachers need regular opportunities to dialogue and build a shared vision and understanding of wellbeing. Arriving at a definition that communicates the multidimensional nature of student wellbeing is a challenge. Different disciplines offer diverse and sometimes competing perspectives on wellbeing.

Much of the research and policy documentation defines student wellbeing in psychological terms and so wellbeing is commonly seen as a combination of sustained positive feelings and attitudes – happy, healthy and confident young people who feel safe, secure, cared for, included, involved and engaged, and so on. Such a view of wellbeing tends to narrowly identify wellbeing with the subjective mental state of the student. There are some problems with this approach. Firstly, it ignores the fact that wellbeing and ill-being exist together as part of the human condition and wellbeing doesn't necessarily mean the absence of negative moods, feelings or thoughts. Secondly, the individual is seen as being solely responsible for their wellbeing without reference to the wider context and social conditions necessary for individual wellbeing to flourish. Even with our best efforts, the wellbeing of individuals can be compromised by the wider social, economic and cultural landscape. Factors such as social class, ethnic identity, gender and sexual identity cannot be ignored when considering student wellbeing. Thirdly, approaches to wellbeing which narrowly

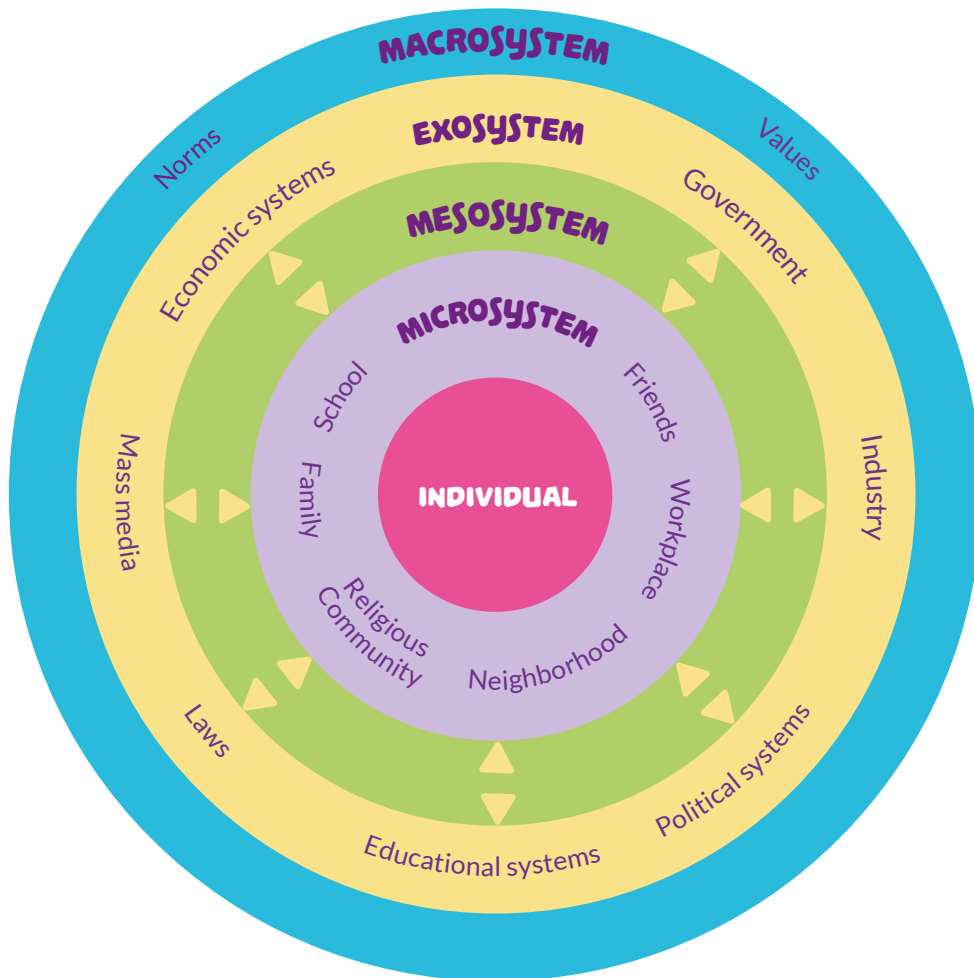
focus on promoting positivity or happiness, can ignore the reality that *'not everything which makes us feel better is good for us. Not everything which hurts may be bad.'*²²

It is important, therefore, that the definition of wellbeing communicates its multidimensional nature and draws on the insights of psychology, philosophy and sociology²³. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development (see Figure 1) is helpful as it provides a comprehensive systems-based approach to understanding wellbeing. It begins by acknowledging the importance of the individual and his/her immediate relationships and then moves outwards to show how a consideration of the wider community and social context is needed to accommodate a systems-based and holistic approach to wellbeing. This perspective recognises that sometimes the wellbeing of individuals is hindered by wider social, economic, or cultural factors and that conversely sometimes one's own behaviour, choices or goals may harm the collective wellbeing at both a local and global level. In addition, it reminds us that our personal wellbeing and that of our local community is connected to the wider world and is built upon values of justice, equality, solidarity and respect for differences in an interconnected world. In a nutshell, this model demonstrates that to be human is to be relational and wellbeing is always realised in a community.

22 Be Botton, A. (2001) *The Consolations of Philosophy*, Penguin Books, p.244

23 O'Brien, M. and O'Shea, A. (2016). *A human development framework for orienting education and schools in the space of wellbeing*. <https://ncca.ie/media/2488/a-human-development-framework-ppsp.pdf>

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological model of human development



INDIVIDUAL
Age, sex, health, etc

MICROSYSTEM
Immediate environments
Direct interaction in activities, roles and relations with others and objects

MESOSYSTEM
Connections between systems and microsystems

EXOSYSTEM
Indirect environments
Systems that influence the individual indirectly through micro-systems

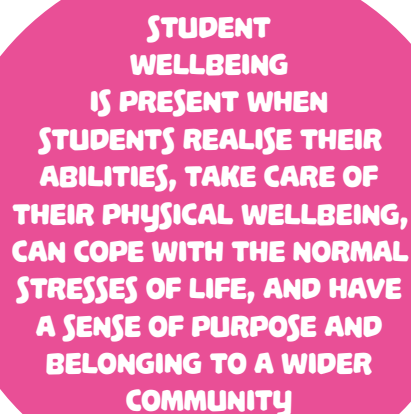
MACROSYSTEM
Social ideologies and values of cultures and subcultures

TECHNO-SUBSYSTEM
Media influences
Computers
Internet
Portable devices
Social media
TV, Phone

Finally, schools need to consider wellbeing less as a state of being but more as a process of 'well-becoming'. It is a lifelong journey. In this context, it is crucial to validate students' current experience and to support young people in gaining the knowledge, skills and dispositions for their wellbeing now, and into their adult lives. It is important to affirm that wellbeing will never be fully realised; setbacks are always possible and this is true for everyone. Low moods, feelings or thoughts, and poor self-esteem should not be seen as obstacles to wellbeing but as aspects of the human condition. By acknowledging the experience of ill-being as part of the continuum of wellbeing, students learn to accept that everyone experiences vulnerability and a need for care at stages in their journey. Students can be encouraged to recognise that wellbeing does not necessarily mean the absence of stress or negative emotions in their lives.

All children and young people 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 process²⁴.

The following definition²⁵ aims to take account of the multi-dimensional nature of wellbeing encompassing social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, environmental and physical wellbeing:



STUDENT WELLBEING IS PRESENT WHEN STUDENTS REALISE THEIR ABILITIES, TAKE CARE OF THEIR PHYSICAL WELLBEING, CAN COPE WITH THE NORMAL STRESSES OF LIFE, AND HAVE A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND BELONGING TO A WIDER COMMUNITY

While every teacher can support student wellbeing, it is further enhanced when important aspects of wellbeing are the subject of learning and teaching in specific curriculum areas and are allocated specific time. The next sections of these guidelines provide direction and practical examples to help schools develop Wellbeing programmes.

24 DES, (revised 2019) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*, p.10

25 Adapted from the WHO definition (2001)



2

**WELLBEING
AND THE
FRAMEWORK
FOR JUNIOR
CYCLE**

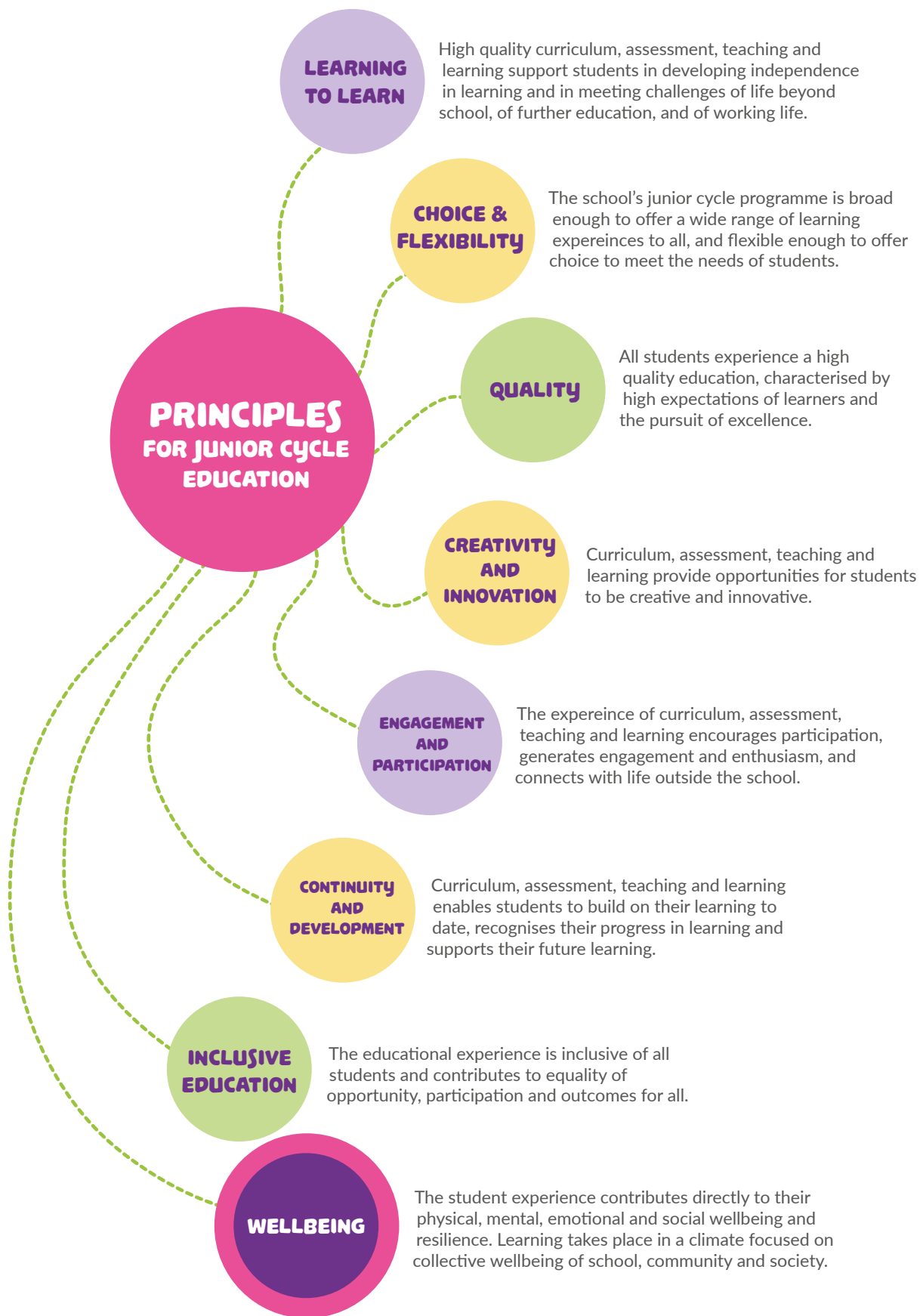
The junior cycle years are an important time in young peoples' lives as they learn to take greater responsibility for their lives and to cope with new experiences, influences and pressures. Student wellbeing is at the heart of the vision for junior cycle and the *Framework for Junior Cycle* provides an excellent basis for planning a junior cycle Wellbeing programme.

The *Framework for Junior Cycle* is underpinned by eight principles that inform the development and implementation of junior cycle programmes in all schools. All of these principles are important in supporting the student experience of wellbeing in junior cycle. It is worth noting that wellbeing is both a principle of junior cycle education and also a curricular area.



**STUDENT WELLBEING
IS AT THE HEART OF THE
VISION FOR JUNIOR CYCLE.**

Figure 2: Principles for junior cycle education



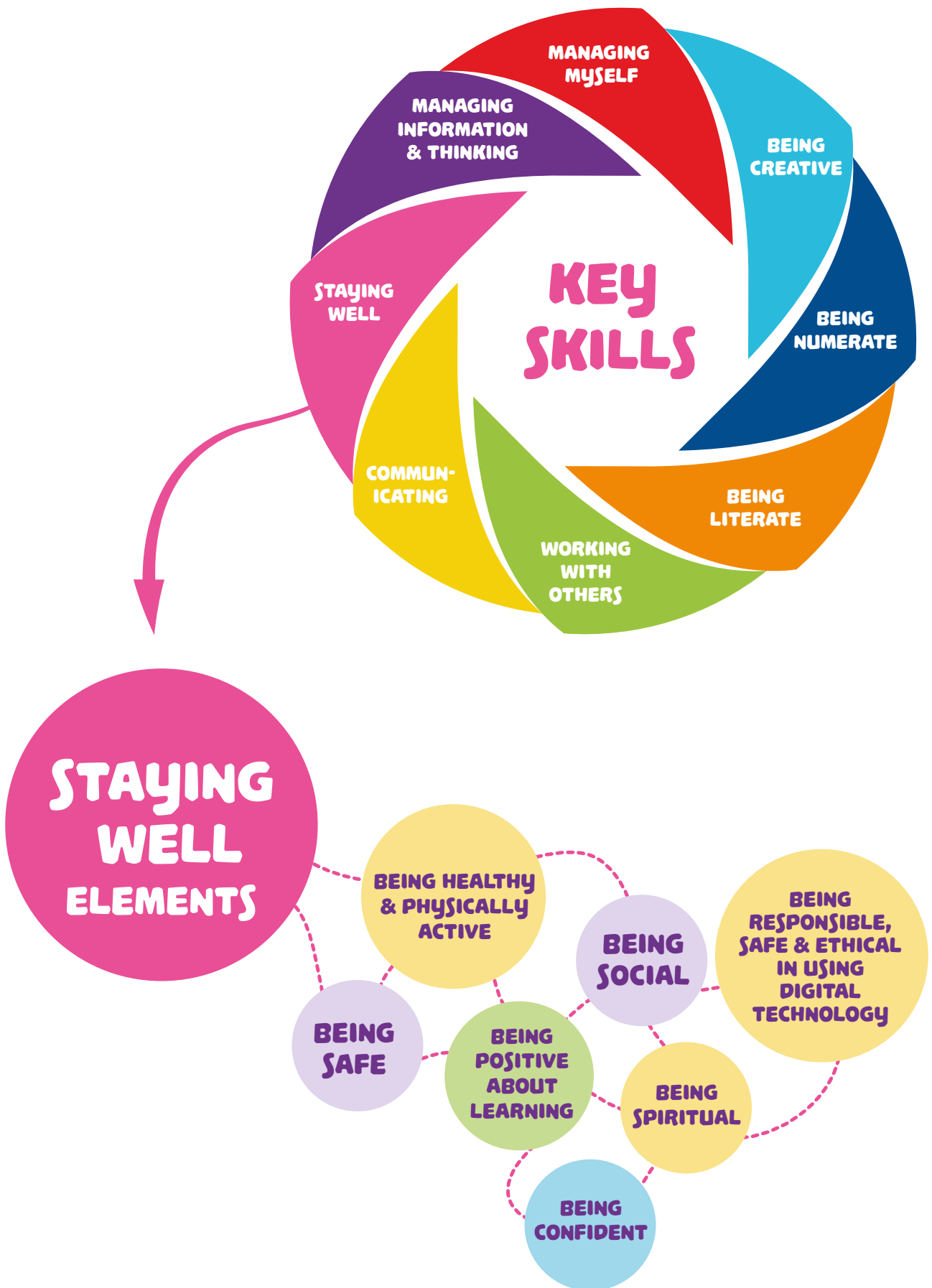
The 24 statements of learning (SOLs) included in the Framework, along with the eight principles, are central to planning for the students' experience of the school's junior cycle programme. A number of the statements of learning relate explicitly to wellbeing, including:

- The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision-making (SOL 5).
- The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts (SOL 7).
- The student has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably (SOL 10).
- The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others (SOL 11).
- The student is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active (SOL 12).
- The student understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices (SOL 13).

The statements and the principles provide the basis for planning and evaluating all junior cycle school programmes. The promotion of key skills within teaching and learning also has an important part to play in supporting student wellbeing. When teachers plan skills-rich lessons, students are more actively engaged in their learning, feel more positive about learning and take more responsibility for their learning. While the key skill of *Staying well* focuses specifically on wellbeing, many of the positive dispositions associated with student wellbeing are fostered through the conscious development of all the key skills in the classroom.

Each school has the freedom to design its junior cycle programme drawing on a combination of curriculum components (subjects, short courses, Priority Learning Units, units of learning and other learning experiences). An important criterion for the inclusion of the different components is that they provide engaging, challenging and enjoyable learning experiences for students, thereby supporting their experience of wellbeing.

Advice on, and examples of, how different curriculum components can be employed and combined in junior cycle Wellbeing programmes is set out in Section 4 of these guidelines.





