



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

2018–2023

Revised October 2019



Prepared by the Department of Education and Skills

Coincheap, an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Éire, 2018. Ceadáítear macasamhlú do chúiseanna neamhthráchtála ar an gcoinníoll go dtugtar aitheantas don fhoinse.

Arna fhoilsiú ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Sráid Mhaoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1.

Tá an foilseachán seo ar fáil ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

# Foreword

The promotion of wellbeing is central to the Department's mission to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. As a society, we face a wide range of challenges that impact on our wellbeing. Promoting the wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared community responsibility and is everybody's business.

Schools play a key role in developing and enhancing young people's wellbeing. Consequently, I have placed a high priority on wellbeing promotion and a target that all schools and centres for education will have embedded a School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process by 2023. Implementation of this process will help our children and young people to realise their potential, to be resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their lives, to take care of their physical wellbeing and to have a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to their wider community, including their school community.

Current research indicates that what is most beneficial in the promotion of wellbeing in education is to adopt a preventative, whole school approach that is multi-component, and evidence-informed. There is overwhelming evidence that children and young people learn more effectively if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves, and feel supported.

We continue to be fortunate to have schools and centres for education already doing so much to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to enhance their wellbeing and deal with challenges including the implementation of the existing curricula. Schools and centres for education have a significant positive influence on the lives of our children and young people and it is a key part of the role of my Department to support them in their endeavours.

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* was first published in 2018. It provided a definition of wellbeing, and an overarching structure encompassing the existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing in education. It was informed by international research and practice and the many relevant policies and guidelines already available to schools and centres for education.

Since it was published, significant work has taken place to realise the vision set out in the Department's Wellbeing Policy. Through the collaboration of the Department's support services and other stakeholders and partners, the *Wellbeing Framework for Practice* has been finalised. This comprises the key areas of wellbeing in education on which schools are advised to focus, the indicators of success in each of these key areas and statements of effective practice to guide schools. In addition, a suite of resources to support schools in this important work has been developed.

Schools and centres for education are asked to include wellbeing promotion as a focus for their School Self-Evaluation (SSE). This should involve the development, implementation and review of wellbeing promotion in their schools, which includes tracking impact.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this work. I believe that the promotion of the wellbeing of our children and young people is central to my mission to enable individuals to achieve their full potential by empowering them through learning.



*Joe McHugh, T.D.  
Minister for Education and Skills*





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*When reference is made to 'schools and centres for education' it is understood that it refers to primary and post primary schools, including special schools, and alternative education settings such as Youthreach, Community Training Centres, Hospital Schools, High Support Special Schools and Youth Encounter Projects.*





## Key Messages

Schools and centres for education in Ireland play a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing through a range of activities and approaches to support the academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of all children and young people.

Many schools and centres for education have already developed innovative approaches to wellbeing promotion supported by strong leadership and quality teaching and learning.

Our education system is key to equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deal with challenges that impact on their wellbeing.

This policy statement provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in this area including the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)* curriculum at the primary level, and the *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme* at the post primary level.

This policy is for schools, centres for education, children and young people, parents/carers, support services, government departments, non-government organisations and all those with an interest in wellbeing promotion in education.

The Department of Education and Skills aims to ensure that the experience of children and young people from the early years and throughout their primary and post primary education will be one that enhances, promotes, values and nurtures their wellbeing.

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

- the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education
- all schools and centres for education will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to promote the wellbeing of all their children and young people
- Ireland will be recognised as a leader in this area

To implement this policy every school and centre for education is required by 2023, to use the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle.

Schools and centres for education will be supported in this process through using the *Wellbeing Practice Framework* and online *Wellbeing Resources*, and by the Department of Education Support Services.







# Section 1

## Wellbeing Policy Statement

# 1. Why we Need a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

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 the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs, and with other Government Departments and Agencies. The promotion of wellbeing in the education community is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills.

This statement sets out the policy of the Department of Education and Skills in relation to its role in the promotion of the wellbeing of our children and young people in schools and centres for education. Schools play a vital role, in the promotion of children and young people's academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development. Our education system is key to equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deal with challenges that may impact on their wellbeing.

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* sets out the Department's ambition and vision for wellbeing promotion, building on the many guidelines and frameworks that are already available to support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. This document has been informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders and international research and practice. They include:

- *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009)
- *Get Active Physical Education: Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People – A Guideline Framework* (DES, 2012)
- *Well-Being in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (DES, DOH & HSE, 2013)
- *Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (DES, DOH & HSE, 2015)
- *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES & NCA, 2015)
- *Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* (DES, Inspectorate, 2016)
- *Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools* (DES, Inspectorate, 2016)
- *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines* (DES & NCCA, 2017)
- *A Whole School Guidance Framework* (NCGE, 2017)
- *Youthreach Soft Skills Framework* (Gordon & County Meath ETB, 2015).

Children and young people learn more effectively and have better academic outcomes if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves and feel acknowledged and supported in their schools. National and international research highlights that the wellbeing of our children and young people is critical to their success in education and in life. It is clear from the research, which includes feedback provided by young people, that there are areas where improvements can be made. This *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* draws from that research and acknowledges the considerable strengths already in the system and in current practice.

This policy statement provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in this area. Its implementation is an ongoing process that will ensure the necessary focus on supporting children and young people in having a sense of purpose and fulfilment, and the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges. Data on success and impact of this policy will emerge after a period of time from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other sources in the



longer term. Evaluation and measurement of success is a challenge internationally and the Department is actively collaborating with international partners in developing a framework for evaluation. Schools and centres for education are supported in this document to identify their own targets for development and track their own success in implementation through use of statements of effective practice set out in the *Wellbeing Framework for Practice* in Section 2. This approach is aligned to the already familiar School Self-Evaluation process.

### Key Principles

The development of this policy has been guided by **key principles**, which in turn will guide its implementation and monitoring:

- **Child/Young person-centred:** The wellbeing needs and the best interests of our children and young people are a central focus of this policy. This requires us to respect and value the voice of children and young people and foster their belonging and connectedness to the school community. This ensures a sound developmental base for present and future wellbeing, as well as academic achievement.
- **Equitable, fair and inclusive:** All children and young people need access to equitable, fair and inclusive opportunities to develop their wellbeing in ways that are responsive and suitable to their particular needs and contexts. Practices need to be tailored, responsive and relevant, building on the existing strengths of children and young people, school staff, families and school communities. This means that practices will vary across schools and centres for education and from student to student.
- **Evidence-informed:** This policy promotes the use of evidence-informed practice, which brings together local experience and expertise with the best available evidence from research. It acknowledges that what works in one context may not be appropriate or feasible in another.
- **Outcomes focused:** This policy promotes continuous improvement practices and the use of data relating to outcomes to guide practice in our schools in relation to the promotion of wellbeing for all children and young people. This policy and framework for practice will ensure the use of a self-reflection process for the identification, monitoring and review of outcomes.
- **Partnership/Collaboration:** The wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared responsibility. Working in partnership with other departments and agencies is key to ensuring this policy is implemented.

This Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice outlines:

- What do we mean by wellbeing?
- The role of schools and centres for education in promoting wellbeing
- What is already happening in the system and in schools?
- What needs to happen next?

