



Wellbeing Policy

1.1 Scope

This policy applies to the whole school community; pupils, parents/guardians, and school staff. A school is not only a learning environment, it is also a place where friendships and social networks form, and where access to support structures are available that will influence their development as young people.

Pupil wellbeing includes recognising their own talents, when they look after their physical wellbeing, when they are able to deal with the stresses of everyday life, and when they feel they have a purpose and that they belong to a wider community (Wellbeing Guidelines 2017).

1.2 Context

This policy was drafted in consultation with all stakeholders. It should be read in the context of the Health and Safety Policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Code of Behaviour, the Pastoral Care Policy, the Child Protection Policy, and the Wellbeing Guidelines 2017. Gaelcholaiste Charraig Uí Leighin encourages all our pupils to fulfil their potential and to have the highest expectations of themselves in every aspect, with their wellbeing at the centre of everything we do.

The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 states that the Junior Cycle years are a critical point in a young person's life. Young people can be influenced easily at this point in their lives, and they need support in making positive decisions about their health and their own wellbeing, and that of others. Wellbeing at Junior Cycle focuses on young people feeling confident, happy, healthy and connected to people and life.

1.3 Rationale

The reasons for drafting this policy include;

- a) The effect that the teaching and learning environment, approaches taken to teaching and learning, and the relationships and interactions between young people, have on the wellbeing of our students.
- b) A function of every school is to create links between young people and their community through sporting and cultural activities and also through learning activities such as work experience, enterprise education, charity collections and voluntary work.
- c) To highlight wellbeing through positive customs and various activities so as to develop the physical wellbeing of the school community.
- d) Research shows that those with higher levels of wellbeing achieve higher cognitive scores. Research by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) found that 'those with high levels of emotional, behavioural, social and educational wellbeing achieved high academic scores (at ages 11, 14 and 16)'. Therefore, it is evident that wellbeing and learning are intertwined.
- e) To highlight that emphasis on academic progress, and emphasis on mental, emotional and social wellbeing go together, and that social and emotional education supports academic achievement rather than undermines it. There is strong evidence that those students that are happy in themselves, in their work, and if they believe in themselves, are more effective learners.
- f) The aim of wellbeing is to nurture people and nurture is dependent on five things; positive feelings, participation, relationships, meaning and achievements. When young people are flourishing, not only are they inquisitive and eager to learn, they are;
 - creative and imaginative
 - connected and empathic
 - good team members
 - confident in themselves
 - resilient and stable
 - positive about themselves and they see themselves growing into better people.

1.4 Aims and Policy Content

The aims of this policy are;

- a) To show how schools can develop and promote positive mental health by using the Continuum of Support as prescribed by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).
- b) To emphasise the necessity of a holistic approach as described in the School's Framework for Health Promotion, where school organisations, ethos, curriculum and links with relevant community bodies are streamlined and intertwined.
- c) To emphasise a whole-school approach to wellbeing, where a positive school environment is provided by supporting the development of positive relationships with peers, positive classroom management strategies are implemented, and positive teacher-pupil and teacher-parent relationships are developed.
- d) To develop the personal and social skills of our students. These include self-organisation, problem solving, communication, self-respect, avoiding negative social influences, and adaptability.
- e) To provide opportunities to all pupils to be involved in a range of activities, that will strengthen feelings of belonging and connectedness with the school and their surroundings.
- f) To positively apply all policies relevant to wellbeing.
- g) To have appropriate protocol and supports in place to support young people and their families with mental health issues.
- h) To work co-operatively with young people to prevent early school-leaving.
- i) To build on the positive practices already in place.
- j) To ensure that students know how to stay well physically and how to make positive and healthy life-choices.
- k) To promote a positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health amongst our pupils.
- l) Pupils will be able to enjoy playing, recreation, sport, art, culture and nature.

- m) That students will forever be learning and growing.
- n) That students will be socially and emotionally well.
- o) That students will participate in their learning and will achieve in their education.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Role of the School

- a) With reference to Paragraph 9(d) of The Education Act 1998, the role of the school is “promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.” The school environment is not only a learning environment but is also a place where friendships and social norms develop, and where support structures are available, that influence the development of young people.
- b) The learning and teaching environment, the methods of delivery, and the relationships and interactions between young people, all affect the wellbeing of young people. Schools also function to connect young people with their communities through sporting and cultural activities, and through learning activities, such as work experience, enterprise and innovation, voluntary work and charity collections. The “nearness” to its community is a strength of any school.
- c) The development of health and wellbeing using cohesive and comprehensive delivery is necessary for the cognitive, emotional, social and academic development of young people (Barry and Jenkins 2007). It is imperative that there is an understanding that those that seek to achieve a high academic standard from their pupils, and those that seek to develop mental, emotional and social wellbeing, are on the same side, and that social and emotional education can support academic learning, as opposed to taking from the time of the other.
- d) There is exceptionally strong evidence available that those that believe in themselves, in their teachers, and that their school supports them, will learn more effectively academically and will be happier in their work.
- e) The school’s culture and ethos will be visible to students in the range of wellbeing activities available to them.

- f) The emphasis on wellbeing will better enable the pupils to develop their life skills and to develop a strong, respectful connection with their school and their community.