3

**WELLBEING - A
WHOLE-SCHOOL
ENDEAVOUR**

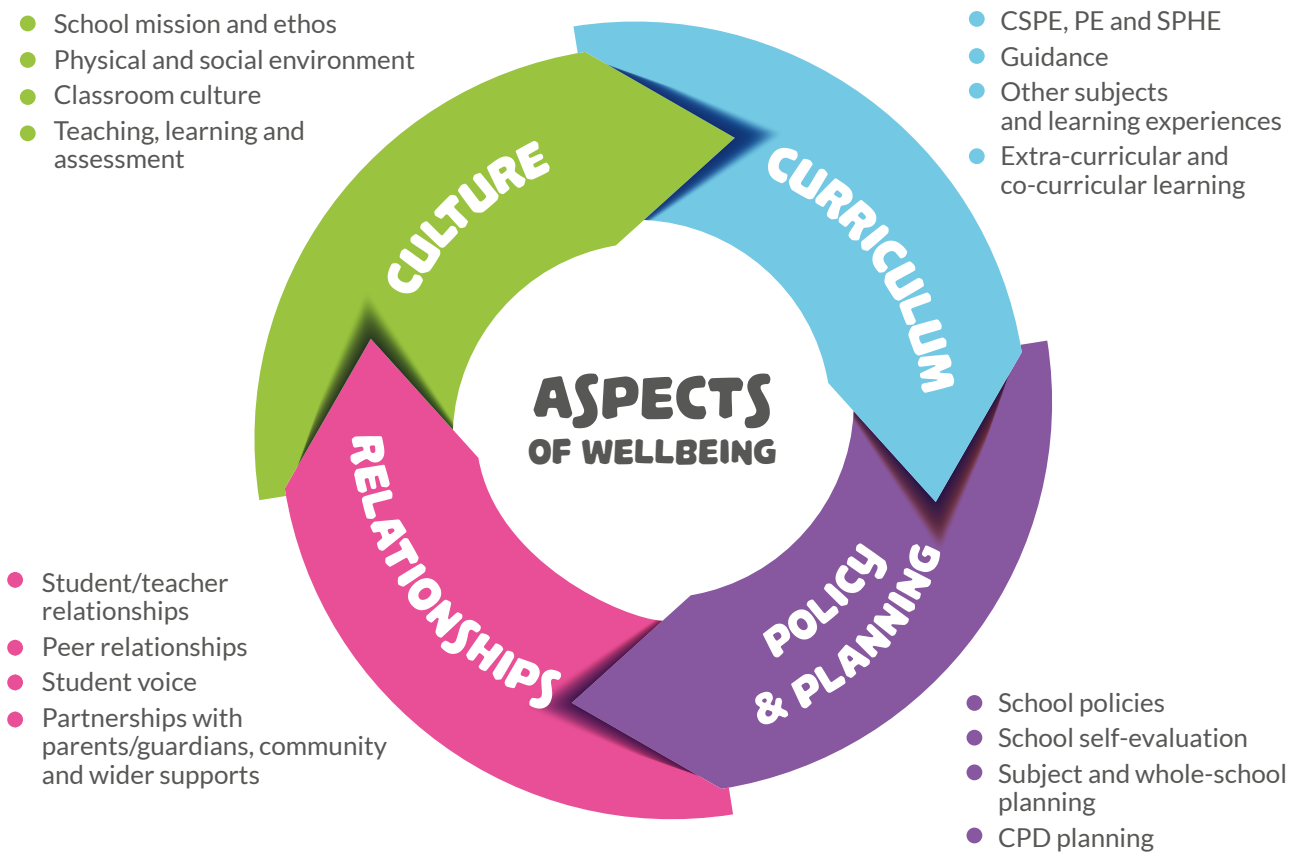
3.1

FOUR ASPECTS OF WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

Planning for wellbeing involves consideration of these aspects: culture, relationships, policy and planning, and the curriculum. This section focuses on the first three of these and looks at ways in which a whole-school community can contribute to building the kind of culture, relationships and policies that support student wellbeing.

The question of wellbeing and the curriculum is the subject of detailed discussion in Section 4.

Figure 3: Four aspects of wellbeing in schools



These four aspects align with the four key areas of wellbeing promotion set out in the Department of Education’s *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*. The *Wellbeing Framework for Practice* provides a set of indicators of success in the four key areas of Wellbeing (see Table 1) as well as statements for effective practice which form the basis of the school’s self-evaluation of its Wellbeing Promotion Process.

Table 1: Wellbeing Framework for Practice Indicators of Success (DES, 2019)

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.

3.2

WHAT MATTERS MOST FOR STUDENT WELLBEING?

Wellbeing is multi-faceted and efforts to promote student wellbeing require a school-wide and all-encompassing approach. When thinking about wellbeing in a school context, it can be helpful to ask what matters most when it comes to promoting student wellbeing. Much of the research in this area concludes that positive relationships between teachers and students, and students and their peers, along with a sense of connectedness, are the key protective factors for students' sense of wellbeing while in school.

A sense of belonging to the school environment is an established protective factor for child and adolescent health, education, and social wellbeing.¹

Connectedness is realised and promoted through the quality of relationships experienced within the school environment and through the values and school culture experienced on a day-to-day basis. In this context, wellbeing is not only taught through explicit curriculum components, but is modelled by those working in the school as they show care, respect and consideration in their interactions with students.

Research emphasises the significance of holistic educational experiences for students so that it is not sufficient to teach 'about' good relationships and respect; this needs to be modelled and experienced in the school community.²

Research also indicates that it is possible to influence the development of social and emotional skills within formal schooling and this, in turn, can lead to better learning outcomes and enhanced wellbeing.

The good news is that some of the social and emotional skills are malleable, and teachers can play a pivotal role by improving learning environments to enhance these skills. ...raising levels of social and emotional skills—such as perseverance, self-esteem and sociability—can in turn have a particularly strong effect on improving health-related outcomes and subjective well-being, as well as reducing anti-social behaviours.³

Everyone within the school, regardless of the level and frequency of contact they have with young people, can help create a positive ethos and climate of respect and care. The importance of small, everyday acts of kindness, interest, consideration and positivity should not be underestimated. These interactions communicate to students that they are recognised, cared for, valued and listened to and thereby contribute significantly to students' feeling of wellbeing.

All of us need 'one good adult' in our corner. This is someone in our lives who gets us, who listens to us and who believes in our potential.⁴

1 DES, NEPS *The Wellbeing and Mental Health of Young People in Ireland: Factors for Consideration for the Leaving Certificate Examination in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic* (2020) <https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/State-Examinations/wellbeing-mental-health-young-people-leaving-cert-covid-19.pdf>

2 O' Brien, M. (2009). *Well-being and post-primary schooling*. NCCA. p180. https://ncca.ie/media/2491/wellbeing_and_postprimary_schooling_a_review_of_the_literature_and_research.pdf


3 OECD. (2015). *Skills for social progress*. pp13-14. <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-for-social-progress-9789264226159-en.htm>

4 Bates, T. (2016, April 2). We have the power to help those in a dark place. *The Irish Times*. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/tony-bates-we-have-the-power-to-help-those-in-a-dark-place-1.2595364>

For many children and young people a family member is their 'one good adult'. Others find their 'one good adult' in school whether it be a teacher, a Special Needs Assistant, the school secretary or another member of staff.

Wellbeing as a whole-school endeavour supports all students, albeit in different ways. When schools have a strong focus on taking care of the needs of all students, then those children who are vulnerable or experiencing particular difficulties also benefit.

The main focus of these guidelines is on building a whole-school approach to wellbeing and a curriculum for Wellbeing that is the responsibility of all and supports wellbeing for all.



**POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS
AND A SENSE OF
CONNECTEDNESS MATTER
MOST FOR STUDENT
WELLBEING**

3.3

STUDENT VOICE AND WELLBEING

Recent curriculum developments, including the process of planning a junior cycle Wellbeing programme, provide rich opportunities for student voices to be heard on matters that affect their learning and their wellbeing. The *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) gives schools greater flexibility to design programmes that are suited to the needs of their junior cycle students and their local context. The *Framework* places the student at the centre of planning and at the centre of teaching and learning.

Only young people know what it is like to be a young person right now and what aspects of wellbeing they need to learn about. It is important that, as educators, we do not assume that we know what young people need. Students should have opportunities to express their needs so that the school's Wellbeing programme responds to their real and expressed needs rather than adult assumptions about what they need.⁵

When students are involved in shaping the Wellbeing programme it is more likely to provide the kind of learning that young people need to deal with the world as they find it, rather than the world as adults imagine it to be for them. By engaging in conversations with different groups of young people, the school can gain students' insights into the four key aspects of Wellbeing (Culture, Curriculum, Relationships, Policy) and identify how best to allocate time within the junior cycle Wellbeing programme. Furthermore, research shows that as young people participate meaningfully in school decision-making, it helps to build their self-confidence and sense of agency, fosters positive student-teacher relationships, and improves their engagement with and commitment to their school. Furthermore, the very experience of having one's voice heard is good for young

people's wellbeing.

With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992, Ireland committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard and that their opinions are given due weight in all matters that affect them. Therefore, listening to young people's voices is 'not an option which is in the gift of adults/policy makers but a legal obligation which is the right of the child'⁶

Within a changing education landscape that recognises young people's right to have their voices heard in matters that affect them, there is a growing awareness that voice is not enough. A key question is how to ensure that their participation is really meaningful. Professor Laura Lundy has developed a model for meaningful participation by children and young people which include these four features:⁷

- **SPACE:** Children must be given safe and inclusive opportunities to express their view
- **VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their view.
- **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to by those with decision-making power.
- **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Lundy has also created a checklist to help those working with and for children and young people, to comply with Article 12 of the UNCRC and ensure that children: have the space to express their views; their voice is enabled; they have an audience for their views; their views will have influence. This is a useful checklist when planning consultations with students. This checklist has been adapted specifically for schools, as shown in Table 2.

5 Noddings, N. (2005). Identifying and responding to needs in education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Volume 35(2).

6 Lundy L (2007) 'Voice is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', *British Educational Research Journal*, 33:6, 927-942

7 Lundy L (2007) See https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf

Table 2:⁸ A checklist for student participation:

<p style="text-align: center;">Space</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Provide a safe and inclusive space for young people to form and express their views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the young people affected by this issue involved? • Are steps taken to ensure that the process is inclusive? • Do the young people feel safe to express themselves freely in the space? • Are the young people who are interested in the issue involved? • Are the young people involved from the start? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Voice</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Provide appropriate information and facilitate the young people to form and express their views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the young people have the information they need to form a view? • Are the young people given a range of options on how to express themselves? • Do the young people know to whom their views will be communicated? • Does the process include opportunities for young people to identify issues that they want to discuss? • Do the young people know they have a choice about their participation?
<p style="text-align: center;">Influence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensure that young people’s views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the young people clear about the scope of their influence, (opportunities and limitations)? • Will young people be given feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken? • Will the young people be given an easily accessible summary of their views? • Do the young people know who the key decision-makers involved are? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Audience</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensure that young people’s views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the right decision-makers involved, i.e. those responsible for decision making on this issue? • Have these decision-makers committed to taking the young people’s feedback seriously? • Is there a process in place to ensure that the young people’s voices are given due weight and consideration? • Are there plans to have the young people involved in presenting their views

8 https://www.ourvoicesourschools.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Planning-a-voice-initiative_a-template.pdf

Young people are, in a sense, experts in their own experience and awareness of wellbeing, in school and in their communities. Combining this expertise with that of their teachers and of the specified curriculum for Wellbeing ensures that engaging and relevant learning *for* and *about* wellbeing can happen.

Practical tools to help schools in listening to young people can be downloaded from the Our Voices Our Schools website at www.ourvoicesourschools.ie/whole-school/



3.4

TEACHER WELLBEING

Wellbeing in school starts with the staff. They are in the front line of the work and it is hard for them to be genuinely motivated to promote emotional and social wellbeing of others if they feel uncared for and burnt out themselves.⁹

Many members of the school community are already committed to supporting the wellbeing of their students. This is evident in schools where class tutors, guidance counsellors, year heads and Special Needs Assistants are working to ensure that young people receive the support and attention that they need to thrive and succeed in school.

Part of the task of putting wellbeing on the school map involves creating opportunities for teachers and other staff to consider their own sense of wellbeing. The Teaching Council recognises ‘the importance of care of self so as to be able to care for others and, in that context, teachers’ well-being is vital if they are to effectively lead learning, and support and facilitate students in this endeavour’.¹⁰

Teacher wellbeing is shaped by individual, relational and contextual factors¹¹. At an individual level, teacher wellbeing is concerned with a need for autonomy, having a sense of competence, a capacity for emotional intelligence, a positive attitude and a healthy work-life balance. The quality of teacher-student interactions and positive professional working relationships are essential for teacher wellbeing. An inclusive whole-school culture with positive and affirming leadership is also important in this context. As with students,

teachers’ sense of belonging and connectedness to their school is also fundamental to their wellbeing. Finally, there are contextual factors such as policy initiatives and school culture that impact on teacher wellbeing. Providing opportunities to discuss teacher wellbeing at all these levels is important.

Teachers require ongoing professional development to ensure that they have a deep conceptual understanding of wellbeing and are confident in using the pedagogical approaches that are known to support and build students’ wellbeing. This is important because their personal understanding and values influence how they care for their own wellbeing and that of their students. In this context it is true that ‘we teach who we are’.¹²

Ultimately, it is important for schools that teachers are supportive of the Wellbeing programme, understand how they can contribute to it and can enable students to have a positive experience as they learn *about* wellbeing and *for* wellbeing across the whole curriculum.

9 Weare, K. (2015). *What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools? Advice for schools and framework document*. p6. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/ResourceFinder/What-works-in-promoting-social-and-emotional-wellbeing-in-schools-2015.pdf>

10 Teaching Council. (2016). *Cosán: A framework for teachers' learning*. p18. <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/publications/teacher-education/cosan-framework-for-teachers-learning.pdf>

11 Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. In *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* Vol. 40(8) Article 6.

12 Palmer, P.J. (1997). The heart of a teacher., *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, Volume 29, 1997 – Issue 6, p. 15.

3.5

EXPECTATIONS AND BELIEFS AND WELLBEING

Students' identities and beliefs about themselves are significantly impacted upon by the values, assumptions and beliefs about learning that both they and their teachers bring to the classroom.

Carol Dweck's research has demonstrated the powerful effect of a *growth mindset* and a *fixed mindset* view of intelligence.¹³ A fixed mindset assumes that our intelligence and creative abilities are static givens which we cannot change to any significant degree, and success is the affirmation of inherent intelligence. A growth mindset is based on the belief that although people may differ in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments, everyone can change and grow through effort and experience. Accordingly, everyone has the potential to grow in intelligence and in ability. A growth mindset thrives on challenge and sees mistakes and failure, not as evidence of lack of intelligence, but as a source of learning. On the other hand, when one adopts a fixed mindset, challenges are avoided, intelligence is seen as something you are born with and if students don't succeed it is due to a deficit on their part.

To ensure that all students continue to improve and engage with their learning, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- What is the dominant view in our school – a growth mindset or a fixed mindset view of intelligence?
- How do we build growth mindsets rather than fixed mindsets with our students?
- Is a growth-based approach to intelligence adopted when we talk about students and talk to students?
- Are students, as individuals, regularly reminded of their potential and strengths as learners and how they can improve?
- Are there high expectations for *all*?
- Are students encouraged to talk about their learning, e.g., what helps them to learn, and to set goals for their learning?
- Are different types of intelligence and accomplishment nurtured and recognised?

13 Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, Ballantine.

3.6

TEACHING AND LEARNING, AND WELLBEING

Teachers can play a particularly important role in raising children’s self-esteem, motivation and confidence by the way they organise teaching and learning.¹⁴

How teaching happens matters! Given that students spend most of their day in class, the day-to-day experience of teaching and learning within the classroom probably provides the greatest opportunity to contribute to student wellbeing. Wellbeing is supported through learning and teaching that helps students feel confident, connected and actively engaged in their learning. It is further enhanced when students experience progress and mastery in the different subjects and courses they are studying.

Junior cycle key skills and the accompanying support materials and toolkits¹⁵ provide an important basis for developing students’ skills in areas that are critically important for wellbeing: Managing myself, Staying well, Being creative, Managing information and thinking, Communicating, and Working with others.

Research with teachers has found that learning and teaching methodologies associated with developing key skills can help students feel more confident, connected and actively engaged in their learning. In particular, teachers who have adopted a key skills approach to teaching and learning reported the following results:

- the lessons became more learner-centred
- student motivation and engagement in learning improved
- more positive classroom relationships and pro-social behaviour were in evidence
- more effective learning took place.

Teachers believed that these results derived from the increased use of co-operative learning strategies, fostering greater levels of student autonomy, and engaging students in conversations about their learning. In particular, they pointed to the positive impact of collaborative learning, peer-explaining, and feedback as well as the value of giving students opportunities to reflect on their learning, set goals and review their progress. Embedding the key skills in teaching and learning also leads to a more democratic learning environment in which students have a voice¹⁶. This too can contribute to student wellbeing.

Teaching and learning that is supportive of student wellbeing

- is democratic and students have a voice in relation to teaching, learning, assessment and reporting on a day-to-day basis
- is inclusive, and consciously addresses the specific needs of minority student groups
- engages students through the use of a variety of approaches including active, cooperative and peer learning
- includes differentiated learning and assessment activities which take into account the diverse needs and interests of individual students
- fosters expectations of high achievement and

14 OECD 2015 *Skills for Social Progress*, p83. <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-for-social-progress-9789264226159-en.htm>

15 <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/framework-for-junior-cycle>

16 See Irish students talking about democratic learning through key skills in a video produced for UNESCO <https://vimeo.com/42553073>

provides opportunities for success for all

- encourages students to support each other and act as positive role models for others
- encourages and capitalises on the potential to experience learning and new challenges in the outdoor environment and wider community.

Because it is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and development in this area, it is expected that all teachers will be proactive in:

- promoting a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure and which respects and develops children’s rights and wellbeing

- establishing open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community, where young people know that they are listened to, and where they feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives
- modelling behaviour which promotes wellbeing for all
- using learning and teaching methods that promote engaged and successful learning.

*Looking at our School (DES)*¹⁷ provides a set of statements that schools can use to self-evaluate and improve teaching and learning through the lens of student wellbeing.



17 *Looking at our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*, DES, can be retrieved from <https://jct.ie/perch/resources/leadership/looking-at-our-school-2016-a-quality-framework-for-post-primary-schools.pdf>

3.7

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENT WELLBEING

Students' experience of assessment impacts on their wellbeing. Findings from PISA 2015 noted a level of exam-related anxiety for young people in Ireland significantly above the OECD average. The stressors on Irish teenagers sitting examinations feature in the PISA (2018) report with 44.8% reporting that they often or always felt they would never do as well as others in exams. 51.6% worry about what would happen if they failed an exam, and 43.1% stated they felt nervous and stressed when thinking about doing exams.

Assessment change is an important feature of the junior cycle developments. This change reflects a substantial body of research that shows the benefits for student learning of a broader range of assessment methods which allow students to show evidence of their learning in different ways. When students are involved in agreeing the success criteria and are given quality feedback that helps them to understand how their learning can be improved, the benefits to both their learning and wellbeing are even greater. This helps students feel more motivated and engaged in the learning process, more in control of their learning and confident in their ability to improve.

Ongoing classroom assessment should contribute to ensuring that students have a positive sense of themselves as learners and a strong sense of their own self-efficacy and capacity to improve. In the consultation leading to the development of the Wellbeing guidelines (2017), parents and students alike said that feedback in the form of comments is more helpful than marks and grades, particularly when the comments say what the student has done well and suggests how they might improve.

The use of a wider variety of assessment methods to collect information about students' progress generates the kinds of evidence that helps teachers to give supportive and meaningful formative feedback. Such varied assessment approaches can

also facilitate greater student agency and ownership of the learning and assessment process as students can exercise more choice in regard to how to demonstrate their learning. That said, it is important to be sensitive to the particular demands of more varied assessment methods and students should feel supported as they develop the skills necessary to complete assignments or tests. Regardless of their purpose, the volume and frequency of assessment activities can act as a source of stress. However, international research suggests that while testing overload is often perceived to be associated with increased levels of anxiety and stress among students, the students' perception of assessment and messages they pick up from their teachers are a greater influence in how they respond.

It is students' perception of the assessment as more or less threatening that determines how anxious students feel about tests...PISA results show that teachers' practices, behaviours and communication in the classroom are associated with students' level of anxiety. After accounting for students' performance and socio-economic status, students who reported that their teachers adapt the lesson to the class's needs and knowledge were less likely to report feeling anxious even if they are well prepared for a test, or to report that they get very tense when they study. Students were also less likely to report anxiety if the teacher provides individual help when they are struggling. By contrast, negative teacher-student relations can undermine students' confidence and lead to greater anxiety.¹⁸

Support for teachers in developing assessment practice is available on the NCCA website under [junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting](http://www.ncca.ie/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting).