## 2. What do we Mean by Wellbeing?

There are many definitions of wellbeing. It is important that any definition of wellbeing communicates its multi-dimensional nature and draws on the insights of psychology, philosophy and sociology (O'Brien & O'Shea, 2016). Wellbeing does not necessarily mean the absence of stress or negative emotions in life or the absence of mental health difficulties. It is important that all members of the education community understand that everyone experiences vulnerability and a need for care at some stages in their journey through life. 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 process.

Wellbeing is comprised of many interrelated aspects including being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware (DES & NCCA, 2017).

The following definition of Wellbeing aims to take account of its multi-dimensional nature (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2001).

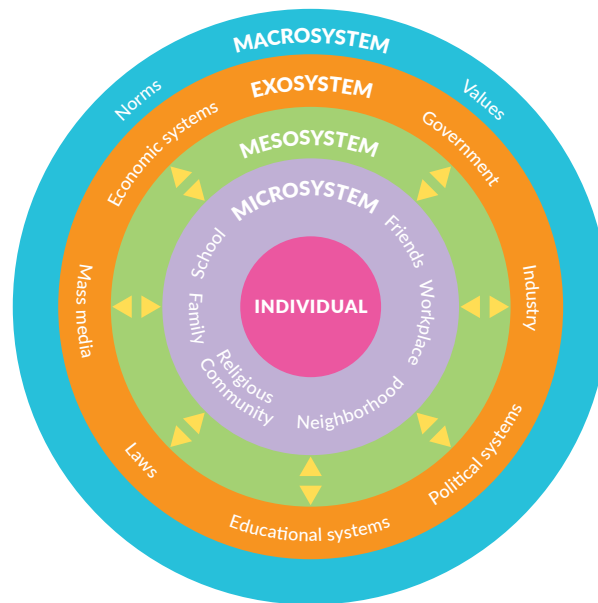
*Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.*

Wellbeing is experienced at a personal level but is associated with and connected to a broad range of risk and protective factors that exist at the individual, relational, community, cultural and societal levels. Our personal wellbeing and that of our local community is connected to the wider world. At a societal level, poverty, inequality, discrimination and oppression have been identified as significant risk factors associated with an increase in the vulnerability of the person and a decrease in their wellbeing (WHO, 2014). Conversely, a society which is built upon values of justice, equality, fairness, solidarity and respect for differences in an interconnected world is a significant protective factor in the development of wellbeing. At other levels, protective factors such as the individual's personal skills and competencies, the affectional ties they have with family, the existence of supportive relationships, safe communities and support systems provide positive contexts and multiple opportunities to support the development of wellbeing and enhance the capacity to cope in the face of adversity (DES, HSE & DOH, 2013, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development supports this view and offers a comprehensive systems-based understanding of wellbeing. It acknowledges the importance of the individual and his/her immediate relationships in their social context and in their wider community. This model demonstrates that to be human is to be relational and that wellbeing is always realised in a community.



Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2017).



#### INDIVIDUAL

Age, sex, health, etc.

#### MICROSYSTEM

Immediate environments

Direct interaction in activities, roles and relation with others and objects.

#### MESOSYSTEM

Connections between systems and microsystems.

#### EXOSYSTEM

Indirect environments

Systems that influence the individual indirectly through microsystems.

#### MACROSYSTEM

Social ideologies and values of cultures and subcultures.

#### TECHNO-SUBSYSTEM

Media influences  
Computers  
Internet  
Portable devices  
Social media  
Television  
Telephones

### 3. The Role of Schools and Centres for Education in Wellbeing Promotion

#### Why Schools Have a Role in Wellbeing Promotion

Wellbeing education occurs throughout life and in a variety of settings. Promoting the wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared community responsibility and is everybody's business. While many factors which influence wellbeing are located in the home, the school, situated within the community can be a powerful context for healthy development in enhancing protective factors and minimising risks. Schools play a key role in developing and enhancing young people's wellbeing as they spend a large proportion of their time in school during their formative years. Many schools and centres for education have already developed innovative approaches to wellbeing promotion supported by strong leadership and quality teaching and learning. Schools and centres for education are also well placed to further support children and young people by optimising opportunities to learn about wellbeing. As well as being a place of academic learning, schools and centres for education provide opportunities to develop friendships and social networks, to respectfully encounter diversity and access support structures.

There is a recognised connection between the cognitive and the emotional world of children and young people. In the school environment social and emotional skills do not exist in isolation but interact with cognitive skills development. The role of the school is now understood as a place which develops the 'whole child', who should leave school with a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of the 21st century (OECD 2014). Hargreaves, Shirley, Wangia, Bacon & D'Angelo (2018) identify the mutually supportive relationships between wellbeing and achievement and emphasise the importance of the reciprocal relationship between wellbeing and the accomplishments of children and young people. Schools are important settings for preparing children and young people to develop wellbeing and positive mental health, where emotional wellbeing may be understood as an educational end in and of itself.

Risk and protective factors relating to wellbeing promotion that are specific to the school/educational setting have been identified. In the school/educational setting wellbeing protective factors include:

- positive relationships with peers and teachers - including positive teacher classroom management strategies and a sharing of positive behaviour management practices with parents
- a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities
- opportunities for social and emotional learning including the development of attention and planning, self-awareness, self-management, relationship and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL 2015)
- opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills providing a sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Shonkoff et al, 2015)
- fostering expectations, recognising contributions, effort and achievement and providing opportunities for success
- wellbeing of school personnel
- protocols and support systems that proactively support children and their families should difficulties arise
- opportunities to develop the necessary skills to cope with using online technology in a safe and appropriate way
- opportunities to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to school work



In the school setting wellbeing risk factors include:

- disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation
- violence/aggression, bullying and relationship difficulties
- low achievement/learning difficulties/special educational needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs
- cultural differences
- school transitions
- poor connection between family and school
- harsh and inconsistent discipline
- lack of opportunity to develop social and emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills

Protective factors have been found to promote positive outcomes for children and young people, even when they have been exposed to risk factors (Cooper, Jacobs, 2011). Within the school context, therefore, implementing a preventative wellbeing promotion process that has a focus on strengthening school-based protective factors and minimising school-based risk factors is recommended.

### **How Can Schools Best Promote the Wellbeing of their Children and Young People?**

Research indicates that a multi-component, preventative, whole school approach to the promotion of wellbeing, with interventions at both universal and targeted levels, is the most beneficial and evidence-informed approach for schools and centres of education.

