



Scoil Aireagail

Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

Wellbeing is now officially recognised as an important feature of the lives of students, through the new Junior Cycle. Scoil Aireagail has traditionally sought to provide its students with a positive, safe and caring environment. The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) will help further embed wellbeing in our school where existing policies, together with our school's culture and ethos, will all contribute to making wellbeing more visible to our students.

The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (NCCA 2017) has helped inform Scoil Aireagail's policy in this area. The guidelines states that "student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community".

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of Scoil Aireagail (Mission Statement)

"Scoil Aireagail is committed to the educational welfare of its entire community. This includes staff, students, parents and the wider population we serve. We will respect and support the needs of staff and so enable them to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively. We will provide a holistic education in which each student is valued and their individual needs are recognised and catered for. We will provide a structured, caring environment enabling each student to reach their full potential and enter society as a responsible adult. This mission statement has been agreed by the staff, parents and Board of Management, the values driving the very existence of the school. Scoil Aireagail is aware of and intends to discharge its statutory obligations as a recognised school, particularly those set out in section 9 of the Educational Act 1998."

Our Mission Statement is consistent with the principles of wellbeing in that it embraces the ambition of providing a holistic education. It recognises the individual needs of students, together with the importance of a caring environment and our objective of enabling our students to reach their full potential. We will continually strive to provide students with the structures, programmes, curriculum and policies to enter society as responsible adults.

Scope of our Wellbeing Policy

- Comply with DES Circular 0015/2017 which mandates 300 timetabled hours of Wellbeing over the three-year Junior Cycle from September 2017, increasing to 400 hours by 2020.
- Reflect on our current provision of Wellbeing in our policies and curriculum
- Be pro-active in examining and considering additional means to foster Wellbeing generally, aligned to the identified subject areas of PE, SPHE, CSPE, Guidance and other units of work.
- Collaborate with the whole-school community in development of Wellbeing policy
- Build on staff capacity by continuing to facilitate CPD in this area

Aspects of Wellbeing in Scoil Aireagail



The Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2017 (NCCA) identify four key aspects of Wellbeing in schools generally. These help to analyse the current provision for Wellbeing, and guides schools in where they can make improvements. The four aspects are:

1. **Culture**
2. **Curriculum**
3. **Policy & Planning**
4. **Relationships**

Culture

School mission statement and ethos: Scoil Aireagail's mission statement as outlined above is very much consistent with the principles underlying Wellbeing. Our current policies help to maintain a culture of inclusivity, tolerance and progression. We are a multi-denominational school, with respect as our key value. The personal welfare of all members of our school community is always paramount, with students' right to learn at the core of our daily lives.

Physical and social environment: The schools internal has features that help to contribute to a positive environment and mind-set:

- Carmelite canteen opens from 8am, with social and dining areas. Students can sit prior to classes starting in the morning and eat during morning and lunch breaks.
- Carmelite canteen also used for supervised study each afternoon, where students can study in a quiet and comfortable setting.
- Outside seating is available for students with some benches in the central area, outside the main building. Some of this furniture however does need replacing.
- Student work often on display along the corridors – highlighting some of the excellent work and endeavour of students.
- A variety of posters is on general display to help highlight important issues such as mental health and wellbeing.
- Lunch-time activities are scheduled on a regular basis – to help promote the extra-curricular. These include sport and non-sport such as chess club, student council meetings and computer club. These are co-ordinated by the lead teachers.
- The sports hall remains open for senior students to use during lunchtime.
- The outside sports facilities remain available for all students to use during morning and lunch breaks.
- A quiet room is made available, when necessary, in the event where a student(s) may be upset and/or need some quiet time.

Classroom culture: Through engagement with relevant CPD, including JCT in-service, teachers are very aware of student wellbeing – and its importance within the classroom. A positive physical environment is maintained in classrooms primarily by ensuring the following, as far as physically possible:

- Clean and well maintained
- Furniture kept in an orderly and structured manner, as per teachers' preferences
- Well ventilated, and adequate heating
- As much natural light as possible
- Posters and student work displayed on wall

Teaching, learning and assessment: In order to contribute positively to student wellbeing, the following should remain features of teaching and learning in our classrooms:

- Teacher continues to implement our SIPs already established
- Student engagement with subject matter is maximised, through the use of a variety of teaching methodologies
- Teacher takes account of student views and experiences
- Teaching is inclusive, in that specific needs of minority student groups are addressed
- Teacher retains high expectations of his/her students. Studies show the importance of how high expectations can contribute to student attainment
- Teacher is encouraging and positive
- Teacher provides opportunities of success to all, inclusive of all levels of student ability
- Differential learning is provided
- A variety of assessment techniques is utilised. This may include projects, presentations, self and peer assessment
- Constructive feedback consistently provided to students

Curriculum

CSPE, PE and SPHE: While wellbeing is a whole-school approach in Scoil Aireagail the three subject areas of CSPE, PE and SPHE are central. The 'Wellbeing Guidelines' place a strong emphasis on these subjects and give specifics on how they should be timetabled at Junior Cycle level. Student progress and attainment in these areas is highlighted in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

CSPE helps students understand how their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others is connected. Students will see wellbeing as not exclusively about the individual, but also about the relationship between individual wellness, wellness of others and wellbeing of the environment. CSPE also prompts students to consider the many social, political, cultural and economic factors that affect individual and collective wellbeing.