18 OECD 2017 PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being – Overview p.10
<http://www.oecd.org/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-iii-9789264273856-en.htm>

3.8

SCHOOL POLICIES

School policies provide the compass by which the school navigates its way. A review of the range of policy areas quickly reveals that many of them relate directly to student wellbeing – the behaviour policy, homework policy, SPHE policy (including relationship and sexuality education), internet safety policy, anti-bullying policy, dignity in the workplace policy, child protection policy, and critical incident policy being those of greatest relevance.

A policy that school leaders tend to identify as being important for student wellbeing is the code of behaviour policy.¹⁹ Research has found that in schools where student wellbeing is optimised, supportive rather than punitive approaches to behaviour are adopted. There is a wide range of positive behaviour strategies that can be adopted in schools.

Reviewing school policies through the lens of student wellbeing prompts questions such as:

- How are school policies developed? Are they developed by a couple of people or in partnership with the whole school community? Do students have a voice?
- How are school policies written? Is the language accessible? Is it punitive or positive in tone?
- How are they shared? Are they explained and made accessible to all? Are they linked to a shared set of values?
- How are they enacted? Are they put into practice with fairness and compassion?

Policy development in support of wellbeing should be a collaborative, inclusive and democratic process involving regular review of the impact and effectiveness of school policies through the lens of student wellbeing.

In a school setting, feeling connected to the school and valued within the school community will impact on a student's ability to learn and reach their potential, as well as impact on their health and well-being. The setting wherein meaningful participation is encouraged also benefits because policies and plans worked on collaboratively might be easier to implement and are much more likely to meet the needs of the whole school community.²⁰

**SCHOOLS POLICIES
PROVIDE THE
COMPASS BY WHICH
THE SCHOOL
NAVIGATES ITS WAY**



19 As reported in a NCCA consultation meeting with school principals, October 2015.

20 HSE. *Schools for Health in Ireland, Post Primary Coordinator's Guide*, p14. <https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HPM00838.pdf>

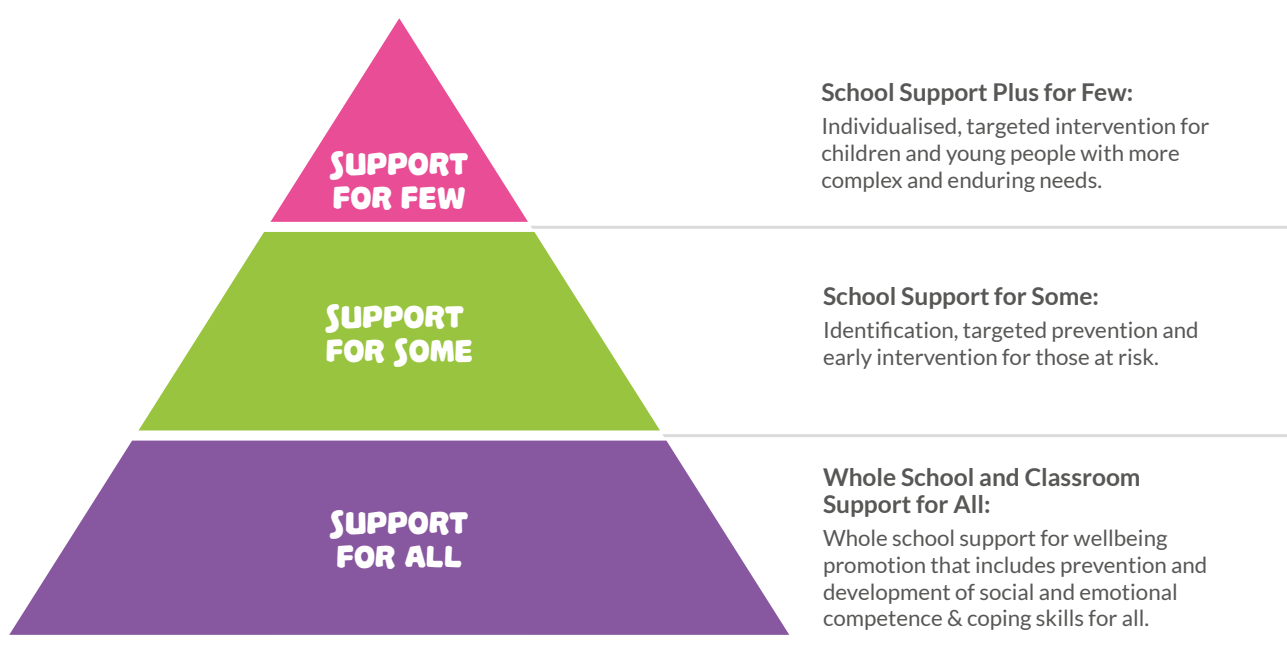
3.9

STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Young people in junior cycle have a wide range of social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. It is useful in the context of planning a whole-school approach to wellbeing to think of students as needing different levels and kinds of support to experience wellbeing, in line with the Continuum of Support framework developed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). Accordingly, wellbeing as a whole-school endeavour takes into account the particular needs of students at these three levels.

1. School support for all is a focus which recognises that all students have wellbeing needs and even those who might appear to engage with school and their education with relative ease need to be supported in achieving the indicators of Wellbeing. It has also been the experience of NEPS that where school support for *all* is the focus, all students benefit including those students who may be experiencing particular difficulties.
2. At the second level, there are *some* students who may be at risk of developing difficulties, who require additional support and encouragement to support them in their wellbeing. In such cases students should have timely and appropriate access to a guidance counsellor on an individual basis.
3. Finally, there are a *few* young people who have more complex and enduring needs and may require support from external agencies, which support and complement the work of the school.

Figure 4: The continuum of support²¹



21 Table reprinted from *Wellbeing Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* (DES) p.14

In every school, there are groups of students who require particular consideration to ensure that planning for Wellbeing is fully inclusive. For example, research shows that children with SEN, especially those with emotional-behavioural or learning difficulties, are more likely to see themselves as

more anxious, less happy, less confident as learners, more critical of their physical appearance, less popular with their peers and more poorly behaved. These differences are sizable, ranging from one sixth to almost half of a standard deviation. Differences are particularly large in relation to academic self-image.²²

Opportunities for the school's professional community to consider how best they can care for the wellbeing of all students in their classes and in the school environment are vital. Increasingly, there are students who are experiencing mental ill-health and who may also be accessing support beyond school; it is important that teachers feel confident that they can support these students if they are in their classes.

Schools have developed excellent and flexible systems to promote the wellbeing of all students and to support students experiencing distress. Many schools have a designated Student Support Team, while others have equivalent systems and structures, but may use different terminology such as 'Care Team' or 'Pastoral Care Team'. These structures play a key role in providing for the welfare and wellbeing of all students and ensure shared ownership, commitment and responsibility for policy implementation in the area of student wellbeing.

Other student support systems, such as buddy systems, peer-mentoring programmes, induction programmes, school chaplaincy, year head and tutor systems, breakfast or lunch clubs, homework clubs and school societies can contribute greatly to student wellbeing.

Students can experience certain aspects of health and wellbeing through focused school-based programmes developed by statutory and voluntary agencies such as the My Friends Youth programme, Active School Flag (ASF) initiative, Yellow Flag equality and diversity programme, Localise volunteer programme, Young Social Innovators (YSI) and other initiatives. These provide important opportunities for students to work together on projects designed to enhance their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.

Links and partnerships with health professionals, educational psychologists, community and sporting organisations and others can provide important complementary expertise and support. One example of a link that schools have found particularly useful is having access to the National Educational Psychological Service and *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* when they experience a critical incident.²³

22 Smyth, E. (2015). *Wellbeing and school experiences among 9- and 13-year-olds: Insights from the growing up in Ireland study*. ESRI/NCCA. p. v. <https://ncca.ie/en/resources/learning-in-focus>

23 DES, *Responding to critical incidents: Guidelines for schools*. <https://www.education.ie/en/schools-colleges/services/national-educational-psychological-service-neps/critical-incidents.html>

3.10

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Home is the first place where children learn about and experience wellbeing. As children and young people develop their understanding of wellbeing and their capacity to take greater responsibility for it, parents and guardians may need support in dealing with issues and challenges that arise.

We know that proactive partnerships with parents and guardians are key to providing a meaningful Wellbeing programme in the school. Involving the wider parent body in school-led initiatives can be challenging for schools. However, planning for Wellbeing should provide a context for greater levels of parental involvement and it is evident from NCCA consultations that student wellbeing is of great concern to parents/guardians. The ESRI report on consultations held as part of the review of senior cycle education found

In relation to areas of learning for senior cycle, the majority – around eight in ten – of the parent groups wanted to see life skills and wellbeing embedded in the senior cycle curriculum²⁴.

Planning for Wellbeing should include opportunities to consult with parents/guardians regularly and in a meaningful way²⁵. Parents can be involved in planning for Wellbeing in a variety of ways such as participating in online surveys about student wellbeing and/or commenting on the findings from student consultations. They might also be invited to participate in focus groups about student wellbeing or to be part of a Wellbeing planning team.

An important aim of Wellbeing in junior cycle is to develop student agency about their wellbeing and their capacity to talk about it. It is important therefore that parents have the opportunity to become familiar with the Wellbeing programme in order to have conversations with their children and support their learning about wellbeing.

Where parents are engaged most successfully by schools the following features of culture and practice are evident:

- Good relationships: parents feel welcome and part of the school; staff are accessible, approachable and responsive and offer non-judgemental support.
- Communication: a range of methods are used to offer parents clear information about wellbeing and the progress their child is making. Parents are, then, better equipped to support their children's learning and wellbeing at home.
- Shared understanding and values: schools involve parents in discussions to agree priorities for wellbeing and to evaluate progress.
- Skills recognised: the school recognises the experience and skills of parents to support improvement in wellbeing outcomes.

24 Smyth, E., McCoy, S., and Banks, J. (2019) *Student, teacher and parent perspectives on senior cycle education*, ESRI <https://www.esri.ie/publications/student-teacher-and-parent-perspectives-on-senior-cycle-education>

25 When schools publish and implement a Student and Parent Charter this will set out processes for consulting with parents/guardians and students.

3.11

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND WELLBEING

The physical environment of the school matters for students' experience of wellbeing.

Each school has a distinctive atmosphere which usually reflects the extent to which the school takes care of the social, emotional and physical needs of those who learn, work and visit.²⁶

The school environment and general character of school buildings has been shown to influence student behaviour and engagement with their learning.²⁷ It is important that schools ensure that the physical environment is welcoming, healthy and safe. Where possible, schools should provide students with opportunities to be physically active during the school day through a range of curricular and extracurricular opportunities for physical activity. Facilities such as social/meeting spaces, a quiet room, green outside areas, and access to healthy food options at snack and lunch times should be provided, where feasible.

Opportunities for students to contribute to planning for active, safe commuting routes to schools should be explored with consideration of how to create calm and safe drop off and pick-up areas too. Student involvement in creating a healthier and greener physical environment through recycling, composting and horticultural projects can also contribute to students' understanding and sense of wellbeing. Supports for such projects are available from a number of organisations such as Green Schools and ECO-UNESCO.



THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL MATTERS TO STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF WELLBEING

26 DES, HSE, DoH. (2013). *Well-being in post primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention*. https://www.education.ie/en/publications/education-reports/well_being_pp_schools_guidelines.pdf

27 Kutsyruba, B., Klinger, D, Hussain, A. (2015). Relationship among school climate, school safety, and student achievement and well-being: a review of the literature. *Review of Education, Volume 3* (2) 103 -35.

3.12

PLANNING

At present, all schools engage in School Self-Evaluation (SSE). The SSE process enables schools:

1. To take the initiative in improving the quality of education that they provide for their students.
2. To affirm and build on what is working well.
3. To identify areas in need of development and to decide on actions that should be taken to bring about improvements in those areas.
4. To report to the school community about the strengths in the work of the school and its priorities for improvement and development.

The following questions are currently used by schools when engaging in SSE activities. Schools can use these questions to reflect specifically on their work in the area of Wellbeing in junior cycle:

- What are we currently doing?
- Why are we doing it?
- How well are we doing?
- What evidence do we have?
- How can we find out more?
- What are our strengths?
- What are our areas for improvement?
- How can we improve?

These questions can be framed using the definition and wellbeing indicators set out in these guidelines.

In addition, the school's professional community will make judgements about the quality of wellbeing provision, identifying strengths and areas to target within the school system and plan the next stage in the improvement journey, through consideration of the Statements for Effective Practice in the *Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice (2019)*²⁸.

Planning and review is an ongoing process through which schools strengthen their capacity to provide a meaningful Wellbeing programme in junior cycle. The appendices in these guidelines provide some additional tools to help schools in the planning process.

**PLANNING AND REVIEW
IS AN ONGOING PROCESS AS
SCHOOLS ARE CONSTANTLY
STRENGTHENING THEIR
CAPACITY TO PROVIDE A
MEANINGFUL WELLBEING
PROGRAMME IN
JUNIOR CYCLE**

28 *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*, p.22 DES (2019)
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/wellbeingineducation/wellbeing-in-education.html>

3.13

PLANNING FOR WELLBEING DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

Critical incidents or extraordinary events (such as the Covid-19 pandemic) can result in schools having to plan in challenging and uncertain circumstances. Such events provide opportunities to take stock of and affirm the many ways in which school life can support wellbeing in times of crisis. Schools can support student and teacher wellbeing by focusing on creating:

- a calm atmosphere where the message is ‘we are all here to support each other’
- positive, supportive relationships
- learning environments that promote collaboration and a sense of connection with peers and teachers
- opportunities for students to consider the strengths and skills they have shown as learners during times of challenge and to build on these
- familiar and predictable school routines and rituals (as far as possible) to enhance everyone’s sense of security and connection
- a sense of hope and efficacy grounded in a belief in everyone’s ability to cope, coupled with assurances that others are there to help too
- opportunities to regularly check-in with students about their experiences of school and learning.²⁹

According to John Hattie³⁰, schools can use an event such as the pandemic to learn more about their students’ learning strengths and needs, which can be used to build better teaching and learning. Living and learning with Covid-19 may have highlighted specific skills that students need to develop or deepen, such as skills in self-management, time management, goal setting, self-regulation and independent learning skills. Short units of learning focused on *learning how to learn* could be developed in response to these needs and included as part of the junior cycle Wellbeing programme.

KEY WELLBEING MESSAGES DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

**SAFETY
CALM
SELF & COMMUNITY EFFICACY
SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS
HOPE**

29 [Considerations in planning for Junior Cycle Wellbeing 2020-2021](#) NCCA, July 2020. See also [Supporting the Wellbeing of the School Community: Returning to School after Covid-19 School Closure Wellbeing Toolkit for Post Primary Schools](#) NEPS, August 2020

30 Hattie, J., *The New Normal of Learning: Build Back Better* (May 2020) accessed at <https://corwin-connect.com/2020/05/the-new-normal-of-learning-build-back-better/>



4

**WELLBEING
AND THE
CURRICULUM**

A dedicated Wellbeing curriculum in junior cycle aims to ensure that all students engage in important learning about wellbeing through key curriculum areas. The junior cycle Wellbeing programme is:

- 400 hours of time-tabled learning for all students¹
- designed to meet the identified needs of students
- supported by a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities although, in general, such events will not count as part of the time-tabled 400 hours.

Schools have freedom to plan a junior cycle programme comprising a selection of subjects, short courses and other learning experiences that meet their students’ needs and interests. The introduction of new subject specifications has provided schools with scope to review both the curriculum and timetabling. The new specifications have been designed for a minimum of 200 hours of classroom engagement (except for Gaeilge, English

and Maths which require a minimum of 240 hours). One consequence of this is an increase in the time available for learning in Wellbeing and other areas as shown in Table 3 below.

When planning a junior cycle programme, the starting point must be the shared vision and values of the school alongside consideration of the principles and statements of learning set out in the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*.

A junior cycle programme that builds the foundations for wellbeing:

- is broad and balanced
- provides choice
- has meaning and relevance
- is enjoyable and engaging
- provides opportunities to experience challenge and success
- equips students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to develop as learners and build positive relationships.

Table 3: The mathematics of timetabling wellbeing

Schools are required to provide 28 hours per week class tuition time for students.	If schools opt for the maximum number of 10 subjects*	If schools opt for 9 subjects*
28hrs x 33.4 weeks x 3 years = 2,805 hours	3 subjects @ 240 hrs each 7 subjects @ 200 hrs each* = 2,120 hrs + 400 hours wellbeing programme = 2,520 hours This leaves an additional 285 hours, over 3 years, for whatever else is deemed necessary.	3 subjects @ 240 hrs each 6 subjects @ 200 hrs each* = 1,920 hrs + 400 hours wellbeing programme = 2,320 hours This leaves an additional 485 hours, over 3 years, for whatever else is deemed necessary.

*or equivalent mix of subjects and short courses.

1 Circular 0076/2020 https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0076_2020.pdf

4.1

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING

As schools design their Wellbeing programme they have considerable flexibility to design a programme to suit their students and their local context. It is equally important that all schools are working towards a shared vision and set of indicators which describe what is important for young people and their wellbeing. On this basis, six indicators – **Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware** have been identified as central to wellbeing. These indicators make explicit what is important for students, teachers, parents and the wider school community. Each indicator has a small number of descriptors. The indicators and their descriptors can be used in a number of ways:

- to review current provision for learning in Wellbeing
- to plan teaching and learning within a school's Wellbeing programme
- to plan conversations and consultations with stakeholders including students, parents and teachers about how the school's Wellbeing programme might best support young people's wellbeing and well-becoming
- to scaffold conversations with students about learning in the Wellbeing programme
- to frame the student's self-assessment about their learning in Wellbeing
- as a visual reminder in classrooms that wellbeing is at the heart of teaching and learning across the whole school (download posters at <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing/>)

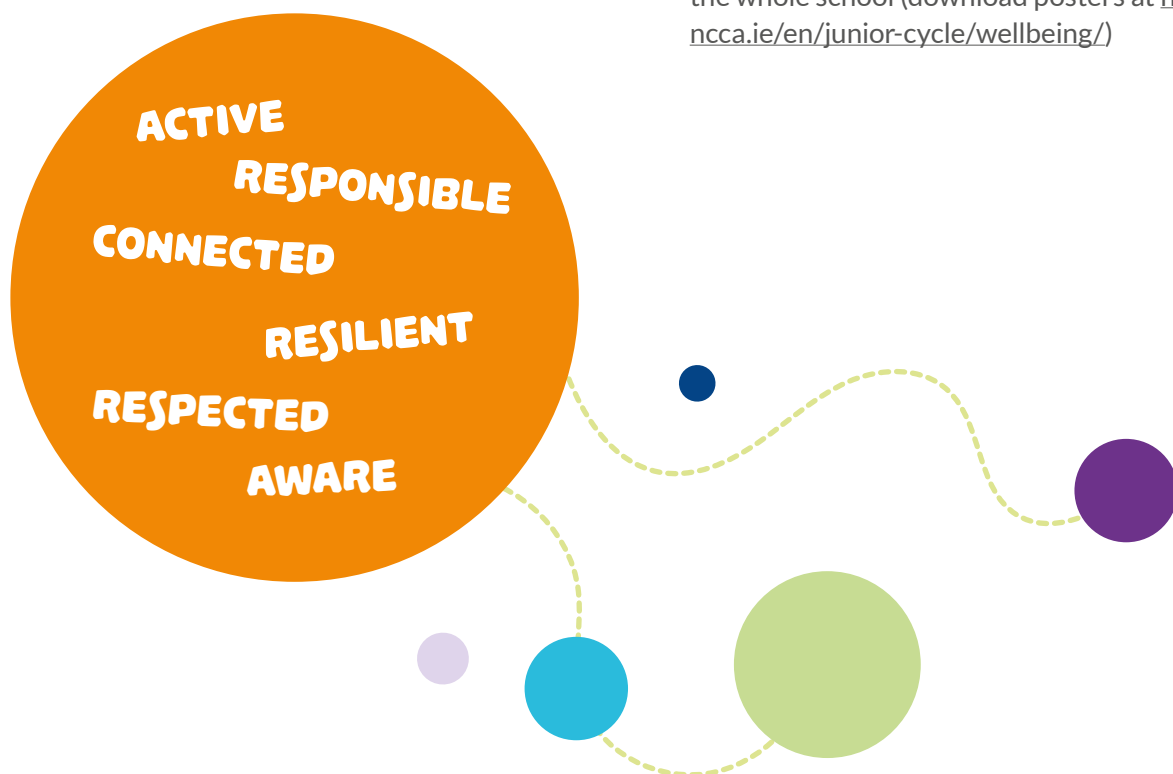


Figure 5: Indicators of wellbeing

 **ACTIVE**

- Am I a confident and skilled participant in physical activity?
- How physically active am I?