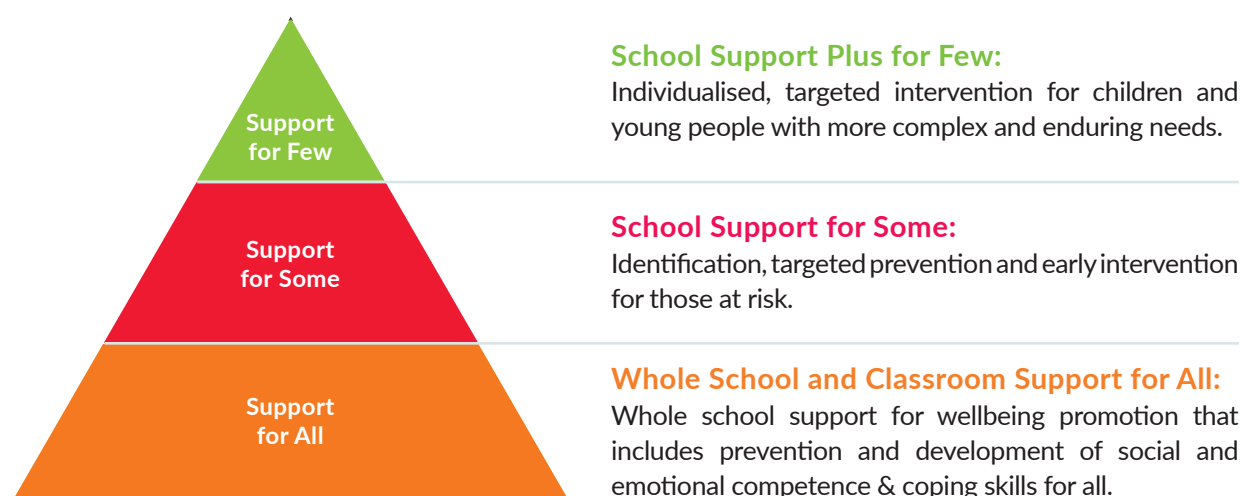
A whole school approach involves all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process of change to improve specific areas of school life that impact on wellbeing. Adopting a whole school approach has been found internationally to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for individual children and young people, including improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning, greater social cohesion, increased social capital and improvements to mental health (Weare & Gray, 2003).

A whole school approach supports the integration of systems within the school community. This creates capacity to be reflective and responsive to the needs of the school and the individuals who are part of the school community. Central to this is the role of staff and the importance of building professional capacity to engage in a reflective process to implement and sustain wellbeing policy and strategies from within. Research has shown that building professional capacity of teachers enhances not only the wellbeing and empowerment of teachers themselves, but has a positive impact on the systems which acknowledges the interaction of wellbeing and achievement (Hargreaves et al, 2018).

Research indicates that the whole school approach adopted should have specific components that promote school based protective factors and reduce school-based risk factors in the promotion of wellbeing:

- The nature of the school environment and connectedness has been found to be a key determinant of success in terms of wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education (Viner et. al, 2012). An environment that enhances competence and wellbeing is one that consciously fosters warm relationships, encourages participation, develops pupil and teacher autonomy and cultivates clarity about boundaries, rules and positive expectations.
- Wellbeing promotion should carry through to all aspects of teaching and learning. Children and young people spend most of their day in classrooms and, consequently, their daily experience of teaching and learning contributes greatly to their wellbeing. The teaching and learning must be democratic, inclusive, engaging, differentiated, fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunity for success. The importance of having a deliberate focus on the development of emotional and social competencies is also highlighted by research. The World Health Organisation (WHO), for example, recognises the need to promote wellbeing through interventions that promote competence and psychological strengths (WHO, 2005). Furthermore, social emotional learning programmes have been shown to significantly improve children and young people's social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and learning performance (Durlack, Weissbert, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Such programmes can be delivered universally, to all children and young people as part of the SPHE curriculum.
- In line with best practice, the Continuum of Support offers a flexible framework within which schools can address all educational needs, including wellbeing needs (DES & NEPS, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). This involves three levels set out in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Continuum of Support**



The Continuum of Support recognises that individual children and young people can have different needs at different times. Those at greater risk and with greater needs may require more specific and targeted support, in addition to the support provided to all children and young people in their class-based groups (Weare & Nind, 2011; Werner-Seidler, Perry, Calear, Newby & Christensen, 2017). Research advocates for the inclusion of **both universal and targeted approaches** and there is evidence that both universal (support for all) and targeted group support (support for some & few) in schools can effectively prevent and address anxiety and low mood for many children and young people (Werner-Seidler, Perry, Calear, Newby & Christensen, 2017; Das et al, 2016; Ahlen, Lenhard & Ghadri, 2015). Some children and young people will still require additional support from specialist support services external to the school. Effective implementation is assisted by having:

- ◆ a sound theoretical base and rationale
  - ◆ specific, well-defined goals
  - ◆ a direct and explicit focus on outcomes for each component of a whole-school approach (Weare & Nind, 2011)
- Coherent policy and planning at a whole school level is needed to ensure the successful delivery of a wellbeing promotion process in schools. School leaders play a critical role in implementation, including in the review and development of school structures to support that implementation. Collaborative cultures emerge when schools engage in reflective practices including appreciative inquiry (Cooperider, 2016, n.d.) to consider the implications of policy from the perspective of their own school systems and the systems in their communities. Such models are noted to enhance professional development through shared learning, to give voice to creativity and to build shared ownership by creating internal and external networks. The development of structures within our schools such as student support teams, supportive consultation models and the use of reflective practices will help schools to engage in collaborative practice and to consider their own systems from within. Organisational and management factors are as essential to a successful whole school approach to wellbeing promotion as are curricular and extra-curricular factors (NICE, 2009).
  - The role of the teacher has also been found to be paramount to children and young people's wellbeing (OECD, 2017), and reaches beyond teaching and learning. The relationship that teachers develop with the young person is a key influence on wellbeing development. Access to 'one good adult' who can guide and support a young person at a vulnerable time is an identified protective factor. Furthermore, support for the wellbeing of staff is also an essential element, and crucial to sustaining teacher/resource staff engagement, enthusiasm and ability to model resilience. It builds staff capacity to cope with challenges and adapt to change, and creates conditions to support and motivate staff to be effective.

This *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* helps to ensure effective implementation of a multi-component, whole school approach that positively impacts all children and young people in line with best international practice. There are many examples of wellbeing promotion already in place in schools and centres for education which are in keeping with this policy. In line with the *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines* (DES, NCCA, 2017), the Department considers that the following four areas of wellbeing promotion are key:

- culture and environment
- curriculum (teaching and learning)
- policy and planning
- relationships and partnerships



This is further outlined in Figure 2, adapted from the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (DES, NCCA, 2017) and informed by the HSE, Schools for Health Process (DES, DOH, HSE, 2013 & 2015).

**Figure 2: Whole School Approach - Four Key Areas Wellbeing Promotion**



## 4. The Role of Government in Wellbeing Promotion in the Education System

### Whole of Government Strategies for Wellbeing

The Government is committed to the vision outlined in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014), “for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future”.

Wellbeing promotion is a government priority as set out in *A Programme for a Partnership Government* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2017) and this is reflected through a range of strategies and cross-departmental groups. As one of the departments with a key role to play in this area, the Department of Education and Skills has a long history of supporting schools in promoting wellbeing through a range of policies, initiatives, frameworks, curricula and programmes. The Department has contributed to strategies that directly or indirectly promote wellbeing. These are set out in Appendix 1.

### Initiatives of the Department of Education and Skills Impacting Wellbeing Promotion

The Department provides a holistic approach of care and education for children and young people from birth to six years. This is informed by *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009) which encompasses four themes, Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking. Pre-school children with special educational needs are further supported through the access and inclusion model (AIM).