PE provides students with enjoyable learning opportunities where they develop confidence and competence to perform in a range of physical activities. Scoil Aireagail strives to embed to its junior students the importance of regular participation in physical activities. All students should consider the importance of lifestyle choices, regular exercise, healthy eating, stress management, relaxation and positive mental health. PE will serve to introduce such topics to students.

SPHE aims to develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build on student's capacity to

develop and maintain healthy relationships. Skills such as self-management, communication, coping and problem solving are covered here. Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of Junior Cycle SPHE. Its aim is to help students acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality. Schools are required to teach RSE as part of SPHE in each year of the Junior Cycle SPHE programme.

Guidance: Our Guidance Policy outlines how students are supported and guided throughout their time in Scoil Aireagail. In terms of important decision-making such as subject options in 1st Year and 5th Year, processes are in place to help students make informed decisions. Teachers, our guidance counsellor, management and parents are involved in these processes – each providing advice and support to students. This support structure contributes to students' wellbeing in a time of potential stress, where it is important students make decisions best suited to their individual needs and abilities.

Guidance is very much a whole-school approach in Scoil Aireagail in that all staff has a role to play. Subject teachers, together with Class Tutors and Year Heads, are at the front line in terms of advising, helping, supporting and guiding students on a daily/weekly basis. Morning assemblies with Class Tutors contribute to students' wellbeing in terms of setting an organised tone for the day, reminding students of issues/events, advising groups and individuals of important matters etc.

The pastoral care team have weekly timetabled meetings where student wellbeing is discussed.

Formal guidance classes are timetabled for our senior students - TY, 5th and 6th Years. The guidance counsellor also meets with students on an individual basis, when necessary. This may involve personal, educational or career-based counselling.

Other subjects and learning experiences: In addition to the three subject areas of CSPE, PE and SPHE Scoil Aireagail provides two other subjects at Junior Cycle, under the umbrella of wellbeing: ICT & Learning to Learn

ICT classes provides our 1st Years with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage confidently in digital based learning. As the use of ICT is set to increase as a teaching and learning tool, we need to prepare our students to respond positively to further advances and technologies. These classes will also deal with the issues of online safety.

Learning to Learn is a programme devised by 'The Super Generation'. It is designed to assist students in knowing themselves better as learners, being more organised and confident along with having a proven study system and approach to learning. It is aimed at embedding a culture of learning and study – as part of the wellbeing provision at Junior Cycle.

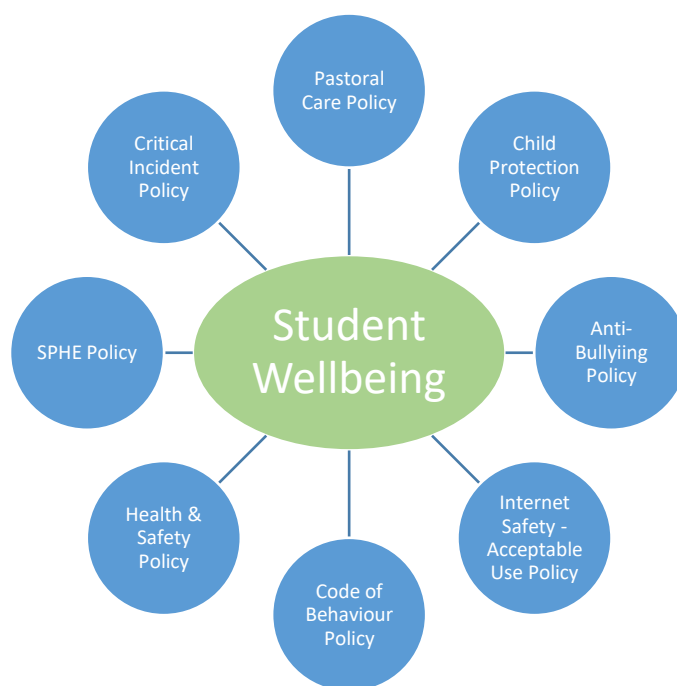
Other learning experiences provided to our students, which contribute to wellbeing, include:

- Visiting speakers on a variety of wellbeing-related topics such as online safety, cyber bullying, motivational speakers, study skills, suicide awareness and prevention, mental health etc.
- Courses or events such as self-defence, music/dance, swimming, orienteering etc.
- A host of extra-curricular activities and events held throughout the year

Extra-curricular and co-curricular: Scoil Aireagail is proud of the strong extra-curricular element it provides to all its students. A good range of sport and non-sport activities remain an important part of the lives of our students. From 1st Year, students are advised to get involved in at least one activity. Co-curricular elements include our student council, school prefects and clubs such as computer and chess clubs. The general objective each year is to provide an activity/interest to suit the entire cohort of students. Other successful well-being initiatives include our healthy eating week, Amber Flag activities and our annual sports day. Physical wellbeing is also important and the canteen has worked significantly to reduce the number of high sugar products available and to provide attractive alternatives to students.