 **RESPONSIBLE**

- Do I take action to protect and promote my wellbeing and that of others?
- Do I make healthy eating choices?
- Do I know where my safety is at risk and do I make right choices?

 **CONNECTED**

- Do I feel connected to my school, my friends, my community and the wider world?
- Do I appreciate that my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts?

 **RESILIENT**

- Do I believe that I have the coping skills to deal with life's challenges?
- Do I know where I can go for help?
- Do I believe that with effort I can achieve?

 **RESPECTED**

- Do I feel that I am listened to and valued?
- Do I have positive relationships with my friends, my peers and my teachers?
- Do I show care and respect for others?

 **AWARE**

- Am I aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours and can I make sense of them?
- Am I aware of what my personal values are and do I think through my decisions?
- Do I understand what helps me to learn and how I can improve?

4.2

WELLBEING IN THE SUBJECT AREAS

While all teachers in all subjects can support student learning in this area, learning *about* and *for* wellbeing is enhanced when it is embedded in the curriculum and visible to students within specific allocated time. Explicitly planning for wellbeing in the curriculum and assigning it space on the timetable communicates to students, parents and teachers that this area of learning is important – it makes the school’s commitment to wellbeing visible and confirms for students in a very recognisable way that their wellbeing matters.

There are three pillars to all junior cycle Wellbeing programmes: Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

For 1st years entering post-primary school from September 2022, the minimum allocation for PE, CSPE and SPHE is set out as follows:

- PE: 135 hours spread out across first, second and third year
- CSPE: 100 hours spread out across first, second and third year
- SPHE: 100 hours spread out across first, second and third year

In planning their Wellbeing programmes, schools should note that from September 2022 onwards, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabuses for SPHE and CSPE should be discontinued and schools are advised to adopt the NCCA short courses in SPHE and CSPE. These short courses have been developed to provide meaningful learning and also include assessment guidance both for ongoing and summative assessment. These short courses therefore provide excellent building blocks for a school’s Wellbeing programme.

In the case of PE, schools are required to provide 135 hours of learning specified by the NCCA across the three years of junior cycle (this specification will be available to schools from September 2021).

In addition, schools can include other areas in their Wellbeing programme, such as guidance-related learning, school-developed short courses and/or units of learning related to aspects of wellbeing designed to meet the needs of their students.

The rationale for the inclusion of CSPE, PE and SPHE is set out below.

CSPE is an important part of a Wellbeing programme for a number of reasons. CSPE can help students understand how their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others is connected. Being well in oneself is important and is always related to the wellbeing of others and of society. It is important for students to understand that wellbeing is not singularly about one’s personal, emotional and physical health. Through the use of a human rights and development framework, CSPE can help students develop a more holistic and ecological understanding of wellbeing as they become aware of the relationship between individual wellness, wellness in relation to others and the wellbeing of the environment. Without CSPE, there is the risk that discussion of wellbeing can feed into individualism and miss the opportunity to make links between individual wellbeing and collective wellbeing, between the personal and the political, and ultimately between our wellbeing and that of the planet. CSPE also prompts students to consider the many social, political, cultural and economic factors that affect our individual and collective wellbeing. Furthermore, the focus on

active citizenship in CSPE provides opportunities for students to grow in confidence, resilience and a sense of agency as they participate in actions and connect with a wider community working to help build a more equal, just and sustainable future. Finally, students are not only learning *about* democracy, sustainability, human rights and responsibilities. They are exercising democracy, human rights, sustainability, responsibility and decision-making in the ways they are learning and being assessed in the CSPE class, which contributes to their sense of wellbeing.

Physical education provides all students with enjoyable and worthwhile learning opportunities where they develop their confidence and competence to participate and perform in a range of physical activities. Students in junior cycle are at an important stage of their lives where they are making their own decisions about how they will include physical activity as part of their lifestyle. Learning in physical education is designed to ensure that students appreciate the importance of participation in regular moderate physical activity not only for their physical wellbeing, but also for their psychological and social wellbeing. By providing a broad and balanced range of activities, physical education aims to build students' motivation and commitment to participate in regular, enjoyable and health-enhancing physical activity. Physical education also provides an opportunity to make connections between lifestyle choices such as regular exercise, healthy eating, stress management, and relaxation and positive mental health.

SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning directly related to health and wellbeing. Through the use of experiential methodologies, SPHE aims to develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build students' capacity to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Through studying aspects of SPHE, students develop personal and social skills that will support their wellbeing, including self-awareness, self-management, communication, coping and problem-solving skills.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of junior cycle SPHE and of the Wellbeing programme. It facilitates

teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of relationships and sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to develop self-awareness and self-esteem, realise their health, wellbeing and dignity; develop positive and respectful, social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others; and, understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to themselves and others.²

2 Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post primary schools (NCCA) 2019 p.72

At this age, students are exposed to a lot of information about sex, sexuality and relationships from a variety of sources and they are navigating many challenging situations and decisions. Recent consultations with children and young people would suggest that their needs in relation to RSE are, in general, not well addressed in schools.

They (students) want schools to provide comprehensive, relevant and age-appropriate RSE throughout all stages of education. Students have a sense that this is hindered by RSE's low status and low priority in schools. They express frustration that they are not receiving comprehensive RSE and that their needs are not being met.³

Schools are required to teach RSE as part of SPHE in each year of the junior cycle SPHE programme.⁴ The Wellbeing programme provides scope for schools to review the provision of RSE across junior cycle and develop an enhanced programme that is comprehensive and relevant to their students' lives. The findings from the *Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post primary schools* (NCCA) can be used to help inform planning in RSE, hand in hand with consultations with groups of students. Arising from this process, specific additional units of learning can be developed to complement the existing SPHE programme and respond to identified needs in the area of relationships and sexuality education. For example, units in one or more of these topics might be relevant: managing relationships in the online world; exploring the link between body image, self-esteem and youth mental health; developing skills for creating healthy relationships.



3 Ibid, p. 25

4 Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03 and M27/2008, all of which are available at www.education.ie These circulars require schools to develop a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and programme and to implement them for all students from first year to sixth year.

4.3

GUIDANCE

Guidance in schools refers to:

A range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance.⁵

Schools are managing their guidance resource hours to comply with the requirement in section 9(c) of the *Education Act* (1998) that a school shall use its available resources to ‘ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices’. Guidance education must be included in the school’s junior cycle programme. The *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) states that guidance provision may be included in the hours available for Wellbeing ‘in recognition of the unique contribution that guidance can make to the promotion of students’ wellbeing’.⁶

The guidance counsellor has an important role in both the design and delivery of elements of the school’s Wellbeing programme. Collaboration

between guidance counsellors and subject coordinators is key to the success of a comprehensive and effective Wellbeing programme. In particular, coordination and communication between the SPHE teachers and the guidance counsellor is critical to identify potential overlap of learning between SPHE and learning in junior cycle guidance, and to ensure that they complement each other and avoid unhelpful duplication.

Schools are best placed to decide how they can include guidance in their junior cycle Wellbeing programme within the context of their whole-school guidance plan. Provision can be made in a variety of ways. Many schools are providing guidance-related units of learning which address students’ personal, social, educational and vocational needs. These units of learning vary from four to six weeks in length and tend to be provided on a modular basis to class groups to ensure that all students in the year group are engaging with the same units of learning.

The kinds of knowledge and skills that can be developed within guidance units of learning are set out in Table 3.

5 DES. (2005). *Guidelines for second level schools on the implications of section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students’ access to appropriate guidance*. p4. https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/pp_guidelines_second_level_schools_9c.pdf

6 DES. (2015). *Framework for Junior Cycle*. p22. <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf>

Table 4: Sample guidance-related learning within Wellbeing

1ST YEAR	2ND YEAR	3RD YEAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the transition to 1st year • Learning to learn • Awareness of personal strengths and interests • Setting personal and learning goals • Self-management and time management skills • Knowing where to go for help • Subject selection (where taster programmes exist) • Student mentor/buddies programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to learn • Reflecting on myself as a learner • Self-regulation for learning strategies • Setting personal and learning goals • Motivation • Developing skills for coping with the normal stresses of life • Career awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study skills • Organisational, planning and time management skills • Coping strategies in times of stress • Managing exam stress • Managing to maintain a balanced life • Identifying my values, strengths and interests and possible career pathways • Subject choice • Thinking about the right job for me

See Section 4.7 of these guidelines for a sample guidance-related unit of learning



OTHER LEARNING THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN A WELLBEING PROGRAMME

CSPE, PE and SPHE provide the main curriculum pillars for building a school's Wellbeing programme. Schools can use the remaining time to provide additional learning that has been identified as important for their students' learning in Wellbeing.

Once a school has considered the particular needs of their junior cycle students, the unique context of the school and the resources available, there is a range of curriculum options available for consideration when deciding on how best to fulfil the 400 hours.

The options include:

- school-developed units of learning that address an aspect of wellbeing identified through consultation with students, teachers and parents/guardians. Examples that have been developed by schools to respond to specific interests/needs of their students include units relating to Learning to Learn, Healthy Eating, Horticulture, Dance, Outdoor Pursuits, Yoga, to name but a few.
- units which provide an extension to learning in CSPE, PE or SPHE/RSE. An example from CSPE is a unit of learning that supports community volunteering developed by Localise Youth Volunteering. A PE, example is where a school developed a unit of learning on water safety. Within SPHE/RSE a school has developed a unit on the topic of consent. In each case it is important that the unit provides distinctive and meaningful learning that is relevant to wellbeing and complements learning in the NCCA short courses that students are already studying, without unhelpful overlap.
- units of learning that relate to the three interlinked aspects of guidance education – personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance.
- units based on wellbeing-related learning outcomes from other NCCA short courses. The Digital Literacy short course provides an excellent example. Not all the learning outcomes in this short course are relevant to the Wellbeing programme but those that are can be brought together as a short stand-alone unit, provided students are not also studying the Digital Literacy Short Course in its entirety (see sample unit p.61). Similarly, the NCCA short course in Artistic Performance can be used to inform the development of a unit of learning linked to wellbeing.
- relevant programmes developed by outside agencies and organisations may be used or adapted. When choosing from these it is important that the rationale for their inclusion in the Wellbeing programme is clear, that they are linked to the six wellbeing indicators and that the learning about wellbeing is clearly outlined (see Appendix I). Examples of programmes that schools have incorporated into their Wellbeing programmes include the *My Friends Youth* programme, *Active School*, *Yellow Flag*, *Young Environmentalist* and the *Social Innovation Action* programme.

WHAT ABOUT INCLUDING GUEST SPEAKERS OR EXTERNAL FACILITATORS?

Visiting speakers can be used very effectively to complement learning in the school's Wellbeing programme, such as a workshop on study skills within a guidance unit of learning or a guest Human Rights activist contributing to a citizenship unit, or a specialist workshop on an aspect of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Research shows that these inputs are most effective when linked to learning that occurs before and after the event and when incorporated into a wider programme of learning. Best practice in the use of external facilitators can be found in *Circular 43/2018 – Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing*. <https://www.education.ie/en/circulars-and-forms/active-circulars>

WHAT ABOUT INCLUDING ONCE-OFF EVENTS?

In general, extra-curricular and co-curricular events will not be counted as part of the time-tabled 400 hours. Some once-off events might fit within a school's junior cycle Wellbeing programme. In identifying such events, the following requirements should be borne in mind:

- The rationale for the inclusion of the event in the school's Wellbeing programme should be clear and the event should provide meaningful learning in Wellbeing. In other words, the event should explicitly support students in learning about wellbeing and/or developing the skills needed to support their wellbeing.
- Optional wellbeing-related initiatives which engage some students, rather than a whole class group, can provide valuable learning for those involved and support students' wellbeing. However, events that are invitational or which some students opt out of should not be counted as part of the 400-hour Wellbeing programme. The event must be inclusive of all students in junior cycle.

CAN TUTOR TIME BE INCLUDED IN THE 400 HOURS?

Tutor class can be included if within the tutor class there is clear and meaningful learning happening related to wellbeing, linked to the wellbeing indicators, and planned using Appendix I. The time must be sufficient to allow students an opportunity to progress their learning in wellbeing. Meaningful learning in wellbeing is unlikely to be achieved when tutor time is spread over 5 days (e.g., 8 minutes per day) and in such instances would not be included in the 400 hours.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS GO ABOUT DEVELOPING THEIR OWN SHORT COURSE?

Where a school has established strong practice in an area of wellbeing, it may decide to develop its own short course using the NCCA guidelines for short courses.⁷ This can be a very worthwhile process which allows the school to focus specifically on its own students' needs and interests. However, developing a 100-hour short course is demanding and time-consuming and, in the first instance, it is important to ensure that the three pillars of the Wellbeing programme – CPSE, SPHE and PE – are given adequate time and support.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS GO ABOUT DEVELOPING THEIR OWN UNITS OF LEARNING?

Many schools are including short units of learning as part of their Wellbeing programme. Sometimes these are derived from existing programmes, such as *My Friends Youth* programme or the *Webwise Lockers* and *Be in Ctrl* programmes. Schools are also encouraged to develop units of learning that meet a specific need identified through consultation with students/parents/teachers. This exemplifies excellent practice. However, three important considerations should be borne in mind.

7 <http://juniorcycle.ie/Planning/Short-Course-Development>

- Individual units may be of great benefit and interest to some students but not to others. Difficulties arising from this can be overcome where schools can offer a choice of units, timetabled simultaneously. Where a student is experiencing pain or trauma, having the choice to opt-in or opt-out of some experiences that might trigger further upset (mindfulness or meditation, for example) can be truly supportive.
- Before developing a unit of learning it is important to check the subject and short course specifications that students are studying to see if the topic is already being taught or the particular focus of learning is already being covered. For example, healthy eating is addressed in SPHE and Home Economics and emotional wellbeing is addressed in SPHE.
- All units need to be planned using Appendix I of these guidelines.

There is no external approval mechanism or system for endorsing or approving units of learning. Schools should review and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the Wellbeing programme as part of ongoing school planning.

CAN I INCLUDE UNITS OF LEARNING LINKED TO SUBJECTS OTHER THAN SPHE, CSPE AND PE?

Creating a unit of learning that uses learning outcomes from a subject which all or most students are already studying is not advisable as the likelihood of unhelpful overlap and repetition of learning is too great. However, where students are not taking a subject as part of their junior cycle curriculum and the subject provides opportunities for significant learning related to wellbeing, then specific learning outcomes from the specification could form the basis for a unit of learning. Art, Music, Home Economics and Business Studies have potential in this regard, for students who are **not already studying the full subject**.

When identifying elements of learning in subjects (other than CSPE, SPHE and PE) that could be incorporated into a junior cycle Wellbeing

programme, the following requirements should be borne in mind:

- The rationale for the inclusion of the learning in the school's Wellbeing programme should be clear. In other words, the unit of learning should address a clearly identified need and be supporting students in learning about wellbeing or developing the skills needed to support their wellbeing.
- The learning must be inclusive of all students in junior cycle.
- The learning about wellbeing which the unit is intended to address should be clear and linked to the six wellbeing indicators.
- In schools where the subject is already timetabled, the time given to the unit related to wellbeing should be in addition to the minimum time specified for that subject specification. For example, in the case of Home Economics, it should be in addition to the minimum 200 hours to be allocated to teaching and learning in Home Economics
- Appendix I in these Wellbeing Guidelines for Junior Cycle must be used to plan all school-developed units of learning in Wellbeing that contribute to the Wellbeing programme.

Some bear traps to avoid:

- Timetabling a Wellbeing class which may overlap with learning already happening within the Wellbeing programme.
- Timetabling tutor time as part of the Wellbeing programme without clear learning outcomes and sufficient class time to engage in meaningful learning.
- Using the Wellbeing space to develop generic key skills such as communication skills, research skills, group-work skills, which are needed across all learning. These should be embedded within teaching and learning in all relevant subjects and not taught as stand-alone units within the Wellbeing programme.

4.5

PROVIDING A WELLBEING PROGRAMME FOR STUDENTS ENGAGING WITH LEVEL 1 AND LEVEL 2 LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Schools offering Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) will be aware that these programmes incorporate significant learning *about* and *for* wellbeing. Schools will be able to draw on learning outcomes from the Priority Learning Units (PLUs) within the learning programmes and elements of the student’s personalised programme (IEP/SSF) for their Wellbeing programme. Therefore, it is not expected that these students will engage in an additional 400-hour Wellbeing programme.

As appropriate and where possible these students may participate in aspects of the school’s Wellbeing programme alongside their peers. In the case of a student working on a personalised L2LP

Programme in a school where students are also studying a Level 3 junior cycle Programme, it is anticipated that much of their learning in PE, SPHE, CSPE and guidance-related learning will be done with their peers. Some learning may take place in small group settings or one-to-one, for instance work on elements of the Priority Learning Units (PLUs) where direct or specific instruction that cannot be done in the classroom is needed. For all Level 1 and Level 2 students the time allocated to wellbeing-related learning will be contextual and respond to the needs of the students.

Links between CSPE, PE, and SPHE and the Priority Learning Units are identified in the table below.

SHORT COURSES LEVEL 2 AND/OR LEVEL 3	LEVEL 2 PLUS	LEVEL 1 PLUS AND SHORT COURSES
CSPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in a community • Preparing for work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of a community (PLU) • Around the world in eighty days (SC)
PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Education
SPHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal care and wellbeing (PLU) • Food Glorious Food (SC) • Keeping well, looking good, feeling great (SC)

Supports for schools in designing their L1LPs/L2LPs Wellbeing programme are available at www.jct.ie.