The quality framework *Looking at Our School* (DES & Inspectorate, 2016a, 2016b) articulates the Department’s holistic view of learning in schools. The framework sees wellbeing 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 enable active citizenship, lifelong learning and personal wellbeing. The framework asserts that in providing good quality learning experiences, 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.

*Looking at Our School* also provides a coherent whole-of-system approach to improving outcomes and experiences for all children and young people. It is used to assist schools in embedding self-evaluation processes and reflective practices and it provides a structure for implementing new initiatives. The domains and standards of *Looking at Our School* can therefore support schools in promoting and enhancing the wellbeing of all members of the school community.

Recent Departmental initiatives which also directly address the wellbeing of children and young people from a range of perspectives include:

- Reform of Junior Cycle including the introduction of Wellbeing as an area of learning
- Provision of additional funding for implementation of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Plan (2017). This includes the expansion of the NEPS service to include a number of NEPS initiatives to build school capacity for the promotion of social and emotional competence in all children and young people and to assist in the development of Student Support Teams

- Continued support for guidance counselling provision in post primary schools with the phased reinstatement of hours lost during the economic downturn
- Implementation of the Model for Allocating Special Education Teachers to Mainstream Schools and the establishment of the National Council for Special Education Support Service
- Continued focus on building capacity to support the implementation of the *Action Plan on Bullying* (2013)
- Revision of child protection procedures, in accordance with the *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DCYA, 2017)
- Publication of *Cosán: The National Framework for Teachers' Learning* (Teaching Council, 2016)
- Expansion of the Employee Assistance Scheme to include a teacher and special needs assistant wellbeing programme
- Development and roll-out of a Physical Literacy Framework through the Professional Development Service for Teachers' (PDST) Fundamental Movement Skills Programme
- Introduction of Physical Education as an optional Leaving Certificate examination subject
- Introduction of a Framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education for students who do not take Physical Education as a Leaving Certificate subject
- Review of Senior Cycle Programme underway
- Review of the Primary Curriculum underway

Other Departments, their bodies and agencies, also have a role in wellbeing promotion, and cross-departmental collaboration is essential for success. This is well established with regard to wellbeing. There are many examples of inter-department and inter-agency working as indicated by the publications and initiatives outlined in Appendix 1. A list of additional agencies, organisations and bodies with a role in wellbeing promotion is included in Table 6 (Appendix 1).

### Building Capacity in the System

Children and young people with additional needs and vulnerable groups are particularly at risk in the area of wellbeing (NCSE, 2014). The Department supports children and young people with special educational needs through a range of measures. The Department directly supports children and young people with special educational needs through the Model for Allocating Special Education Teachers to Mainstream Schools and the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme. Additional teaching support and extra staffing resources in centres for education are provided to meet the needs of these children and young people through group or individualised interventions. These additional staff help teachers to support children and young people with the highest level of need in the education system. While support services are provided to schools to build capacity to support the wellbeing of students, consideration also needs to be given as to how best to support centres for education in this regard. In addition, through the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Plan* (2017), the Department sets out a vision for education to become a pathway to better opportunities for those in communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion. The plan presents a set of objectives and actions to support children who are at greatest risk.



Alternative education provision is available to particular groups of young people through special schools, hospital schools, secure units and centres for education for children and young people at risk of early school leaving.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports schools to promote the wellbeing and mental health of all children and young people. While supporting all, NEPS prioritises support for those at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs. In line with best practice, NEPS encourages schools to adopt a whole school, continuum of support approach to provide for children and young people's wellbeing needs (DES & NEPS, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). This involves three levels: *Support for All*, *Support for Some* and *Support for Few*. NEPS achieves its objective through the provision of a tiered service delivery model encompassing casework and systemic work, to build overall school capacity.

A programme of continuing professional development and other supports in accordance with agreed work plans are provided by the Department which enrich the capacity of teachers to meet the needs of their children and young people. The Department's support services for teachers are as follows:

- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
- The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)
- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Centre for School Leadership (CSL)
- The National Council for Special Education Support Service
- Supervision for guidance counsellors in relation to their guidance counselling role (funded by Teacher Education Section)

## 5. The Department's Ambition & Vision for Wellbeing Promotion

This policy statement sets out the vision and ambition of this Department to ensure that the experience of our children and young people from the early years throughout their primary and post primary education will be one that enhances, promotes, values and nurtures their wellbeing. While good practices are already established in wellbeing promotion, realising the Department's ambition and vision for success will require focused attention. Supporting schools in this process of wellbeing promotion requires commitment across the education system and with the relevant partners of the education system.

The Department of Education and Skills, in reviewing its policy and approach to promoting the wellbeing of all children and young people in schools and centres for education, is setting out to ensure, that by 2023:

- *the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education*
- *all schools and centres for education will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to enhance the wellbeing of all*
- *Ireland will be recognised as a leader in wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education*

Key to this ambition is building on the good practice already in place and the capacity of every school and centre for education to assess, understand, evaluate and promote the key factors that will lead to optimal promotion of student wellbeing in their own school setting.

The Department will endeavour to support appropriate, high quality, approaches to the ongoing review and development of school culture and environment, teaching and learning, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships. The Department promotes a continuum of support approach and the provision of both universal and targeted interventions that promote school-based protective factors and reduce school-based risk factors. This multi-component, whole school approach will be key to ensuring that schools are places that augment the wellbeing of all children and young people by teaching and encouraging them to be active, responsible, connected, resilient, respected and aware (DES & NCAA, 2017).

### What are the Indicators of Success?

The Indicators of Success outlined in Table 2 below are the broad outcomes to which the Department aspires and wants schools and centres for education to accomplish. Schools and centres for education will be asked to use the Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success (Table 2) to identify their own strengths and targets for improvement, and to actively monitor their progress and outcomes in relation to wellbeing promotion over time. They will do this by accessing the opinions and views of all stakeholders throughout the process.

**Table 2: Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success**

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
<b>Culture &amp; Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.</li> <li>• Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum (Teaching &amp; Learning)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.</li> <li>• Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy &amp; Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.</li> <li>• Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships &amp; Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community.</li> <li>• All adults in schools and centres for education have an increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.</li> </ul>

These Indicators of Success in the four key areas of Wellbeing are further expanded upon as statements of effective practice in the *Wellbeing Framework for Practice* (Section 2) which will form the basis of the school's self-reflective Wellbeing Promotion Process.

Statements of Effective Practice in each of the four key areas of Wellbeing Promotion describe practices operating competently and efficiently at the whole school preventative level (Support for All) and also at the more specialised and individual intervention levels (Support for Some and Few). This is a key reference tool which helps to standardise the approach to reviewing wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education. It is envisaged that schools and centres for education will engage with the statements and adapt and develop the best practice items as they meet the needs in their own school community.



The statements of effective practice should enable school leaders and staff involved in internal and external evaluation to arrive at evidence-based evaluative judgements about the quality of aspects of provision. They will enable school leaders and staff to identify strengths and areas to target within the school system and therefore plan the next stage in the improvement journey.

A corresponding catalogue of supports and programmes offered by the Department and other agencies will be available for use. This will provide practical support and information in an online, easily navigable format and act as a key reference tool in selecting programmes and interventions when reviewing practice in relation to wellbeing promotion.