2.2 Student's Role

- a) To partake in school activities both inside and outside the classroom.
- b) To always be responsible.
- c) To respect themselves, others and difference.
- d) To be understanding towards one another.

2.3 Parents'/Guardians' Role

- a) The school relies on the support of Parents/Guardians for this policy to be applied.
- b) The school will make every support possible available to students, and the same support is expected from Parents/Guardians.
- c) It is essential that there is regular communication between school and home because 'ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid'.

2.4. Role of Staff

School staff support this policy by;

- a) Making a comfortable, enjoyable and encouraging learning environment available to all.
- b) Making a broad and varied range of activities available to students.
- c) Ensuring that every child is taking part and involved in school life.

- d) Recommending a healthy range of food and educating every student on the necessity of healthy food.
- e) Giving every student the opportunity to take a break and relax.
- f) Encouraging restful sleep that will nourish healthy minds and bodies.

2.5. Roles of Public Services

- a) Support from other services such as NEPS is sought when appropriate.
- b) Reports are made to Túsla and an Garda Síochána as necessary.

3. Wellbeing in School

3.1 Wellbeing on the Timetable

| Year | PE | CSPE | SPHE | Wellbeing | Guidance |
|-------------|----|-------|------|-----------|----------|
| First Year | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - |
| Second Year | 2 | ----- | 1 | ----- | - |
| Third Year | 2 | 1 | 1 | ----- | - |
| Fourth Year | 6 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Fifth Year | 2 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Sixth Year | 2 | - | - | - | 1 |

The above diagram outlines the number of Wellbeing classes covered per week for each Junior Cycle year group. Over the course of the 3-year Junior Cycle, the students receive approximately 396 hours of timetabled classes dedicated to Wellbeing. As well as this, each year group receives an induction at the beginning of each school year and also has a 5-minute assembly with their class teacher every week. With this taken into consideration, the students receive a total of over 400 hours dedicated to Wellbeing over the course of the Junior Cycle. This is in compliance with the DES circular 0015/2017 which mandates 300

hours Wellbeing to be included on the timetable over the 3-year cycle from September 2017 and building to 400 hours of Wellbeing by 2020.

3.2 Extra Activities:

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| Counselling service |
| School Tours |
| Science Week |
| Numeracy Week |
| Literacy Week |
| Gaelic Football |
| Hurling |
| Camogies |
| Hockey |
| Basketball |
| Sailing |
| School Choir |
| School Band |
| LGBTI+ Week |
| Guest Speakers |
| Debating |
| Links with the Community |
| Environmental Committee |
| Student's Council |
| House System |
| Whole School Approach to Healthy Eating |
| School Ceremonies |
| School Library |
| Supervised Study |

3.3 Wellbeing Indicators:

Respected: The students are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and values in a safe and constructive environment during class time through group discussions and group work. They also get the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns on a school-wide scale through the student council. Each class elects two representatives to speak on their behalf at student council meetings which initiates positive student involvement and change within the school.

Aware: As part of the Junior Cycle, students are encouraged to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, values and personal decisions both inside and outside the classroom setting. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on their work, thoughts and decisions within the classroom setting which enables them to become more aware of themselves and their decisions and their surroundings.

Active: The school as a whole take activeness very seriously. This is both inside and outside of the classroom. The school hosts active days such as “walk one kilometre to school” day and a sports day also takes place every year. Many extra-curricular activities are available to students in school, which allows students to be more active in their own lives. Many skills are instilled in students at Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin. These skills include;

- a) Being a confident and skilled participant in physical activity
- b) Being physically active
- c) Being aware of how active they are

Responsible: Students in the school are encouraged to take ownership for their own decisions and choices. They understand that they are responsible for their own health.

The following skills are instilled in students at Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin:

- a) Being able to act to protect and promote their wellbeing and that of others
- b) Making healthy eating choices.
- c) Knowing when and where their safety is at risk and enabling them to make the right choices
- d) Feeling connected to their school, friends, community and the wider world

- e) Understanding how their actions and interactions impact on their own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts

Resilient: Students in Gaelcholáiste Charrig Uí Leighin develop their resilience skills so that they can adapt well when faced with adversity or stress. SPHE classes develop students social and emotional skills and help the, build positive relationships with other students, their teachers, their families and wider society. The development of the following skills is encouraged;

- a) Knowing where they can go for help.
- b) Realistic optimism, keeping a positive outlook, without denying reality.
- c) Believing that with effort they can succeed and having a 'growth' mindset.
- d) Build a sense of meaning and purpose in the students' lives.
- e) Feel confident in themselves and having the coping skills to deal with life's challenges.

Connected: Gaelcholáiste Charrig Uí Leighin aims to create a supportive and caring learning environment for all students and staff. Teachers aim to ensure that every student feels respected and valued in the classroom and extracurricular activities encourage team work and a sense of community within the school. We place an emphasis on the following in the school;

- a) Feeling connected to their school, with their friends, community and the wider world.
- b) Understanding how their actions and interactions impact on their own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts.

The Board of Management of Gaelcholáiste Charrig Uí Leighin adopted this policy on May 5th 2019.

It is available to all stakeholders.

It will be reviewed annually, or as is deemed necessary.