4.6

PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND STEPS IN DEVELOPING WELLBEING PROGRAMMES

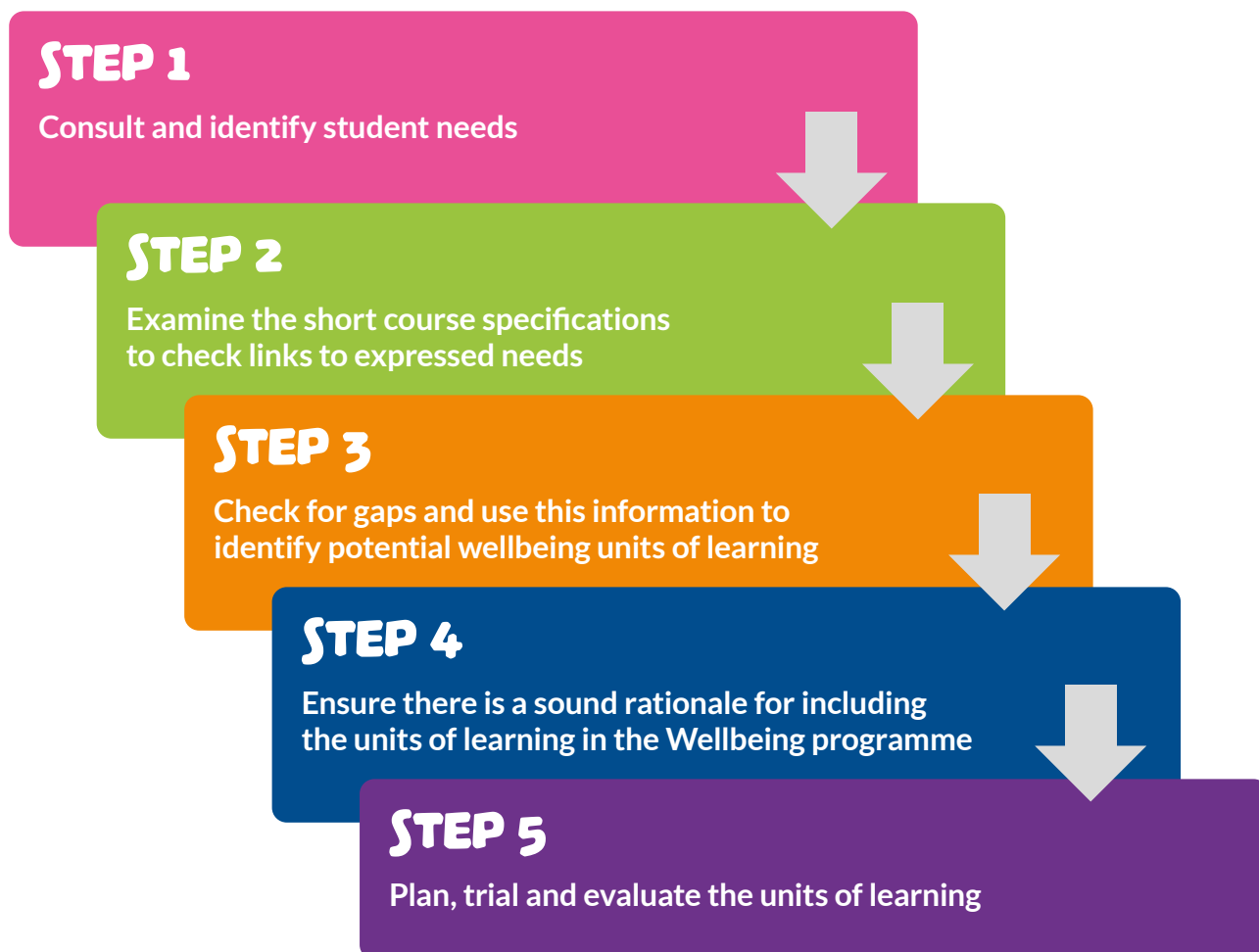
Each junior cycle Wellbeing programme will be shaped by its unique school context and by the students' needs. It will evolve and change over time so that it continues to provide meaningful and relevant learning for all students. To achieve this, schools will regularly revisit the planning principles and steps.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **A collaborative approach:** As is the case with all school planning, representatives of all stakeholders – school management, teachers, students, and parents- should be involved. Such collaborative planning will ensure that needs are met through the totality of the programme.
- **A consultative approach:** Ongoing consultation with all the stakeholders will help to inform planning, highlight what is working well and what needs attention in the Wellbeing programme. Such consultation may identify experiences and practices that contribute to students' experience of ill-being while in school and is important to be open to this information.
- **Flexibility to respond to students' needs:** The particular needs of the students in the school should be a central consideration in developing a meaningful, relevant and flexible programme. Engaging students in conversations about their learning in wellbeing will help in developing a Wellbeing programme that responds to their expressed needs rather than adult assumptions about what students need. Tools for consulting with students are in the appendices and at www.ourvoicesourschools.ie
- **Mapping of local community resources:** It is useful to identify the range of skills, resources and services that can be drawn upon both within the school and the local community, which can be used to generate a map of relevant contacts and networks that can contribute to students' wellbeing.
- **Adapting to change and to new and emerging circumstances:** As students and circumstances change so too must the Wellbeing programme. Sometimes, new issues can be addressed within existing parts of the Wellbeing programme, such as the SPHE programme. At other times issues might need to be addressed through specific school-developed units of learning or once-off externally facilitated workshops.
- **Linking planning for junior cycle Wellbeing with the school's SSE process:** The evaluation tool (Appendix D) can be used or adapted for this purpose along with the statements of effective practice set out in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

STEPS

Most schools have formed a Wellbeing team to oversee the planning and evolution of a meaningful and coherent Wellbeing programme. The steps involved in this process are shown below and these should not be seen as once-off but on-going in nature.



STEP 1

Consult and identify student needs

A Wellbeing team is needed to support the planning process and ensure coherence across the Wellbeing programme. This team typically comprises teachers with a particular interest in or responsibility for student wellbeing (such as SPHE, CSPE, PE and the Guidance Counsellor), a member of the management team, and ideally, student and parent representatives. Their tasks might include overseeing consultation processes, ensuring communication with all members of the school community so that there is a shared understanding, vision and commitment to the Wellbeing programme, and overseeing the ongoing review and evolution of the Wellbeing programme.

STEP 3

Check for gaps and use this information to identify potential wellbeing units of learning

Guidance as to how schools can identify and develop their own units of learning can be found on page 99 of these guidelines.

STEP 5

Plan, trial and evaluate the units of learning

The units of learning must be planned using *Appendix I to ensure that the learning outcomes are explicit and clearly link to learning about Wellbeing. These should be trialled, evaluated (by both students and teachers) and amended as needed.

STEP 2

Examine the short course specifications to check links to expressed needs

The results of consultations with students, staff and parents are discussed by the Wellbeing team and help inform the planning and review process. Often topics that are identified through consultations are addressed in the learning outcomes within one or more of the CSPE, SPHE and PE short courses. For this reason, careful examination of these specifications is necessary to establish what additional learning experiences need to be included within the Wellbeing curriculum space and how this can best be achieved. It is important that CSPE, SPHE and PE teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that a comprehensive, coherent programme that meets students' needs is put in place. This collaboration can also help to identify potential helpful or unhelpful overlap and/or gaps in the overall Wellbeing programme.

STEP 4

Ensure there is a sound rationale for including the units of learning in the Wellbeing programme

Schools have a good degree of flexibility in designing a Wellbeing programme to meet their students' needs and therefore variation between schools and within schools from year to year is to be expected. The rationale for choices made should be clearly linked to an identified need and should support students in developing some or all of the six indicators of wellbeing. See page 100 of these guidelines.

*Note that this Appendix retains the title Appendix I for consistency with its title in an earlier version of these Guidelines.

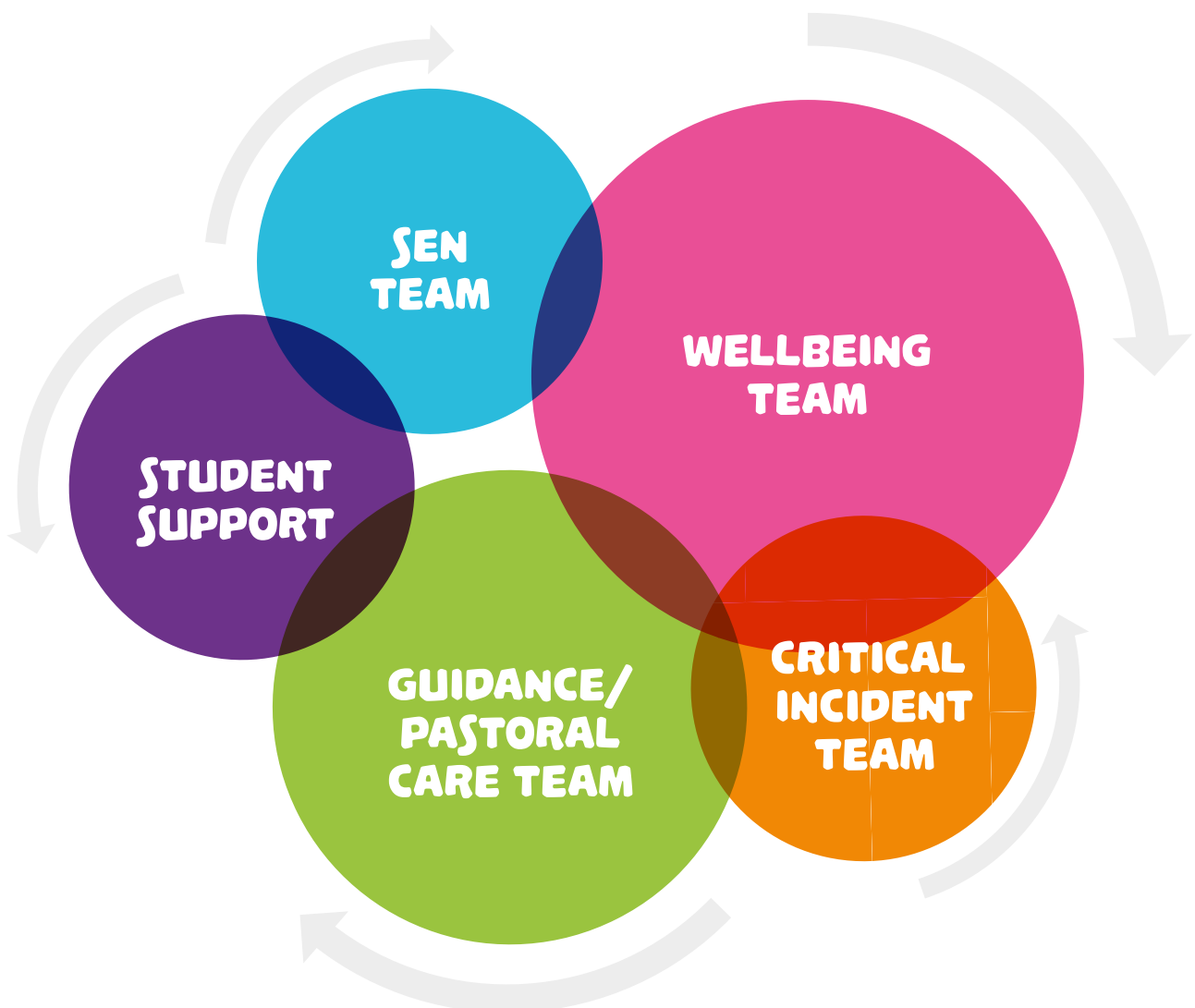
HOW THE JUNIOR CYCLE WELLBEING TEAM FITS WITHIN THE STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

Most schools have very clear procedures and systems for supporting all aspects of student wellbeing to meet their own needs and particular context. The student support team is the overarching team concerned with providing for the welfare and wellbeing of all students. It is a mechanism through which many of the existing student supports are co-ordinated and planned.

The student support team works closely with other teams and groups such as the SEN department, guidance and counselling team, pastoral care team, the critical incident management team and the junior cycle wellbeing planning team.

While the main focus of the wellbeing team is to oversee the ongoing planning and evaluation of the Wellbeing programme, the wellbeing team is also uniquely positioned to highlight the many ways that the school can protect student wellbeing beyond the Wellbeing programme.

LOOKING AT HOW ALL THE TEAMS FIT TOGETHER



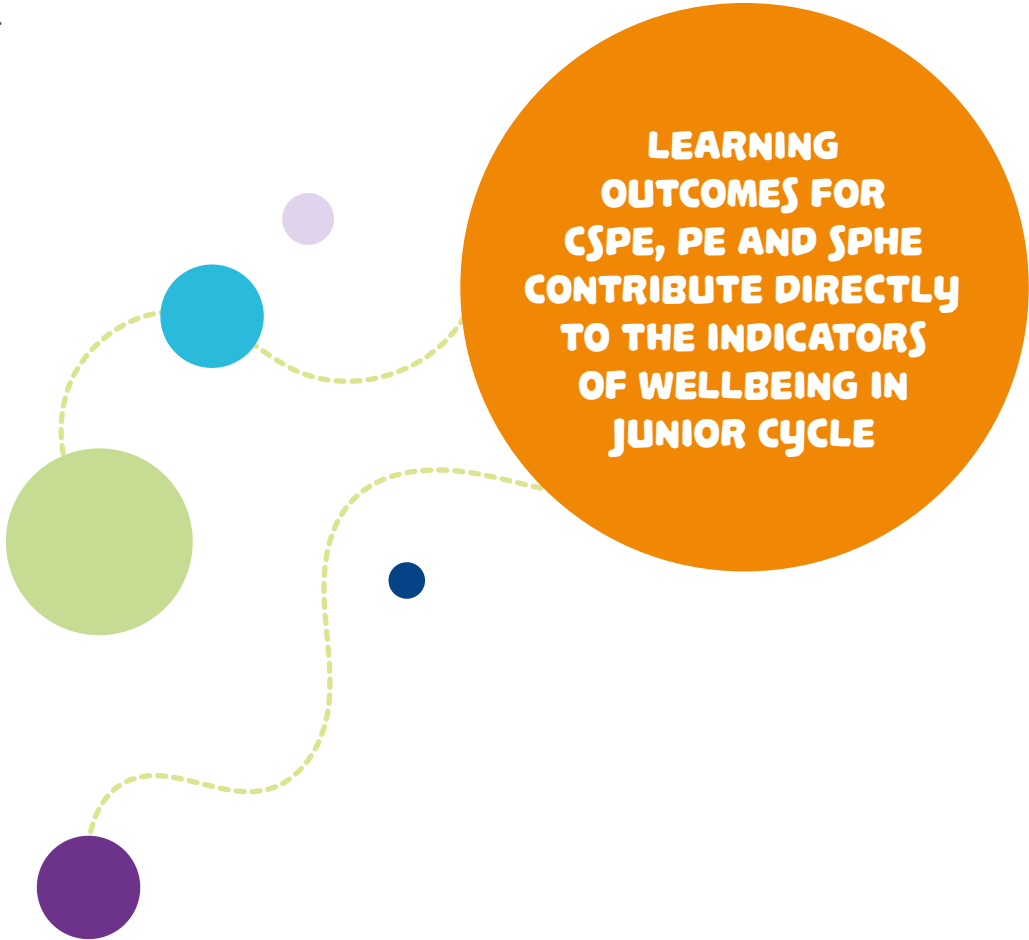
FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Once the school has taken into account the needs of the students in junior cycle, the unique context of the school and the resources available, the following questions can be considered.

QUESTION	COMMENT
Have we gathered evidence to support our planning decisions?	
What is influencing our decisions?	
Can we provide a sound rationale for each element of the Wellbeing programme?	
Do we have processes in place to check that the programme continues to be relevant and meaningful for our students?	
Are there regular opportunities for collaborative planning between CSPE, PE and SPHE teachers and other teachers involved in the Wellbeing programme?	
Is there a mechanism in place to check for any unhelpful overlap or repetition of learning across the different parts of the junior cycle Wellbeing programme?	
Are classes timetabled to allow for quality learning in Wellbeing?	
Are teachers who have expressed an interest and have the required skills and training deployed to teach the Wellbeing programme?	
Are teachers encouraged and facilitated to avail of ongoing continuing professional development opportunities in this area?	
Have we developed practices for assessment and reporting on learning across the Wellbeing programme?	
Are we using outside agencies and NGOs effectively to support the Wellbeing programme?	

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR A WELLBEING PROGRAMME

The learning outcomes for CSPE, PE and SPHE contribute directly to the indicators of wellbeing in junior cycle. Overall, there is a notable convergence and congruence between the learning outcomes across the three areas and the six indicators of wellbeing. This is unsurprising because, as part of their development process, there was widespread consultation with education partners to ensure that the learning outcomes addressed important, relevant and meaningful learning for young people in CSPE, PE and SPHE. Care was also taken to ensure that unnecessary or unhelpful overlap between learning outcomes for the three areas of learning was avoided.



**LEARNING
OUTCOMES FOR
CSPE, PE AND SPHE
CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY
TO THE INDICATORS
OF WELLBEING IN
JUNIOR CYCLE**

4.7

SAMPLE WELLBEING UNITS OF LEARNING

This section of the guidelines provides a range of sample units of learning that have been developed by schools and other organisations, which can be incorporated into or adapted for use in a school's Wellbeing programme. These are included to inspire and provide practical exemplars of how to set out units of learning using the template in Appendix I.

TITLE OF UNIT:

MAKING THE TRANSITION TO FIRST YEAR

Duration:	4 hours approx. to be taught in September. (6 x 40 minute or 4 x 1-hour classes)
Identified need:	Moving into post-primary education can be an exciting and challenging time. Many schools have identified a need to support students during this transition in order to help build new relationships and friendships and to enable success in learning. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) responded to this need by co-creating this unit with teachers and consulting with students in its development.
Aim of the unit:	This unit aims to guide students in their transition from primary to post primary school by facilitating students in developing self-management, personal and social skills to enable a positive transition.
Learning outcomes:	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine challenges and concerns associated with starting 1st year and identify ways to address these. • Identify people they can ask for help and supports that are available to students in their new school. • Set meaningful and appropriate learning goals and assess their progress towards achieving these goals. • Practice self-management and time management skills to support them in managing school and other activities. • Identify their values and how they can use their values in decision making.
Sample student learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think, Pair, Share – Who can support me in my new school? • Personal reflection and guided discussion about goals and goal setting • Quiz – Understanding my Timetable. • Group work to create 'survival' tips for other students starting into a new school

LINKS TO JUNIOR CYCLE

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING	EXAMPLE OF RELATED LEARNING IN THE UNIT
11. The student takes action to safeguard his/her wellbeing and that of others	The students will gain practical information to help them manage the transition to post primary school. They will also be supported in reflecting on their hopes, fears, expectations and goals within a safe space thus contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing.
7. The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.	The students will reflect on the importance of being kind to their fellow classmates during their transition into their new school. They will be encouraged to reflect on what makes them inspirational individuals. Students will be given the opportunity to explore how they can make a positive contribution to their class and the world.
5. Has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making	The students will be given the opportunity to reflect on their own values and explore ways of using their values as a compass for decision making.