### What is a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process?

To implement this policy every school and centre for education is required, by 2023, to use the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle. Schools and centres for education will be supported in this process through using the *Wellbeing Framework for Practice* and *Wellbeing Resources*.

Schools firstly will select wellbeing promotion as a topic for SSE. At an information-gathering stage, schools will consult with and collect information from key stakeholders, including staff, children and young people, and parents/carers, relating to current practice in the key areas of wellbeing promotion. This information is essential in order to highlight positive aspects and strengths in their practice and identify areas for development – an analysis and judgement stage. This analysis will inform actions for wellbeing in a selected area. At an intervention stage, appropriate school interventions and strategies will be generated and agreed. Schools will incorporate these actions into their School Improvement Plan (SIP). Steps will be put in place to implement the agreed actions. At the monitoring stage actions will be reviewed on an ongoing basis which will assist schools in evaluating impact and tracking their progress in this process of continuous improvement.

### How is Success Measured?

International research proposes that measuring progress has proven to be a challenge, as wellbeing outcomes for children and young people are difficult to measure. Caution is advised in aiming to measure the wellbeing of individuals. Personal wellbeing is not like literacy and numeracy skills, it is not something that can be definitively achieved and tested. Wellbeing is a process of well-becoming. It is not static and it fluctuates over time and within different contexts. It can vary from day to day and from time to time.

We know, however, that using measurement to evaluate provision for wellbeing in a system gives an indication of its effectiveness, signposts the need for improvement, and shows the ability of the school or centre for education to reflect on its systems. Outcomes and accountability matter. Schools and centres for education need to be ambitious in establishing an understanding of what can be achieved in contributing to the wellbeing of children and young people.

A variety of measures of success to be considered when evaluating the outcomes of a school or centre for education's Wellbeing Promotion Process are suggested in Table 3. The Department is committed, over the coming years, to identifying and establishing clearer ways of measuring successful wellbeing promotion in schools.

**Table 3: Suggested Measures for Success**

Schools should consider what measures of success are appropriate for them. A list of possible measures to monitor for change are set out below.

- Student attendance
- Successful school completion
- Successful transitions of students
- Data gathered in school and centre for education (e.g. via survey, interview, checklists)
- Data gathered through consultation with children and young people, parents, teachers and other staff members
- Information from Inspection Reports

These are indicative only, and schools should decide on the measures that support their own vision for wellbeing in their school.

The DES Lifeskills Survey provides data on a number of school wellbeing promotion related issues, including physical activity, healthy eating, the implementation in schools of social, personal and health education (SPHE) and relationships and sexuality education (RSE), anti-bullying and substance use. In the longer term OECD data should also reflect the impact of implementation of the Wellbeing Promotion Process in Ireland.

The impact of the work of schools and centres for education combined with the impact of the work of other sectors will also be captured in the national data sets, such as the indicators for children and young people developed for and aligned with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020*. Furthermore, at present, an Outcomes Framework is in development as part of Healthy Ireland to provide evidence to support an objective assessment of its impact.

### **Overall Goal & High Level Actions**

It is the goal of this Department that by 2023 all schools and centres for education will have embedded a dynamic Wellbeing Promotion Process encompassing a whole school approach and reflecting the four key areas and indicators of successful wellbeing promotion. While good practices are already established in wellbeing promotion, realising the Department's ambition and vision for success will require focused attention. Supporting schools in this process of wellbeing promotion requires commitment across the education system. The following seven high level actions will support the realisation of this vision.

**Table 4: High Level Actions**

1. Strengthen and align current structures within the Department and between the Department and other relevant Departments to ensure the coordinated implementation of this <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i>
2. Plan and provide for the national roll-out of a professional development process to facilitate all schools and centres for education to engage with and embed a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process which builds professional capacity and collaborative cultures, from 2018-2023.
3. Provide for an aligned, comprehensive and easily-accessible programme of support for all schools and centres for education to address school-identified wellbeing promotion needs.
4. Consider how the system is meeting current and future teachers' learning needs relating to wellbeing promotion.
5. Develop a research based framework for the evaluation of wellbeing promotion in schools.
6. Improve use of supports for children and young people at key points of transition within and between education settings.
7. Promote the wellbeing of school and centre for education personnel.

The supporting implementation plan in Table 5 outlines sub-actions for each of the high level actions and time lines for delivery.

## 6. Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice: Implementation

The Department will work to ensure that implementation of this policy is supported from national to local level. It provides challenges and opportunities to build on existing good practice and will require commitment to achieve the stated ambition and vision for success.

Department agencies, state funded bodies and other stakeholders are key to ensuring the policy is implemented across the educational system. Commitment to collaborative actions and shared responsibility with other Government Departments including the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and their agencies is required.

Schools and centres for education are asked to commit to a process of self-reflection to identify existing strengths, opportunities and challenges in their practice and incorporate a Wellbeing Promotion Process into their existing planning and self-evaluation processes. Achievement of the vision will require change and improvement in how schools organise their approach to wellbeing promotion. Increased attention to implementing a multi-component whole school approach is an important element.

This Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice heralds more aligned services and supports from the Department in the area of Wellbeing Promotion for all schools and centres for education. It is the overarching context in which the implementation of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme is situated in post primary schools. Within this policy and framework implementation, it is expected that the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines will be the focus for implementation with the Junior Cycle cohort initially.

The Student Support Team and school leaders, will be responsible for implementation in post primary schools. At primary level school leaders will have responsibility for implementation, and in centres for education responsibility will lie with the centre coordinator.

### Wellbeing Policy Statement Implementation Plan

An Implementation Plan for 2018-2023 is set out below with details and timelines in respect of the high level actions. Effective realisation of this policy will require allocation of resources to ensure actions are carried out.

The initial programme of work will include:

- Trialling, evaluating and refining the use of the online *Wellbeing Resources* to support the Wellbeing Promotion Process
- Enhancing existing structures that support wellbeing implementation
- Engaging in consultation with the partners in education including children and young people
- Coordinating the work of support services and clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Building capacity in schools and centres for education in wellbeing promotion and promoting communities of practice and collaborative culture
- Raising awareness regarding supports for teacher wellbeing
- Focusing on improving guidance counselling provision



- Improving collaborative practice across three government departments and their agencies
- Publication of a circular to advise schools on the use of external programmes and facilitators to promote a whole school, multi-component approach to wellbeing promotion.

### **Supporting the Implementation of the Wellbeing Promotion Process**

*Wellbeing Resources* (available online), to support the Wellbeing Promotion Process will provide practical tools and information to support schools and centres for education. These *Wellbeing Resources* will include:

- *Statements of Effective Practice for Wellbeing Promotion*
- *Evaluation Tools: Parent/Carer, Child/Young Person and Staff Questionnaires*
- *Focus Group Guidelines* to facilitate access to the voice of key stakeholders
- Exemplars of good practice
- *A Wellbeing Practice Recording Template*
- List of current supports and resources relevant to wellbeing promotion for each of the four key areas
- Revised circular for schools to provide strengthened guidance on the use of programmes/external facilitators in school wellbeing promotion.

Using the *Wellbeing Resources*, schools and centres for education will monitor their work to improve wellbeing promotion. Progress on addressing the Statements of Effective Practice are specific and tailored to the wellbeing needs identified by stakeholders. They are evaluated by each individual school using the Wellbeing Promotion Process.