Policy & Planning

School Policies: All Scoil Aireagail's policies are student-centred, where the educational experience and wellbeing of our students remain paramount. Each policy contributes in some way to the wellbeing of our students. Below are some of the policies most directly related to wellbeing generally:



School self-evaluation: Scoil Aireagail is pro-active in identifying possible areas of improvement in our practices. To date a number of areas have been our 'focus' where, after investigation and research, School Improvement Plans have been devised. These areas of focus include literacy, numeracy, assessment practices and homework/revision. Our School Improvement Plans outline the specifics, where the six-step procedure was followed:



Subject and whole-school planning: Teachers in each subject departments meet regularly throughout the school year. The pastoral care/senior management team meet weekly. Issues, including student wellbeing, are discussed and an appropriate whole-school response devised if necessary. In subject and whole-school planning the six indicators of wellbeing are taken into account:



Continual Professional Development (CPD) planning: Scoil Aireagail has a strong and meaningful engagement with CPD. Our CPD Policy outlines our approach to the continuous upskilling of staff. Management encourages and facilitates staff to attend CPD according to both the needs of the school and the interests of the staff. Some of the CPD most relevant to wellbeing, which staff have recently attended include:

- JCT – general and subject specific
- Magenta Principles (Mike Hughes)

- Suicide awareness and prevention
- Wellbeing
- 1st Aid
- Leadership
- School self-evaluation
- Special Educational Needs
- Student council/student leadership
- GDPR
- Careers
- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Health & Safety

Relationships

Student/teacher relationships: Scoil Aireagail have policies and processes in place to help maintain a good working relationship between student and teacher. The 'Positive Behaviour' policy rewards good work in a variety of areas for our younger students. It provides the Class Tutor with a positive element to morning assemblies. Students are aware that all teachers contribute to this process and is now well established within our school.

Teachers remain approachable from the perspective of our students, where they are reminded regularly of the importance to report any issues of concern to a member of staff. Students will realise that any matters such as allegations of bullying are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and promptly, and will involve school sanctions if substantiated.

Our 6th Year mentoring system is very important in terms of the wellbeing of our senior students. Teachers volunteer to act as a mentor for a particular student for that year. The mentoring teacher will meet with the student several times during the year, where they will listen to any concerns that student may have. As 6th Year tends to be the most stressful time in a student's school life, Scoil Aireagail considers it important to provide this additional service which supplements the role of our guidance counsellor.

Peer relationships: Prior to entering Scoil Aireagail the 1st Year groups are strategically planned. Typically, our 1st Years consist of two groups which remain together in those groups for most subjects in their first year. The criteria for arranging the groups include:

- Gender balance
- Numerical balance as far as possible
- SEN students distributed between both groups including consideration to students who have access to SNAs.

As students mainly come from a high number of local primary school with small enrolment figures, boys from the same primary school remain in the same group. Likewise, girls from the same primary school remain in the same group. The idea here is to avoid separating those who have already formed close friendships in primary school.

Students are divided into three groups for the taster programme in the practical subjects. Here, gender and numerical balance are maintained as far as possible. Students are grouped from different primary schools in order to facilitate the formation of new friendships.

At the beginning of each school year the 6th Years are involved in a mentoring programme, where they act as mentors for our 1st Years. Our senior students involve the 1st Years in a variety of physical activities in our school hall. This is co-ordinated and organised by a teacher. This programme helps 1st Years to get to know each other, and the older students. Similarly, at the end of the first term the 6th Years accompany the 1st Years to an out-of-school activity for the day.

Student voice: Scoil Aireagail has a Student Leadership Policy that recognises and facilitates the student voice within our school. The two main elements to this is the student council and the school prefects. Other committees include the Green Schools' committee. These are co-ordinated by teachers, where students volunteer to play their part in communicating student perspectives. Surveys and student focus groups are often used to collect data and opinion – mainly in relation to SIPs/SSE. These are also very useful in gathering student opinion on various issues.

Partnerships with parents/guardians, community and wider supports: Scoil Aireagail has a strong whole-school community, where each plays its part in contributing positively to the student experience. Parent/teacher meetings remain well attended. Senior management welcomes parent/guardians as they arrive, and tea/coffee/refreshments arranged for parents and teachers. The experience is made as positive and as welcoming as possible. Communication between school and parents/guardians is regular through meetings, newsletters, correspondence, student diary and invitations to many events during the year. The wider community is involved in school life through many events such as work experience, visits to primary schools, local visiting speakers and course providers, sponsors, parent association, board of management etc. Regular communications and good working relationships play their part in contributing positively to student wellbeing.