KEY SKILLS IN FOCUS

There are opportunities to support many key skills in this unit but the following are particularly significant:

KEY SKILL	EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Managing myself	Students will learn how to manage themselves and their learning better through the practice of goal setting and other strategies.
Communicating	Students will develop communication skills as they listen to each-other's hopes, fears and expectations about post-primary school.
Staying well	Students will learn the importance of asking for help when needed and where/who to go to if support is needed.
Working with others	Through active and cooperative learning activities the students will get to know each other – thus building relationships and a sense of connection with each other and their new school.
Managing information and thinking	Students will gather, record and organise information using digital technology.

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 CONNECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I feel connected to my school, my friends? • Do I appreciate how my actions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others?
 RESILIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I believe I have the coping skills to deal with life's challenges? • Do I know where I can go for help?
 RESPECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I have positive relationships with my friends, my peers and my teachers?
 AWARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours and can I make sense of them? • Am I aware of what my personal values are and do I think through my decisions?

ASSESSMENT

Formative: Students maintain a portfolio of their learning.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEBLINKS

The NCGE in partnership with careersportal.ie has developed resources to support teachers in facilitating this unit of learning, which are available at https://careersportal.ie/guidance/index_junior.php and at www.ncge.ie/resources

TITLE OF UNIT:**STAYING SAFE AND WELL ONLINE**

Duration:	One class per week for 10 weeks
Identified need:	This unit has been designed in response to concerns identified around student activities online. These concerns are frequently voiced by staff, parents and students themselves. This led JCT (Junior Cycle for Teachers) to develop a unit of learning drawing on knowledge and skills addressed in the Digital Media Literacy short course. Six learning outcomes from the course are used to support learning in this unit of learning. It is important to note that this unit is suitable as part of a Wellbeing programme in instances where the school is not offering the full short course in media literacy and therefore there is no risk of overlap of learning. Some parts of Relationships and Sexuality Education link with and complement this unit and some liaison with the SPHE coordinator is needed too.
Aim of the unit:	To deepen awareness and develop the relevant understanding, knowledge and skills needed for interacting in a safe, responsible, respectful and healthy manner with digital technologies and online media.
Learning outcomes: ⁸	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how they use digital technologies, communication tools and the internet in their lives (1.1) • Illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of using digital technologies, communication tools and the internet (1.2) • Discuss their personal safety concerns when using digital technologies, communication tools and the internet (1.5) • Describe appropriate responses to potentially harmful situations (1.7) • Outline the opportunities and risks presented by young people's use of social networks (4.1) • Demonstrate how best to share personal information, express opinions and emotions online in a responsible and respectful manner (4.4)

⁸ Numbers (1.1, 1.5 etc.) indicate that the learning outcomes are taken directly from the NCCA Digital Media Literacy short course specification. <https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/Digital-Media-Literacy/>

<p>Sample student learning experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm all the ways students use social media, apps and the internet in their lives and then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each, with a particular focus on the impact on wellbeing. • Watch selected 'Cloud control' video clips (and/or other media resources) with think, pair, share and guided discussion activities to consider the impact of internet and social media use from a personal and societal perspective. • Explore the idea of 'digital stress', what it looks/feels like and specific measures students can use to deal with it. • Discuss, in small groups, specific online scenarios/case studies and agree the best response in each scenario. • Conduct a survey of their peers to find out how much time students in their school spend online and for what purposes. • Examine measures young people can take to manage the time they spend online. • Conduct a walking debate to check students' understanding of the law and their rights in relation to their online presence. • Maintain a log of key learning and insights gained throughout this unit.
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LINKS WITH JUNIOR CYCLE

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS

SOL 11. takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others

SOL 24. uses technology and digital media tools to learn, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner





KEY SKILLS IN FOCUS:

There are opportunities to support many key skills in this unit, but the following are particularly significant.

KEY SKILL	KEY SKILL ELEMENT	EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Staying well	Being responsible, safe & ethical in using digital technology	Discussing how to deal with potentially harmful situations online
Managing myself	Knowing myself	Class brainstorming and private personal reflection on how we use digital technologies in our lives – positives and negatives
Communicating	Discussing and debating	Guided class discussion and think, pair, share, following video clip stimuli
Being literate	Expressing ideas clearly and accurately	Group work presentation on advice for peers in dealing with challenging online situations

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 RESPONSIBLE	Do I take action to promote and protect my wellbeing and that of others? Do I know where my safety is at risk and do I make right choices?
 CONNECTED	Do I appreciate that my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts?
 RESILIENT	Do I believe I have the coping skills to deal with life's challenges? Do I know where I can go for help?
 RESPECTED	Do I show care and respect for others?
 AWARE	Am I aware of what my personal values are and do I think through my decisions?

ASSESSMENT

There are many ways that teachers might assess the students' learning. These are some suggestions :

- A group presentation on how to avoid or deal with potentially harmful situations online.
- Preparation of an online safety leaflet for their peers, possibly linked to whole school awareness activities working towards 'Safer Internet Day' in February each year.
- Create a video campaign to raise awareness about an issue of online wellbeing including information on how to deal effectively with a specific issue, e.g., digital stress, cyber bullying, the sharing of non-consensual images.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEB LINKS

- [Digital Media Literacy short course specification](#)
- ['Cloud-control documentary video clips](#)
- ['Cloud-control' Teaching resource pack](#)
- [Connected](#) – Connected has been specifically designed for teachers of the junior cycle Digital Media Literacy Short Course. Module 1 entitled 'My online Wellbeing' and is specifically relevant to this Unit.
- [Lockers](#) – Lockers is an SPHE resource developed to engage 2nd and 3rd year students on the topic of non-consensual image sharing.
- [Be in Ctrl](#) – Be in Ctrl is a junior cycle SPHE educational resource addressing the issue of online sexual coercion and extortion.
- [ThinkB4UClick](#) – ThinkB4UClick is specifically designed for teachers of junior cycle CSPE. ThinkB4UClick explores the issue of online privacy in the context of online rights and responsibilities.
- [Connect with Respect](#) – The Connect with Respect resource aims to help students in secondary schools to understand the impact that cyberbullying can have on people.

TITLE OF UNIT:**LEARNING TO LEARN⁹**

Duration:	One class per week for 10 weeks (Suitable for 1 st or 2 nd yrs.)
Identified need:	The unit was developed following an extensive 'student voice' project during which students discussed possible areas of learning that they would find valuable as part of their Wellbeing programme. Understanding how they learn and becoming more successful learners featured strongly. This led a group of teachers to develop 'Learning to Learn' to help students gain a greater awareness of themselves and what they can do to become better learners. This unit has been trialled and amended based on student feedback.
Aim of the unit:	to support students develop as reflective learners and to develop skills and strategies that will help them learn more effectively and successfully.
Learning outcomes:	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify their own learning preferences – Visual, Auditory, Read/write, and Kinaesthetic (VARK) and suggest learning strategies that suit each one. • Use a range of practical strategies to support their learning, including graphic organisers, mind maps, flash cards, study plans, study buddies, etc. • Reflect on themselves as learners. • Take more responsibility for their learning.
Sample student learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect individually and then share in groups what helps them to learn. • Individually check out their personal learning preference using an online questionnaire. • Working in groups, compile a list of strategies that help them to learn, using a placemat. • Use the internet to source information and practical resources that can support their learning. • Maintain a learning log to support reflection on their learning.

LINKS**STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS**

SOL 11. takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others.

SOL 24. uses technology and digital media tools to learn, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner.

9 The NCCA would like to acknowledge Newbridge College, Co Kildare, for permission to publish this unit.




KEY SKILLS IN FOCUS

There are opportunities to support all key skills in this unit, but the following are particularly significant.

KEY SKILL	KEY SKILL ELEMENT	EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Managing myself	Being able to reflect on my learning	Through the activities students will reflect on how they learn and ways to improve it
Managing information and thinking	Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating information and data	Students will learn how to use a range of tools to help record, organise and manage their learning
Staying well	Being positive about learning	Students will become more positive and engaged in learning as they develop their awareness of themselves as learners and take more responsibility for their learning
Being creative	Learning creatively	Students will explore and create ways that help them learn.

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 RESILIENT	Do I believe that with effort I can achieve?
 RESPECTED	Do I feel that I am listened to and valued?
 AWARE	Do I understand what helps me to learn and how I can improve?

ASSESSMENT

Students show evidence of their learning through one or more of the following activities:

- A poster or presentation, depicting or telling the ways they learn best
- A group project aimed at creating a set of strategies for effective classroom learning that could be shared with teachers.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEBLINKS:

- NCCA Key Skills booklet, *Managing Information and Thinking* especially p. 17–21 and p.28–37
- https://ncca.ie/media/1151/managing-information-and-thinking_april-2015.pdf
- NCCA Focus on Learning booklet *Students reflecting on their learning* (especially p.12–14)
https://ncca.ie/media/1926/assessment-booklet-4_en.pdf
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) , *Learning to Learn Guidance* <https://www.stpaulscollege.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2ND-YEAR-STUDY-LEARNING-TO-LEARN-IGC-17.pdf>
- *Study tips* from Studyclix: <https://www.studyclix.ie/Blog/Show/how-to-study-a-guide-for-1st-and-2nd-year-students>
- *Learning and memory techniques* <https://www.irishtimes.com/sponsored/exam-times/study-guide/learning-and-memory-techniques-1.1614348>
- *What prevents you from studying better?*
<https://careersnews.ie/prevents-studying-better/?highlight=Factors%20that%20affect%20>
- *Find out your learning preference* <https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/?p=questionnaire>
- *Your learning profile* worksheet <https://www.sess.ie/dyslexia-section/your-learning-profile>
- *Note-taking reading and learning strategy* <https://www.nbss.ie/node/249>
- *Study tips and mind maps* <https://www.sess.ie/dyslexia-section/study-tips-and-mind-maps>
- *Graphic organisers for class use* <https://www.pdst.ie/node/2827>

TITLE OF UNIT:**SUPPORTING WELLBEING THROUGH MUSIC**

Duration:	One class per week for first year
Identified need:	Evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of singing or performing music is very strong, particularly when performing is done as part of a group ¹⁰ . This awareness coupled with a strong interest in music among students led to this unit of learning being developed. It was created in a small school setting where music is not available as a subject in junior cycle and therefore there is no risk of overlap between this unit of learning and junior cycle music. There was also a desire to develop a unit that would help create a positive class climate to celebrate the success and involvement of 1 st year students and where the skills and abilities of all are recognised and affirmed.
Aim of the unit:	to develop skills of self-awareness that allow students appreciate how music can support their wellbeing and develop skills of musical expression, so that they can create and perform music with others and experience joy, creativity and a sense of wellbeing.
Learning outcomes:	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify similarities and differences between a range of genres and styles of music • Explore how music can help us and others express and communicate emotions and regulate feelings • Create and perform rhythm patterns through movement, body percussion, composing and percussion instruments. • Play/sing melodic phrases as a soloist/group. • Compose and perform an original piece of music individually or in groups in response to a stimulus¹¹ • Prepare, rehearse and perform pieces of instrumental and vocal music in an ensemble • Identify and reflect upon how music supports the 6 indicators of wellbeing in their lives.

10 <https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/blog/why-singing-is-good-for-pupil-well-being/>
<https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Creative-Ireland-and-Youth-Singing-in-Ireland-Helen-Doyle-research-paper-2019.pdf>
<https://livingwell.org.au/well-being/mental-health/how-music-can-support-our-well-being/>
https://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-01/benefits-learning-and-playing-music-adults?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIubW84vfR6QIV2-7tCh3neQSeEAAYASAAEgIQOfD_Bw-

11 Stimulus can be an image, word, feeling, graphic, object

<p>Sample student learning experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to a selection of music from various musical genres through the lens of wellbeing. • Create a play list of ‘music to energise me’, ‘music to calm me’, ‘my feel-good music’, ‘music for venting frustration’. • Clap, tap, vocalise a variety of rhythmic patterns. • Listen to samples of music that tell a story and discuss how the music, characters and emotions connect. • Create a musical piece that portrays at least two emotions and explain how they are represented in the performance. • Sing and play together in a variety of ensembles and using a variety of instruments. • Participate in karaoke ukulele using YouTube. • Perform solo, in small groups, and as part of a final performance. • Class discussion and individual reflection on how music helps to manage stress, express feelings and promote wellbeing (using the 6 indicators of wellbeing).
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LINKS

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS

SOL 4: The student creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved.

SOL 11. takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others

SOL 23: The student brings an idea from conception to realisation

SOL 24. uses technology and digital media tools to learn, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner





KEY SKILLS IN FOCUS

There are opportunities to support all key skills in this unit, but the following are particularly significant.

KEY SKILL	KEY SKILL ELEMENT	EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Managing myself	Being able to reflect on my learning	Students will reflect on the skills they are developing and how learning through creativity and collaboration with their peers is supporting their wellbeing.
Communicating	Using digital technology to communicate	Students will use digital technology to learn and practise new musical skills and to express themselves creatively.
Staying well	Being positive about learning	As students experience the excitement and fun of performing together, they will feel connected to each other and positive about learning.
Being creative	Learning creatively	Students will experience a range of creative methodologies, for example through movement, singing, performing, creative use of technology and music apps.

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 CONNECTED	<p>Do I feel connected to my school, my friends, my community and the wider world?</p> <p>Do I appreciate that my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, at local and global contexts?</p>
 RESILIENT	<p>Do I believe I have the coping skills to deal with life's challenges?</p>
 RESPECTED	<p>Do I feel listened to and valued?</p> <p>Do I have positive relationships with my friends, my peers and my teachers?</p> <p>Do I show care and respect for others?</p>
 AWARE	<p>Am I aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours and can I make sense of them?</p>

ASSESSMENT

Self and peer assessment of learning can be woven throughout this unit.

The culminating group performance provides a summative assessment moment allowing students to demonstrate together the skills they have learned and show evidence of improvement, commitment, creativity and teamwork.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEBLINKS:

- <https://yousician.com/>
- *Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World* by Israel K/Israel Kamakawiwo'ole – Ukulele Play Along. [Video file] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bv46K4cSsoc>
- Reese, Dr Jill, (Mar 12, 2016) *Count on Me - Bruno Mars - UKE CHORD GUIDE*. [Video file] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YpgQsfjEDY>
- Reese, Dr Jill, (Jan 14, 2016), *Don't worry, be happy Ukulele Chord Guide*. [Video file] Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOtgCUr2_TM
- Reese, Dr Jill, (Nov 6, 2016) *Let it be, Ukulele chord guide*. [Video file] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ifJ5GxhpR8>

TITLE OF UNIT:**VOLUNTEERING FOR ALL COMMUNITY PROGRAMME¹²**

Duration:	30 hours
Identified need:	Volunteering For All Community Programme provides a way for schools to cultivate and celebrate the positive contribution young people make to the places in which they live and creates awareness of how students can support their own wellbeing and that of others by helping others. There is strong evidence that people who volunteer regularly report better wellbeing because of increased self-esteem and confidence, decreased anxiety, reduced depression, and better social interaction, integration and peer support (CSO, 2013).
Aim of the unit:	To facilitate a student-led volunteering project in the local community where students take action in the service of others. By making a positive difference they can enhance their own wellbeing and that of others.
Learning outcomes:	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify real needs in their local community. • Explore how their gifts and skills can be used for the benefit of others. • Work collaboratively to design and plan a volunteering project locally. • Take ownership of tasks. • Take action to enhance the wellbeing of others. • Listen respectfully and value others for who they are. • Reflect upon the impact of their volunteering on their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.
Sample learning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engage in 'All About Me' exercise to uncover the talents, skills and attributes that they have to offer their community. • In teams, students create a map of their ideal community and present it to their class. • Students conduct a community needs analysis to identify groups/ organisations in the community and needs they can help with. • Students engage in guided discussion to examine real need vs. perceived need. • Students democratically identify and agree a community service action project that is practical and achievable. • Students work together to plan a community service, put the plan into action, and evaluate it.

12 Localise Youth Volunteering is a Non-Government Organisation that supports schools in developing meaningful volunteering projects for young people. These projects have grown since the COVID-19 pandemic with online support and blended learning support offered to students and teachers. <https://www.localise.ie/>

LINKS

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS

SOL 5. has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making.

SOL 6. appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives.

SOL 7. values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.

SOL 11. takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others

SOL 23. brings an idea from conception to realisation

KEY SKILLS:

There are opportunities to support all key skills in this unit, but the following are particularly significant.

KEY SKILL	KEY SKILL ELEMENT	STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Being Creative	Exploring options and alternatives	Students conduct a community needs analysis as part of the decision-making process.
Communicating	Discussing and debating	When deciding who to help and how to help them, students engage in active dialogue as part of the decision-making process.
Managing information and thinking	Setting and achieving personal goals	Each student chooses or is assigned a number of tasks to make the project successful.
Managing myself	Being social	Students leave the classroom and perform a service for people in the community, forming relationships with people who are typically outside of their social circle.
Working with others	Respecting difference	Volunteering helps to shape student's world view and develop a healthy respect for others

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 RESPONSIBLE	Do I take action to promote and protect my wellbeing and that of others?
 CONNECTED	Do I feel connected to my school, my friends, my community and the wider world? Do I appreciate that my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, at local and global contexts?
 RESILIENT	Do I believe that with effort I can achieve?
 RESPECTED	Do I show care and respect for others?
 AWARE	Am I aware of what my personal values are?

ASSESSMENT

Students show evidence of their learning through a portfolio or e-portfolio. Student select 3–4 pieces of evidence that best demonstrate their learning with a short reflection stating why each piece was chosen. Selected pieces might include worksheets, a copy of the group contract, photographs of the ideal community design, research findings, brainstorming sessions, evidence of tasks completed, associated art or craft works, event day photographs and so on.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEBLINKS:

- This programme is facilitated by Localise Youth Volunteering www.localise.ie The programme site is www.volunteeringforall.ie where classroom resources and instructional videos are available.
- Localise has a number of social media channels including [facebook.com/localise](https://www.facebook.com/localise), [instagram.com/localiseyouth](https://www.instagram.com/localiseyouth), twitter.com/localiseyouth and [youtube.com/localise2010](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0W0W0W0W0W0W0W0W0W0W0W) where examples of projects carried out by students can be accessed.
- To register for this programme, contact Localise on info@localise.ie and (01) 4979010.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- CSO report on Volunteering and Wellbeing in Ireland <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-vwb/qnhsvolunteeringandwellbeingq32013/>
- The European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers, contains useful definitions and sets of rights and responsibilities for volunteers <https://www.youthforum.org/charter-rights-and-responsibilities-volunteers>

TITLE OF UNIT:**ACTIVE BEING: INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WELLBEING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

Duration:	10 weeks (suitable for differentiation across 1 st to 3 rd year groups).
Aim of the unit:	to deliver a student-led, educational, physical health and wellbeing unit of learning that increases students' understanding of the importance of physical activity and creates inclusive physical activity opportunities for all students.
Identified need:	Physical activity has many physical and mental health benefits. However, in Ireland physical activity levels among young people are low, especially in females. Students' sense of school connectedness, optimism and resilience are also declining. Being physically active provides students with opportunities to enhance these dispositions. Therefore, it is important to encourage physical activity outside of, and in addition to, the PE class to ensure a healthy, happy lifestyle. Consequently, this unit was designed by the Pathway for Health group (PAfH) at the University of Limerick, in collaboration with the Active School Flag initiative of the Department of Education and Skills.
Learning outcomes:	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss their understanding of the terms inclusive, physical activity, and wellbeing. • Discuss the benefits of being physically active and how physical activity can enhance their wellbeing. • Work together to identify the barriers and facilitators of a healthy life, and how these change across different environments e.g. in school, at home, in your local community. • Develop their creativity and teamwork skills by working collaboratively to design and teach a new activity that is inclusive for all students. • Take action to enhance their wellbeing by demonstrating commitment to a new physical activity in school or in the local community. • Reflect on how they feel before and after exercise.