### **Supporting Schools and Centres for Education**

Existing support services will focus initially on co-ordination and clarification of roles and responsibilities. This will be overseen by the Wellbeing Implementation Group.

A plan for supporting schools in the roll-out of the implementation of this *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* will be developed by existing Departmental support services including:

- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
- The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)
- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Centre for School Leadership (CSL)
- The National Council for Special Education Support Service

The Department of Education support services will collaborate with the HSE's Schools' Health Promotion Service to further support the roll-out of this Wellbeing Promotion Process.

### **How will the Policy Implementation be Monitored by the Department?**

The Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Steering Committee has responsibility for the oversight of the implementation, coordination and review of this *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice*. The committee is comprised of representatives from the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) Unit, Teacher Education Section (TES), the Inspectorate and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The work of the Steering Committee is coordinated by NEPS. The implementation of this Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice will be supported by a Wellbeing Advisory Group, which will include external membership. A Wellbeing Implementation Working Group will lead this work and provide regular progress reports to the Steering Committee and to the Minister. The Wellbeing Implementation Working Group will focus on the high-level actions and sub-actions set out in Table 5 which are designed to address the opportunities and challenges identified in this Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

The Wellbeing Implementation Working Group will also set out a plan for facilitating quality engagement and communication with relevant stakeholders. It will convene a consultative group of key stakeholders and partners to devise an engagement strategy with regard to implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*. Coordinated activity with other Departments will be facilitated as appropriate, through Implementation and Steering Group mechanisms and the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project<sup>1</sup> (CES, 2018) structures which are in development.

### **Wellbeing Policy Implementation Plan 2018-2023**

The following Wellbeing Policy Implementation Plan will guide the work of implementation. Sub-actions, outlined in a sequential way in Table 5, will progress the work of achieving the high level actions.

1 The Pathfinder Project aims to improve the collaborative working of three Departments – Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education and Skills (DES), Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) as related to Youth Mental Health. The work will focus on implementation of agreed actions, including the alignment of services and publicly available information, consistent referral protocols to government and non-government services, managing waiting lists and access to intermediary services for children and young people.

**Table 5: Wellbeing Implementation Plan 2018–2023**

	High Level Actions and Sub-actions	Date Begin	Date Due	By Whom?
<b>1</b>	<b>Strengthen and align current structures within the Department and between the Department and other relevant Departments to ensure the coordinated implementation of this <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i>.</b>			
1.1	Consider and agree an optimal structural arrangement within the Department of Education and Skills for effective implementation of this <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .	Q3 2018	Q3 2018	DES
1.2	Establish a Wellbeing Implementation Working Group with a Wellbeing Coordinator to lead the work of supporting implementation of the <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> .	Q3 2018	Q3 2018	DES
1.3	Develop a cross-departmental structure to facilitate consultative processes and protocols between the Department and the education partners, the DOH/HSE and DCYA/Tusla, and with other relevant departments, as appropriate.	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	DES
1.4	Convene a Wellbeing Implementation Advisory Group of key stakeholders including children and young people, and external experts, to advise on implementation of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.	Q1 2019	Q4 2023	DES
1.5	Support the work of the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project as it develops.	TBA	Q4 2023	DOH DES
1.6	Contribute to progressing the development of clear pathways to a continuum of services provided for children and young people by the Departments of Health, Children & Youth Affairs and Education and Skills.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DOH/HSE DES/NCSE DCYA/ TUSLA
1.7	Publish within the Action Plan for Education Reporting Framework the progress made in delivering quarterly actions.	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	DES

	High Level Actions and Sub-actions	Date Begin	Date Due	By Whom?
2.	<b>Plan and provide for the national roll-out of a professional development process to facilitate all schools and centres for education to engage with and embed a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process which builds professional capacity and collaborative cultures from 2018-2023.</b>			
2.1	In consultation with relevant partners, develop a CPD work plan for the introduction of the Wellbeing Promotion Process that promotes communities of practice, collaborative cultures across clusters of schools and the promotion of innovation and creativity.	Q1 2019	Q3 2019	DES
2.2	Trial the <i>Wellbeing Resource</i> across clusters of schools and centres for education, for refinement and finalisation.	Q3 2018	Q4 2019	DES
2.3	Implement a national roll-out of supports for the introduction of the Wellbeing Promotion Process to all schools and centres for education between 2019 and 2023, which promotes communities of practice, collaborative cultures and the promotion of innovation and creativity.	Q1 2020	Q4 2023	DES
3.	<b>Provide for an aligned, comprehensive and easily-accessible programme of support for all schools and centres for education to address school-identified wellbeing promotion needs.</b>			
3.1	Map existing resources and supports available for continuing professional development in the area of Wellbeing, currently provided by DES support services and HSE Schools' Health Promotion Service.	Q3 2018	Q2 2019	DES
3.2	Conduct a gap analysis of this map, and make recommendations and provision for the implementation of priority actions to ensure clear pathways to support and resources are made available to all schools and centres for education for the promotion of Wellbeing.	Q2 2019	Q4 2019	DES
3.3	Based on the mapping exercise and gap analysis provide clear information to schools and centres for education regarding roles and responsibilities of support services in relation to wellbeing promotion together with details of CPD provision.	Q1 2020	Q4 2023	DES

	High Level Actions and Sub-actions	Date Begin	Date Due	By Whom?
3.4	Initiate inter-departmental collaboration in developing a web portal to facilitate schools' access to all supports for the implementation of the <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice</i> in schools and centres for education in an easily navigable and accessible format.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES
3.5	Consider the need for the development of evidence-based social and emotional learning programmes with a sound theoretical and psychologically-informed rationale and specific, well-defined goals. Make recommendations and plan for their implementation.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES
3.6	Provide more comprehensive and strengthened guidance to schools on the effective use of external programmes and facilitators relating to Wellbeing.	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	DES
3.7	Extend focused support for 20 DEIS post-primary schools in supporting the development of Student Support Teams.	Q2 2018	Q3 2019	DES
3.8	Extend focused support for all post-primary schools in supporting the development of Student Support Teams.	Q3 2019	Q4 2023	DES
3.9	Finalise the development of resource materials to support schools in development and review of Student Support Teams.	Q3 2018	Q4 2019	DES
3.10	Identify and implement actions to enhance the voice of children and young people in schools.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES
3.11	Identify and implement actions to enhance engagement of parents/carers in the Wellbeing Promotion Process in schools.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES
3.12	In the context of the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project, examine the need for the provision of therapeutic interventions for children and young people.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	Pathfinder Project (DES/ DCYA/ DOH)
3.13	Collect and review data on the use of Guidance Counselling resources in post primary schools and identify potential recommendations for improvement.	Q2 2018	Q4 2018	DES
3.14	Review the content and delivery of relationship and sexuality curriculum with a view to recommending areas for attention.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES NCCA