Sample learning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a colourful infographic to promote physical activity and wellbeing and position it around the school and/or on the school website. • Create a portfolio outlining their physical activity journey using reflections, charts, photos, motivational quotes, drawings, etc. • Brainstorm ways to build minutes of moderate intensity physical activity into their lives and share their ideas with the class. • Use a smart app to record weekly averages, in their portfolio, for the total number of steps taken by the individual/or class with the goal of reaching 10,000 steps daily. • Research and collect a portfolio of age-appropriate exercise videos and meditations that students can undertake at home to increase their health and wellbeing. • Work in groups to modify an existing activity or create a new activity that is fun and inclusive for all students regardless of one’s ability. Working in their groups, students can teach their activity to other class members. • Buddy up with a partner or friend and try a new after school activity.
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STATEMENTS OF LEARNING IN FOCUS

SOL 11 Takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others

SOL 12 Is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active

SOL 24 Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical matter






KEY SKILLS

There are opportunities to support all key skills in this unit, but the following are particularly significant.

KEY SKILL	ELEMENT	STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
Managing information and thinking	Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating info.	Design and complete a <i>How active are we?</i> survey Collect a portfolio of age-appropriate exercise videos and meditations that students can undertake at home to increase their health and wellbeing.
Staying well	Being healthy, physical and active	Students will partake in a new after school physical activity and choose a mechanism of recording and reflecting on this trial activity (buddy system)
Being creative	Implementing ideas and taking action	Design, co-create and deliver a fun physical activity workout to their peers, responding to the needs, abilities and interest of the class.
Being numerate	Estimating, predicting and calculating	Participate in a steps challenge, including setting a step count goal over a period of time.
Managing myself	Setting and achieving personal goals	Set personal and achievable physical activity goals and reflect on their progress weekly.

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING IN FOCUS

The wellbeing indicators make explicit the hoped-for outcomes of learning in Wellbeing. The indicators that this unit specifically supports are highlighted below:

WELLBEING INDICATOR	RELEVANT DESCRIPTORS
 ACTIVE	Am I a confident and skilled participant in physical activity? How physically active am I?
 RESPONSIBLE	Do I take action to protect and promote my wellbeing and that of others?
 CONNECTED	Do I feel connected to my school, my friends, my family?
 RESILIENT	Am I willing to work hard to achieve great things?
 AWARE	Am I aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours?

ASSESSMENT

Students will show evidence of learning and commitment to physical activity through an e-portfolio or portfolio. Working individually and independently, over the ten-week period, the students will collate images, videos, quotes, readings, reflections and experiences in a 'Changing my physical activity levels' portfolio. The class and teacher will work collaboratively to agree what a high-quality portfolio of physical activity change might look like and co-create the criteria for success at the beginning of this unit of learning. The portfolio can be self-assessed, peer-assessed or teacher-assessed using the success criteria.

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

- www.activeschoolflag.ie
- www.peai.org
- The following is a link to the Pacer Health app to record daily steps: <https://www.mypacer.com/>
- The following is a link to allow students create colourful info graphs: www.canva.com
- [Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity levels report and info graphs \(CSPPA 2010, 2018\).](#)
- [UK Physical Activity Guidelines, Benefits and Infographics:](#)
- [Physical Activity Plan for Ireland](#)
- [Get Ireland Active & Resources](#)
- [Get Active! Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People – A guiding framework](#)
- [Physical activity report card for Ireland](#)
- [Get Active in the Classroom](#)

4.8

SAMPLE WELLBEING PROGRAMMES

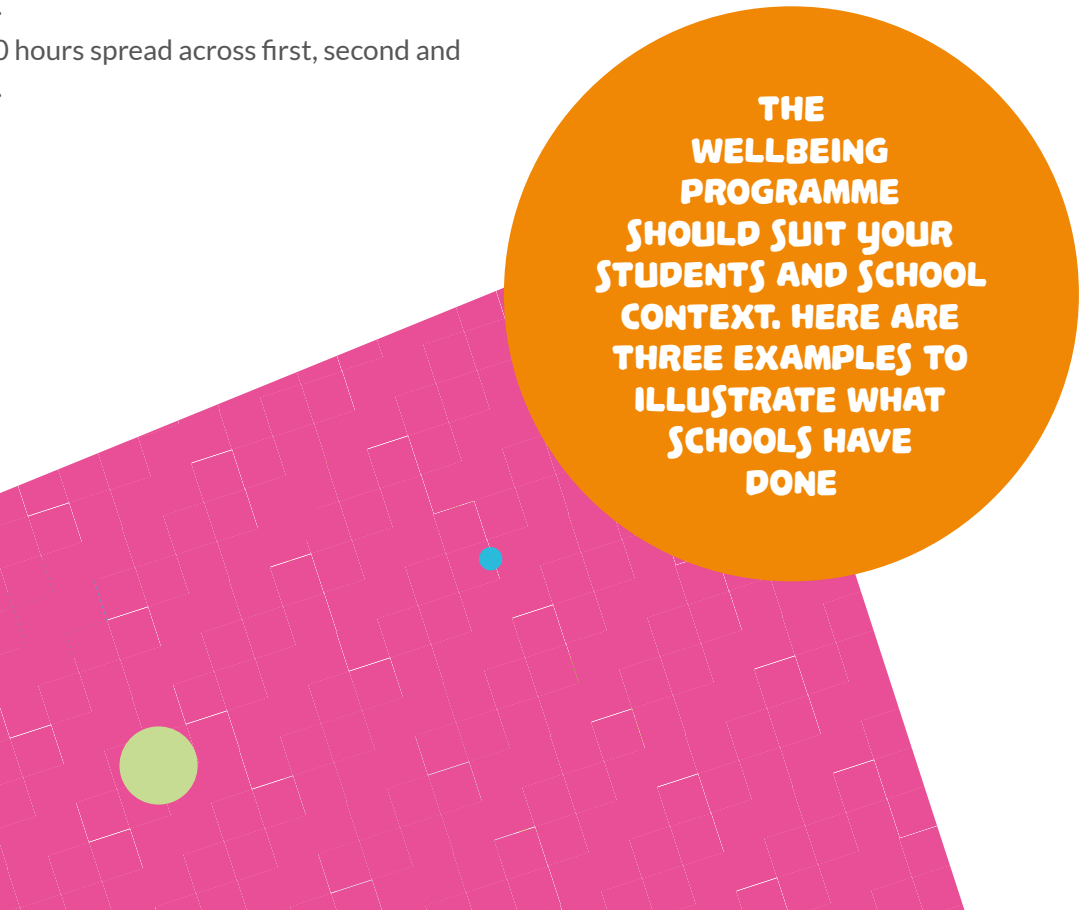
This section includes three sample Wellbeing programmes designed to illustrate different ways in which schools might configure a programme. As there are many other possibilities within and beyond each programme, these examples should be seen as illustrative.

ALLOCATING TIME

Learning in CSPE, PE and SPHE is viewed as fundamental to learning about and for Wellbeing. For this reason, there is a **minimum threshold of time** which should be provided in each area. This minimum is set out as follows:

- PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year
- SPHE: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year.
- CSPE: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year.

These minima represent 335 timetabled hours, and schools have the flexibility to allocate *more* time to these areas in line with their priorities and students' needs should they choose to do so. However, once these minimum requirements have been met, the remaining 65 hours which make up the full complement of 400 hours can be allocated to other aspects of wellbeing. For example, the flexible space offers schools scope to timetable some of the already existing, excellent programmes that relate to wellbeing, or to develop their own units of learning. The following programmes all reflect allocations of 400 hours.



THE WELLBEING PROGRAMME SHOULD SUIT YOUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOL CONTEXT. HERE ARE THREE EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT SCHOOLS HAVE DONE

SAMPLE PROGRAMMES

PROGRAMME 1

Context:

In this school the timetable is designed around 40-minute class periods. The Wellbeing programme comprises the short courses in CSPE and SPHE and 135-hours of PE. In addition, students engage in short units of learning (10/11 weeks duration), scheduled for one 40-minute class period each week, across the three years of junior cycle. A mixed school of approximately 900, students have a strong interest in environmental and social action and this is reflected in the units of learning. The school is also situated by the sea, hence the inclusion of water safety as a unit of learning.

The table below outlines the main features of the programme.

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	HOURS
PE	Double class period	Double class period	Double class period	135
CSPE	Double class period	Double class period	Single class period	100
SPHE	Double class period	Single class period	Double class period	100
UNITS	Single periods x 11 weeks	Single periods x 11 weeks	Single periods x 11 weeks	66
Term 1	Making the transition into post-primary school ¹³	Junior Social Innovation Action programme ¹⁴	Young Environmentalist Award ¹⁵	
Term 2	My Friends Youth programme ¹⁶	JAWS (Junior Aquatics Water Safety) ¹⁷	Relationship skills ¹⁸	
Term 3	Staying safe and staying well online ¹⁹	Learning to learn ²⁰	Guidance and study skills	

Approx
401
hours

13 See sample unit p.58

14 <https://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie/programmes-initiatives/junior-programme/>

15 <https://ecounesco.ie>

16 <https://www.friendsresilience.org/my-friends-youth-ages-12-15/>

17 www.watersafety.ie

18 This unit was developed in response to students expressing a need for more time to discuss aspects of relationships and sexuality and was planned alongside the SPHE programme

19 See sample unit p.61

20 See sample unit p.64

PROGRAMME 2

Context: This is a mixed urban school with under 200 students. In this school the timetable is designed around 40-minute class periods. The Wellbeing programme includes the short courses in CSPE and SPHE and the 135-hour course in PE. In addition, the school has developed three long units of learning in response to the needs and interests of their students. Each one is 22 hours duration and runs for the year. Guidance-related learning is facilitated through short blocks, arranged between the teachers of the units of learning and the guidance counsellor.

Music and wellbeing was developed in this school as students felt there could be wellbeing benefits to singing or performing music as part of a group²¹. It was created within the context of a small school where music is not available as a subject in junior cycle and therefore there is no risk of overlap between this unit of learning and junior cycle music. *Localise volunteering award* is run in partnership with the NGO Localise Youth Volunteering with the aim of promoting wellbeing through service to others. *Managing myself and managing my learning* was developed by an SPHE teacher and guidance counsellor to address needs related to coping with increased study demands in 3rd year, managing learning goals and deadlines (including CBAs) and strategies for coping in times of stress.

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	HOURS
PE	Double class period	Double class period	Double class period	135
CSPE	Double class period	Double class period	Single class period	100
SPHE	Double class period	Single class period	Double class period	100
UNITS	Single periods x 33 weeks	Single periods x 33 weeks	Single periods x 33 weeks	66
Title	Music and wellbeing	Localise volunteering award	Managing myself and managing my learning	

Approx
401
hours

21 This is borne out by research such as <https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/blog/why-singing-is-good-for-pupil-well-being/>
<https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Creative-Ireland-and-Youth-Singing-in-Ireland-Helen-Doyle-research-paper-2019.pdf>
<https://livingwell.org.au/well-being/mental-health/how-music-can-support-our-well-being/>
https://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-01/benefits-learning-and-playing-music-adults?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIubW84vfR6QIV2-7tCh3neQSeEAYASAAEgIQOfD_Bw-

PROGRAMME 3

Context: This Wellbeing programme is from a school of over 700 students that has moved to one-hour classes.

- One-hour period for SPHE and CSPE in each of the three years.
- One-hour period for PE in 1st year and 3rd year and a two-hour period in 2nd year

The school also offers shorter rotating units of learning, designed in response to the needs and interests of the students in 2nd and 3rd year and two stand-alone workshops for 1st years, which are facilitated early in September to support students in settling in and getting to know each other. The number of rotating units reflects the number of class groups in each year.

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	HOURS
PE	One hour	Two hours	One hour	132
CSPE	One hour	One hour	One hour	100
SPHE	One hour	One hour	One hour	100
UNITS	<p>Specially designed workshops</p> <p>Settling into my new school (2 hours)</p> <p>Physical activity team-building (3 hours)</p>	<p>5 rotating units (each runs for 6 -7 weeks/hrs)</p> <p>Exploring my local community through physical activity</p> <p>Resilience Academy programme²²</p> <p>Exploring who I am and my personal goals²³</p> <p>Healthy eating²⁴</p> <p>More than a Selfie²⁵</p>	<p>5 rotating units (each runs for 6 -7 weeks/hrs)</p> <p><i>All different – all equal</i></p> <p>Celebrating diversity</p> <p>Junior cycle Active School</p> <p>Guidance²⁶</p> <p>Understanding consent²⁷</p> <p>Sustainable consumption: food & fashion</p>	68



22 The Resilience Academy is a six-week programme developed and facilitated by Pieta House for second year students aimed at equipping students with emotional resilience tools. For information: <https://www.pieta.ie/how-we-can-help/prevention-programmes/resilience-academy/>

23 This unit, developed by the NCGE can be downloaded https://careersportal.ie/guidance/index_junior.php

24 In this school the Home Economics teacher has designed this unit so that it provides new learning for those students who also study JC Home Economics.

25 #MoreThanASelfie – a programme of lessons and facilitators guide which explores the link between body image, self-esteem and mental health. Available from info@bodywhys.ie

26 In this school students progress directly into 5th year so guidance is important in 3rd year to help students identify their values, strengths, interests and possible career pathways and to help them in making suitable subject choices for senior cycle. https://careersportal.ie/guidance/index_junior.php

27 This unit links with and supports the SPHE/RSE programme and is taught with the support of an outside agency.

A decorative graphic on a green background. It features several circles of different colors and sizes: a large white circle with the number '5', a medium yellow circle, a medium pink circle, a medium purple circle, a medium orange circle, a small blue circle, a small cyan circle, a small dark blue circle, and a large white circle containing the text 'ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING'. Dashed white lines connect some of the circles, forming a path from the top-left white circle down to the yellow circle, then to the pink circle, and another path from the yellow circle down to the purple circle, then to the orange circle. There are also several floating circles not connected by lines.

5

**ASSESSMENT
AND REPORTING**

5.1

ASSESSMENT IN WELLBEING

The *Framework for Junior Cycle* states that all assessment in junior cycle should have as its primary purpose the support of student learning.¹ To achieve this, the framework emphasises the need to broaden the approach to assessment, recognising that *no single assessment event can provide evidence of the full range of student achievement*.² This is especially true in relation to learning in Wellbeing where assessment has to take account of the wide range of learning experienced by students.

Assessment in Wellbeing is not about teachers assessing where the student is situated on the continuum of wellbeing or making a statement about the student's subjective state of wellbeing. It would be unhelpful for a teacher to make a judgement about a student's wellbeing *per se*, given that student wellbeing depends on a variety of factors and life circumstances which can change quickly and can be context-specific. The focus of assessment in Wellbeing is on gathering evidence of what the student has learned *about* wellbeing, i.e. the knowledge, skills and dispositions students have gained. While not every learning outcome needs to be assessed, it is important that students are provided with regular opportunities to show evidence of their learning and encouraged to reflect on their learning throughout the Wellbeing programme. It is expected that

most of the assessment activities in the area of Wellbeing will be classroom based and formative in nature.³

In line with good assessment practice, assessment of learning in the Wellbeing programme should be

- integrated into planning for teaching and learning within all elements of the Wellbeing programme
- purposeful, and focused on providing students with feedback on ways students can improve their learning
- varied and inclusive of the needs and abilities of students
- aligned with the learning outcomes of the relevant short courses or units of learning
- supportive of students' wellbeing, by avoiding over-assessment and by providing students with opportunities to take ownership of and make choices about how assessment in Wellbeing happens.

All the curriculum components of a Wellbeing curriculum provide opportunities for both ongoing and summative assessment and formative feedback. For example, students can be asked to complete assignments, project work, presentations, performances, engage in self/peer assessment, reflect on their learning and set goals for the next steps in learning. Teachers can also use effective questioning and dialogue to allow students to make their learning visible and to plan for improvement. All assessment activities are most effectively carried out when supported by success criteria stating what a good piece of work looks like in the contexts involved.

1 <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf> p35.

2 Ibid p34.

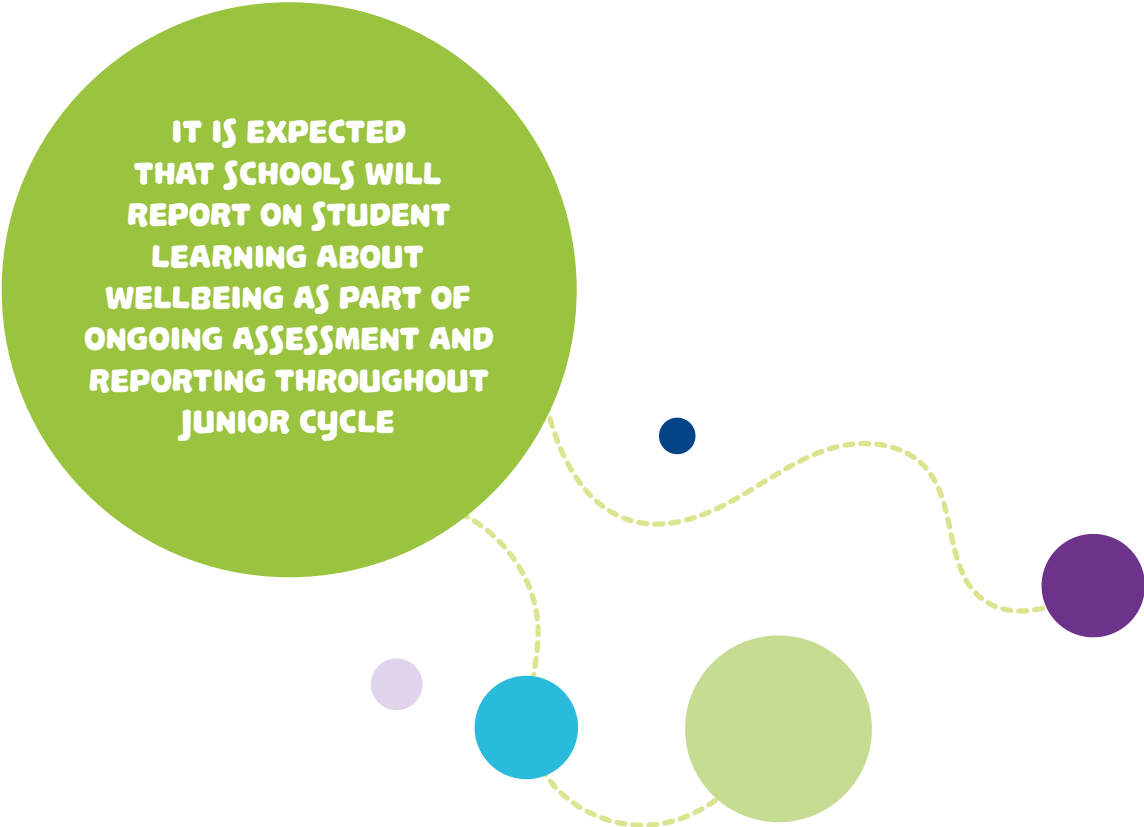
3 Ibid p42.

5.2

REPORTING ON WELLBEING IN FIRST AND SECOND YEAR

Reporting on students' learning in Wellbeing aims to provide parents with a picture of what students are learning about Wellbeing and the skills they are developing to support their wellbeing. It is expected that schools will report on student learning about Wellbeing as part of ongoing assessment and reporting throughout junior cycle. For the most part, reporting will focus on ongoing assessments that students have completed as part of their learning in CSPE, PE and SPHE and in units of learning or other learning experiences that make up the school's Wellbeing programme. The NCCA has

developed reporting templates in line with the style and format of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement⁴. Schools are encouraged to develop their own reporting formats along similar lines. This formal report will be supplemented by a range of other forms of reporting throughout the school year, including parent teacher meetings and informal written and oral feedback to students on their progress.



**IT IS EXPECTED
THAT SCHOOLS WILL
REPORT ON STUDENT
LEARNING ABOUT
WELLBEING AS PART OF
ONGOING ASSESSMENT AND
REPORTING THROUGHOUT
JUNIOR CYCLE**

4 Available at <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/reporting>

5.3

REPORTING ON WELLBEING IN THE JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT (JCPA)

Reporting on student learning in the area of Wellbeing is included in a dedicated section of the JCPA. This is the section in which schools report on student achievement in Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) related to learning in CSPE, SPHE and PE. The school uses the descriptors used for making judgements on all CBAs, namely *yet to meet expectations*, *in line with expectations*, *above expectations* and *exceptional*. The assessment guidelines for NCCA short courses provide detailed advice on assessment and other practical issues. Where schools amend these short courses or develop their own short courses, they can use the assessment approaches included in the NCCA short courses to inform the design of the CBA.

The JCPA also includes a free text space where schools can report on achievement in Wellbeing beyond PE, SPHE and CSPE, such as assessments completed as part of their students' engagement in Wellbeing units of learning. In planning such units, using Appendix I, schools will have given thought to how learning within these units will be assessed.

Schools may also report on student learning in Wellbeing in the *Other Areas of Learning* section of the JCPA. Here, one or two learning experiences outside of the 400-hour Wellbeing programme might be included, such as 'I developed confidence and became more physically active through my involvement in the school Karate club' or 'I increased my awareness of wellbeing by being on the organising committee for Friendship week' and so on. Over time, students can take responsibility for deciding what they wish to include in the Other Areas of Learning section of the JCPA.

The inclusion of student-developed statements within the *Other Areas of Learning* is important as it

- helps students become much more aware of themselves as learners
- meaningfully includes student voice in reporting
- makes visible student engagement in wellbeing learning beyond the classroom.



**INCLUDE STUDENT
VOICE IN REPORTING TO
MAKE ENGAGEMENT IN
WELLBEING LEARNING
MORE VISIBLE**

5.4

STUDENT REFLECTION ON LEARNING IN WELLBEING

Students are more likely to engage with assessment tasks that will enable rich reporting when the tasks are undertaken in a context of regular dialogue and feedback and where students are provided with frequent opportunities to reflect on their learning. The importance of building students' skills of reflection on learning cannot be overstated. The capacity to reflect on their learning is a common prerequisite for success across the three short courses that form the pillars of the junior cycle Wellbeing programme.

Teachers can build up students' skills in reflecting on their learning through the lens of the junior cycle Key Skills and the six wellbeing indicators. In this way, students can be helped to move beyond thinking simply about knowledge or information gained and can be prompted to consider how specific key skills have been developed through their learning. Similarly, the six indicators— Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware—can be used to support ongoing student reflection about their learning in Wellbeing. For example, at the end of a class, a unit, or a school term, students can use the indicators to reflect on

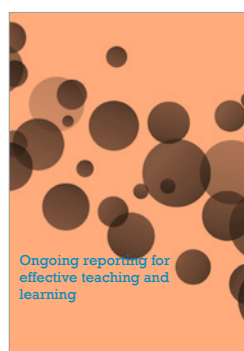
- their important learning about Wellbeing
- the indicators that they feel they are making most progress on
- the indicators that they would like to make progress on and how this might be done.

Ultimately, learning in Wellbeing aims to encourage young people to take responsibility for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. It is therefore important that reflection and assessment practices in Wellbeing help students become familiar with the language of wellbeing and to develop their capacity to talk about their learning.



The NCCA *Focus on Learning* booklets provide lots of practical guidance for ongoing assessment which can be adapted for use in the different areas of the Wellbeing programme

These booklets can be downloaded at: <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/focus-on-learning>



Guidelines on Reporting are available at <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/reporting>

6

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: USING THE WELLBEING INDICATORS TO REVIEW SCHOOL PRACTICE

The six indicators of wellbeing identify what is important for young people's wellbeing in junior cycle. Each school has flexibility to plan their own Wellbeing programme to support student progress in relation to each of the indicators.

The following questions may be helpful in supporting groups such as the whole staff, subject departments, teachers of a year group, the wider school community including administrative and ancillary staff, to reflect on current practices and how they, individually and/or collectively, contribute or could contribute to supporting students in relation to each of the indicators.

	IN MY ROLE AND IN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS, HOW DO I SUPPORT THEIR LEARNING JOURNEY TOWARDS	YES	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT YET
 ACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being a confident and skilled participant in physical activity being physically active 			
 RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being able to take action to protect and promote their wellbeing and that of others making healthy eating choices knowing when and where their safety is at risk and enabling them to make the right choices 			
 CONNECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling connected to their school, their friends, community and the wider world understanding how their actions and interactions impact on their own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts 			
 RESILIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling confident in themselves and having the coping skills to deal with life's challenges knowing where they can go for help believing that with effort they can achieve 			
 RESPECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing care and respect for others having positive relationships with friends, peers and teachers feeling listened to and valued 			
 AWARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and being able to make sense of them being aware of their personal values and able to think through their decisions being aware of themselves as learners and knowing how they can improve 			

Reflecting on this exercise consider:

Which wellbeing indicators do you feel you are most supporting? What is the evidence for this?	
Which wellbeing indicators need your attention? What is the evidence for this?	
What one/two changes will you make to support students' progress in relation to the indicators?	
What surprised you doing this exercise?	

APPENDIX B: TEMPLATE TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

This planning template can support a conversation amongst teachers to enable a coherent, collaborative approach to planning for Wellbeing. It can help create awareness of potential links between different aspects of learning across the Wellbeing programme. Importantly, it can allow for ongoing adaption and change as new and emerging needs arise during the course of the school year.

Learning outcomes for each CSPE, SPHE and PE are available on www.curriculumonline.ie

YEAR 1	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	REVIEW/ FEEDBACK
CSPE	Unit Title Learning Outcomes				
PE	Unit Title Learning Outcomes				
SPHE	Unit Title Learning Outcomes				
Other	Unit Title Learning Outcomes				
Potential Collaborative Themes					
Collaborative Wellbeing-related Events					
Potential links with other subjects					

Acknowledgement: This template was developed by JCT and is included here with their permission




APPENDIX C: USING WELLBEING INDICATORS TO SUPPORT STUDENT REFLECTION


The following questions may be helpful in supporting students to reflect on their wellbeing using the six indicators. It might also be useful for checking in with students to ensure that they understand what is included under the different indicators.

In using this, or other self-assessment tools, it is important to stress to students that wellbeing is a process and a lifelong journey and may never be fully realised. The purpose of this tool is to allow students to reflect on their wellbeing, to identify areas of wellbeing that they can improve and to provide information and insights for the staff about how they can better support learning for and learning about wellbeing.


Students can use the comment box to comment on an answer, to set a goal and/or to suggest how the Wellbeing programme in junior cycle could support their progress in relation to this indicator.

This self-assessment tool could be generated on Google Docs or a similar platform and the results could be used to inform planning.


	DAY TO DAY	YES	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT YET
 ACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am a confident and skilled participant in physical activity I am physically active on a regular basis 			
Comment:				
 RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take action to protect and promote my wellbeing and that of others I make healthy eating choices I know when my safety is at risk and I make the right choices to protect myself 			
Comment:				
 CONNECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel connected to my school, my friends, community and the wider world I understand how my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts 			
Comment:				

	DAY TO DAY	YES	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT YET
 RESILIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel confident in myself and have the coping skills to deal with life’s challenges • I know where I can go for help • I believe that with effort I can achieve 			

Comment:

 RESPECTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel listened to and valued • I have positive relationships with my friends, my peers and my teachers • I show care and respect for others 			
--	--	--	--	--

Comment:

 AWARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours and I can make sense of them • I am aware of my personal values and can think through my decisions • I am aware of how I learn best and know how I can improve 			
--	---	--	--	--

Comment:

Reflecting on this exercise, consider the following:

Three things I am doing to support my wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
Three things I plan to do that will help to support my wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

APPENDIX D: WELLBEING IN JUNIOR CYCLE: SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND STAFF¹

This checklist can be used to reflect on and evaluate what the school is doing well and what needs to be improved in the four key aspects of wellbeing in junior cycle: culture, relationships, curriculum and policy/ planning. Schools should use all available evidence from a range of people including students, teachers, parents/guardians to review the extent to which it meets the features set out in the questionnaire.

KEY ASPECT: CULTURE

How are we doing? Apply rating 1 – 3 taking into account the criteria in the second column.
(1. Needs attention, 2. Acceptable, 3. Excellent)

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
School mission and ethos	The wellbeing of the whole school community is at the heart of the school’s mission statement.			
	Everybody in the school community is valued and has opportunities to flourish.			
	All staff contribute to promoting a caring and inclusive environment within the school that is supportive of student wellbeing.			
	There is a shared vision and understanding of what student wellbeing means which emphasises strengths and capacities rather than simply focusing on problems and weaknesses.			
	Respectful and caring relationships are fostered between staff and students, students and students, and staff and parents.			
	There are structures in place designed to support the wellbeing of students, e.g. a Student Support Team.			

¹ This checklist has been adapted from DES, HSE, DOH. (2013). *Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention*. p. 62-65 and it also correlates closely with the Statements of Effective Practice in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2019)

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
Physical and social environment	The physical environment conveys a message of warmth, welcome and inclusion.			
	The school is a safe place for all students.			
	There are spaces for students to meet socially and to have quiet time.			
	The school building is accessible for all students.			
	Students and staff take pride and care in maintaining the physical environment.			
	The school environment is conducive to promoting physical activity and healthy eating choices.			
Classroom culture	Teachers have high expectations for all students.			
	There are open, positive, supportive relationships between teachers and students in class and outside.			
	A culture of collaboration and cooperation is promoted through day-to-day teaching, learning and assessment practices.			
	Students feel safe, secure and respected in their classrooms.			
Teaching, learning and assessment	Students are actively engaged in their learning and enjoy being at school.			
	Students receive regular formative feedback about their learning and how they can improve.			
	Students have regular opportunities to talk about their learning and what helps them to learn.			
	Teachers use participative methodologies to develop the key skills in their subjects.			
	Teaching and learning is differentiated and provides an appropriate challenge to enable all students to engage and experience success.			

Which of the aspects of **Culture** outlined above should be prioritised in planning for Wellbeing in junior cycle?

What are we going to do?

Who is going to do it?

Review date:

KEY ASPECT: RELATIONSHIPS

How are we doing? Apply rating 1 – 3 taking into account the criteria in the second column.
 (1. Needs attention, 2. Acceptable, 3. Excellent)

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
Student teacher relationships	Student teacher relationships are friendly, caring and respectful.			
	The whole school staff feel confident, as individuals, about their potential role as the ‘one good adult’ that students may turn to for support and help.			
	Students know where to get support and how to access the ‘care’ structures in the school.			
	There is a positive discipline policy where discipline issues are resolved with care, respect and consistency.			
Peer relationships	Students show respect, care and concern for each other.			
	Students feel safe and supported amongst their peers.			
	Teachers feels supported and cared for amongst their colleagues.			
Student voice	There are different structures in place where students can have their voices heard, e.g. in class, tutor meetings, student voice focus groups, prefect meetings, Student Council.			
	Students know that their feedback is valued because it is acted on.			
	All students have an opportunity to have their voices heard and are involved in making decisions about their life in school.			

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
Partnership with parents/guardians, community and wider supports	Parents/guardians feel welcome, respected and listened to as partners in the education of their children.			
	Parents/guardians have opportunities to learn about the school’s Wellbeing programme in junior cycle and how they can support their child’s wellbeing.			
	Parents/guardians are actively encouraged to get involved in the planning and evaluation of the Wellbeing programme.			
	The school has developed positive, proactive links with groups and clubs in the community involved in supporting young people’s wellbeing.			

Which aspects of **Relationships** outlined above should be prioritised in planning for Wellbeing in junior cycle?

What are we going to do?

Who is going to do it?

Review date:

KEY ASPECT: CURRICULUM

How are we doing? Apply rating 1 – 3 taking into account the criteria in the second column. (1. Needs attention, 2. Acceptable, 3. Excellent)

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
CSPE, PE, SPHE	There is a coherent and coordinated approach to the provision of CSPE, PE, SPHE as part of the Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.			
	There are regular opportunities where teachers can work collaboratively in planning for CSPE, PE and SPHE.			
	Students’ and parents’ voices inform planning in CSPE, PE and SPHE.			
	Teachers are supported and encouraged to participate in continuing professional development in CSPE, PE and SPHE.			
	Teachers are consulted before being assigned to teach SPHE and/or CSPE.			
Guidance	Guidance-related learning is an important aspect of the Wellbeing curriculum in junior cycle.			
	The guidance counsellor works collaboratively with the wellbeing team in planning the Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.			
	The guidance counsellor has opportunities to get to know and to support students in junior cycle.			
	The guidance counsellor co-ordinates the appropriate sharing of relevant information about students with their teachers in support of their wellbeing.			
Other subjects and learning experiences	Each teacher understands their role in supporting learning for and learning about wellbeing in their subject.			
	Teachers, other than CSPE, SPHE and PE teachers, are encouraged to consider how they can contribute to learning about wellbeing and for wellbeing.			

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
Extra-curricular and co-curricular learning	The ways in which outside groups and agencies are used to support learning about wellbeing is thoughtfully managed.			
	The school’s extracurricular programme is designed to be broad, accessible and inclusive.			
	Students and parents are actively involved in planning and evaluating the school’s extra-curricular programme.			

Which aspects of **Curriculum** should be prioritised in planning for wellbeing in junior cycle?

What are we going to do?

Who is going to do it?

Review date:

KEY ASPECT: POLICY AND PLANNING

How are we doing? Apply rating 1 – 3 taking into account the criteria in the second column.

(1. Needs attention, 2. Acceptable, 3. Excellent)

FOCUS	SOME CRITERIA TO LOOK FOR:	NEEDS ATTENTION	ACCEPTABLE	EXCELLENT
School policies	School policies are developed and reviewed in partnership with students, parents and staff.			
	Wellbeing-related policies including policies in relation to behaviour, internet safety, extra-curricular activities, SPHE (including RSE) and anti-bullying are in place and are regularly reviewed.			
	Policy documents are accessible and are shared with students and parents/guardians.			
	Policies are enacted with fairness and compassion.			
School self-evaluation (SSE) Subject and whole-school planning	In school planning, time is made available for planning in Wellbeing.			
	Explicit links are made between planning for Wellbeing and SSE.			
	Planning documents for Wellbeing are collated and saved in support of WSE in Wellbeing.			
	Wellbeing in junior cycle is an important feature of whole school and subject planning.			
Continuing professional development (CPD)	Teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD in support of student wellbeing.			
	Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to share their learning in CPD with colleagues.			
	In school CPD includes opportunities for teachers to share their work in junior cycle Wellbeing with colleagues.			

Which aspects of **Policy and planning** should be prioritised in planning for Wellbeing in junior cycle?

What are we going to do?

Who is going to do it?

Review date:

APPENDIX E: PARENT FOCUS GROUP

The purpose of this focus group is to facilitate the active participation of parents/guardians in planning the Wellbeing programme in junior cycle. This focus group should, if possible, include parent representatives from across the school cohort. If it is not possible to convene a physical meeting with parents, then an online survey can be used.

1. INTRODUCTION (FULL GROUP ACTIVITY)

Explain to parents that Wellbeing is an area of learning in junior cycle and information about this can be accessed at <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing>. Explain that the purpose of the session is to hear their ideas and suggestions for this area of learning and that their feedback will be used to inform the on-going planning process.

2. BRAINSTORM: WHAT IS WELLBEING?

When you hear the word 'wellbeing' what words, phrases come into your mind?

Record feedback on a flip chart. Draw attention to the different aspects of wellbeing that are included. Identify where there are gaps and ask if they think these are important and would like to add them to the feedback.

3. BRAINSTORM: WHAT REALLY MATTERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

Feedback can be recorded on a flip chart, a graffiti wall, post-its.

4. THINK, PAIR, SHARE ACTIVITY

Individually, consider the following:

What can this school do to support students and their learning for wellbeing?

Pair up and identify the three most important ideas.

Pair up with another pair, share what both groups have identified and agree the two most important suggestions.

5. FEEDBACK

Take feedback from each group and record the different ideas on a flip chart. Take care not to repeat ideas.

Invite parents to rank in order the ideas, for themselves, where '1' is the most important idea. Everyone has two votes. They cast their two votes, giving their first one to the most important. (First and second preferences can be recorded using two different colour stickers.)

6. RANKING THE WELLBEING INDICATORS

The wellbeing indicators describe the skills and dispositions that a programme in Wellbeing is designed to develop in young people in junior cycle.

Individually, rank in order the indicators where '1' is the most important in your opinion.

In threes, discuss your rankings with the other parents. Agree which indicators(s) will require the most support and how this might happen in the school.

7. WHAT'S THE IMPORTANT LEARNING IN WELLBEING?

In small groups, consider the following question:

When you think about your child or young people in junior cycle: what do they need to learn about and be able to do in support of their wellbeing? How can this school plan for this kind of learning? Each group identifies the three most important ideas and records them on the flipchart.

Invite each group to share one of their ideas and these should be recorded.

8. TO FINISH: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Ask each parent to record what one big idea from today they would like to see considered in the school's planning for Wellbeing in junior cycle.

The one big idea from today that I would like to see considered is...

APPENDIX I: TEMPLATE TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN PLANNING UNITS OF LEARNING IN WELLBEING

Title of unit:	Duration
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Identified need:

Aim of the unit:

Learning outcomes:

Students will be able to...

Sample student learning experiences:

Links to Junior Cycle	
Statement of learning:	Example of related learning in the unit

Key skills in focus

Key skill	Element	Example of possible student learning activity

Indicators of Wellbeing in focus

Wellbeing indicator	Descriptors

Assessment

Useful resources and weblinks



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