	High Level Actions and Sub-actions	Date Begin	Date Due	By Whom?
3.15	Continue to support DEIS schools in promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people through the DEIS Action Plan.	Q2 2018	Q4 2023	DES
<b>4</b>	<b>Consider how the system is meeting current and future teachers' learning needs relating to wellbeing promotion.</b>			
4.1	Within the context of emerging plans for CPD in the Department, develop a research based framework for the evaluation of continuing professional development.	Q3 2018	Q4 2023	DES
4.2	Consider the impact of the reconceptualised Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes on wellbeing, in the context of the Teaching Council's review of the criteria and guidelines for ITE providers.	Q4 2018	Q4 2020	DES
<b>5</b>	<b>Develop a research based framework for the evaluation of wellbeing promotion in schools.</b>			
5.1	A framework for evaluation of wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education will be finalised.	Q3 2018	Q4 2020	DES
<b>6</b>	<b>Improve use of supports for children and young people at key points of transition within and between education settings.</b>			
6.1	Consider, agree and implement actions needed to ensure the retention of vulnerable children and young people in the system, and particularly at critical transition stages in the education and training system, building on existing resources.	Q2 2018	Q4 2023	DES
6.2	Consider actions needed to support schools and centres for education in effective management of confidential information.	Q1 2019	Q4 2023	DES
6.3	Review and strengthen supports particularly for vulnerable children and young people, at key points of transition.	Q2 2019	Q4 2023	DES
<b>7</b>	<b>Promote the wellbeing of school and centre for education personnel.</b>			
7.1	Review the current range of wellbeing supports available to staff with a view to ensuring best practice in early intervention and prevention for supporting positive occupational health and wellbeing.	Q2 2019	Q4 2019	DES



# Section 2

## Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice

The Statements of Effective Practice comprise actions for primary and post primary schools, and centres for education.  
It is important to note that all statements are not applicable to each education setting.  
The statements have been finalised following consultation.

## Background – The Policy

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice – Revised (2019)* builds on the good work already happening in schools to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to enhance their wellbeing and deal with life's challenges.

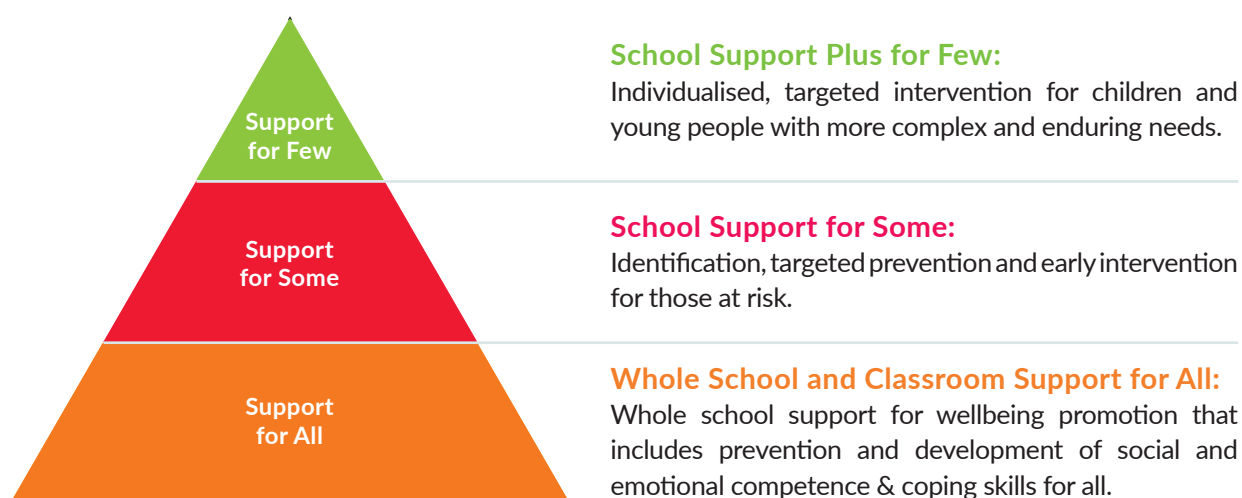
The policy recognises that wellbeing education occurs throughout life and in a variety of settings. While many factors which influence wellbeing are located in the home and the community, the school can be a powerful context for healthy development in enhancing protective factors and minimising risks.

The policy provides schools with a whole school, multicomponent and preventative approach to wellbeing promotion, based on international research and best practice.

**A whole school approach** involves all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process of change to improve specific areas of school life that impact on wellbeing. Adopting this approach has been found internationally to produce a wide range of educational and social benefits for children and young people. A whole school approach supports the integration of systems within the school community and creates capacity to be reflective and responsive to the needs of the school and members of the school community.

A whole school approach focuses on **promoting wellbeing for all members of the school community** and includes **preventative approaches**. Embedded in the whole school approach and in line with the Department's Continuum of Support (Table 6) is the recognition that members of the school community can have different needs at different times. Those at greater risk and with greater needs may require more specific and targeted support, in addition to the support provided to all members at the universal level.

**Table 6: Continuum of Support**



The Department advocates a **multicomponent approach** to wellbeing promotion to ensure that all of the key areas that contribute to wellbeing promotion in schools are given a focus. The four key areas for action are outlined in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Whole School Approach: Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion**





### Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice

The Indicators of Success outlined in Table 7 are the broad outcomes to which the Department aspires and wants schools and centres for education to accomplish.

**Table 7: Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success**

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
<b>Culture &amp; Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.</li><li>• Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.</li></ul>
<b>Curriculum (Teaching &amp; Learning)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.</li><li>• Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.</li></ul>
<b>Policy &amp; Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.</li><li>• Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.</li></ul>
<b>Relationships &amp; Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community.</li><li>• All adults in schools and centres for education have an increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.</li></ul>

The Indicators of Success are further expanded upon in the statements of effective practice which appear later in this document, which provide a set of standards for wellbeing practices across the Continuum of Support at the whole school preventative level (Support for All) and also at the targeted and more individualised levels (Support for Some and Few).

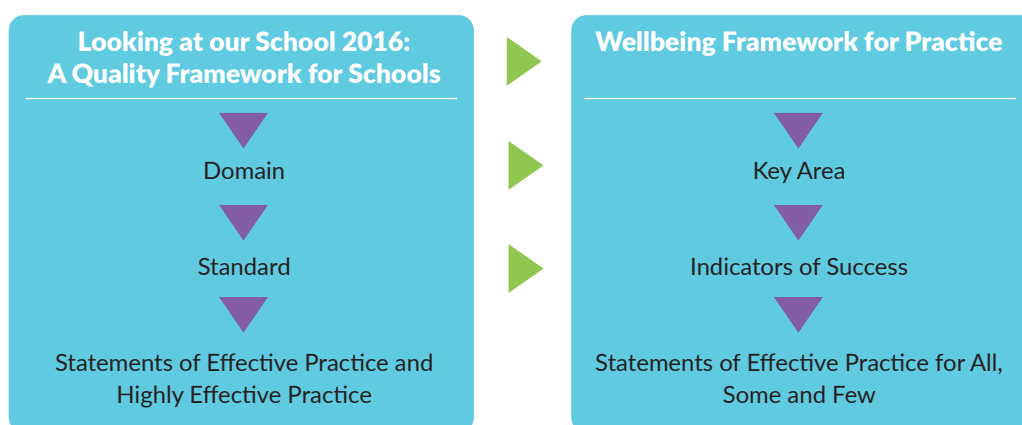
They are key reference tools which help to standardise the approach to implementing and reviewing wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education. *The Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice* will enable school leaders and staff to arrive at evaluative judgements about the quality of aspects of provision, identifying strengths and areas to target within the school system and plan the next stage in the improvement journey.

### School Self-Evaluation and the Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice

To implement this policy every school and centre for education is required by 2023, to use the six-step School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process with the Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice, to consider their existing provision for wellbeing under each of the four key areas (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships), and to devise and implement a plan for improvement in one key area, as appropriate for the school. In devising and implementing the improvement plan, schools and centres for education should refer to the statements of effective practice in key areas as, relevant to the specific focus they have chosen.

The Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice is closely aligned to the standards set out in *Looking at Our School (LAOS) 2016*. In order to assist schools in their use of the SSE process to engage with Wellbeing, Figure 4 shows how the language in the *Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice* maps to the language of LAOS.

**Figure 4: Linking Looking at our Schools and the Wellbeing Framework for Practice**



The example on the next page demonstrates how these two frameworks are aligned in more detail.

**Figure 5: Example of alignment of Looking at our Schools and the Wellbeing Framework for Practice**



The SSE process provides a framework for schools when gathering and analysing evidence, identifying needs and setting targets for achievable outcomes. It is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review, focused on school improvement. The six-step process enables schools to gather and use evidence to identify meaningful and specific targets and actions for improvement. It enables them to create and implement improvement plans, to measure their progress, and to identify their achievements. This is further detailed in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Using the SSE process with the Wellbeing Framework for Practice



# Statements of Effective Practice

## Key Area 1 - Culture and Environment

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

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

- Children, young people, and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.

### Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

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



## Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

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

\*This list is not exhaustive

## Key Area 2 - Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

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

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

- Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all.
- Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.

### Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

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

## Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

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

## Key Area 3 - Policy and Planning

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

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

- Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion.
- Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.

### Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

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

## Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

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



## Key Area 4 - Relationships & Partnerships

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

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

- Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community.
- All adults in schools and centres for education have an increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.

### Wellbeing Statements of Effective Practice for All

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

## Statements of Effective Practice For Some & Few

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

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## Acronyms

AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
CAP	Curriculum and Assessment Policy
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DOH	Department of Health
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education Settings
ETB	Education and Training Board
HSE	Health Service Executive
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
OECD	Organisation of Economic and Development
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social Personal and Health Education
TES	Teacher Education Section
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Appendix 1

## Government Strategies and Cross-Departmental Collaboration

### Strategies

Other Departments, their bodies and agencies, also have a role in wellbeing promotion, and collaboration is essential for success. A range of government strategies directly or indirectly promote wellbeing as follows:

- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014 - 2020) developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 - 2025<sup>2</sup> developed by the Department of Health
- Connecting for Life Ireland's Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2020)
- National Sexual Health Strategy (2015 - 2020)
- Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project (2017)
- Youth Mental Health Taskforce (2017)
- A Healthy Weight for Ireland - Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 - 2025
- National Physical Activity Plan (2016)
- National Carers' Strategy: Recognised Supported Empowered (2012)
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017 - 2021)
- National Drugs Strategy: Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery (2017 - 2025)
- Irish Aid Development Education Strategy (2017 - 2023)
- National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014 - 2010)
- Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2016 - 2021)
- Equality and Diversity Guidelines for Childcare Providers (2016)
- Creative Ireland Programme (2017 - 2022)
- LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (2018)

<sup>2</sup> The Department supports the Healthy Ireland Strategy through the cross departmental groups for example Healthy Ireland Cross Sectoral Group, Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group and National Physical Activity Plan Implementation Group

### ***Cross-Departmental Collaboration***

Cross-departmental collaboration with regard to wellbeing is well established and there are many examples of inter-department and inter-agency working as indicated by the following publications and initiatives:

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, (2009)
- Well-Being in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DCYA, DOH, HSE, 2013)
- Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025
- Framework for Developing a Health Promoting School Primary and Post Primary (2013)
- Aistear Síolta Practice Guide (NCAA, 2015)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Promotion (DES, DCYA, DOH, HSE, 2015)
- Blueprint for the Development of Children and Young People's Services Committees (2015)
- National Youth Mental Health Taskforce Report (DOH, 2017)
- Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children (DCYA, 2017)
- Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project
- Healthy Lifestyle Guidance for Schools
- Active School Flag
- Lifeskills Survey 2015
- National Physical Activity Plan 2016
- A Healthy Weight for Ireland - Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 – 2025

The following cross-departmental agencies, organisations and bodies also have a role in wellbeing promotion

**Table 8: Additional agencies and bodies relevant to Wellbeing Promotion**

Agencies and Bodies linked to the Departments of Education and Skills, Health and Children and Youth Affairs relevant to wellbeing promotion
<p><b>Department of Education and Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Council for Special Education (NCSE)</li> <li>• National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)</li> <li>• The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)</li> <li>• Education and Training Boards (ETB)</li> <li>• SOLAS</li> <li>• Association of Teachers Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI)</li> <li>• Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)</li> <li>• National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)</li> <li>• The Teaching Council</li> <li>• Inspire and Med Mark Employee Assistance Service and Wellbeing Programme</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of Health (DOH)/ Health Service Executive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Health Promotion Teams</li> <li>• Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</li> <li>• Speech and Language Services</li> <li>• Primary Care School Team (Public Health, Dental Health, Immunisations )</li> <li>• National Office for Suicide Prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Family Agency TUSLA, including Education Welfare Service, Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme (in schools participating in the DES, DEIS initiative)</li> <li>• Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) - A structure to co-ordinate and improve services for children and young people through local and national interagency working</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Department Policy Documents and Reports Linked to Wellbeing Promotion

- SPHE Curriculum Primary (1999)
- SPHE Curriculum Junior Certificate (2000)
- Student Councils: A Voice for Students (2002)
- Whole School Guidance Planning (2004)
- Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004)
- Síolta: National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (2006)
- A Continuum of Support for Primary Schools (NEPS, 2007)
- Inclusion of Students with Special Education Need: Post Primary Guidelines (2007)
- Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools (NEWB, 2008)
- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009)
- A Continuum of Support for Post Primary Schools (2010)
- Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties, A Continuum of Support (2010)
- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Report (2010)
- Aistear, Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2010)
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2011)
- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020)
- Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, The Teaching Council (2016)
- School Self-evaluation Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2012)
- Get Active Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People: A Guideline Framework (2012)
- Healthy Ireland 2013-2025 (DOH, 2013)
- Guidelines for VECs and Youthreach and Community Training Centres on using the Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services Fund (2013)
- Schools for Health Frameworks and Handbooks (HSE, 2013)
- Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools (2013)
- Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014)
- Aistear Síolta Practice Guide (2015)
- STEM Education Policy Statement (2017-2026)
- Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers
- Occupational Health Strategy for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants (2016/7)
- Taskforce on Youth Mental Health Report (2017)
- Critical Incidents Guidelines for Youthreach and Community Training Centres (DES, 2017)
- A Profile of Learners in Youthreach (DES, 2017)
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE): A Whole-School Guidance Framework (2017)
- Wellbeing in Youthreach and Centres of Education Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, in draft)

This Policy Statement and Framework for Practice is  
available on the Department of Education website:  
[www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie)



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