

Well Schools School Profiles

Ten case study profiles that share how wellbeing can be supported across a school community



Manchester Institute for Education, The University of Manchester.

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We would like to thank the schools and staff who have contributed their time to this project.

We have very much enjoyed listening to the inspirational accounts behind the different approaches taken to support the wellbeing of their staff and student communities.

We hope these stories encourage and enthuse others for embedding and sustaining effective wellbeing practice into their schools and communities.

About the Research Team

The project was conducted by a team from the Manchester Institute of Education at the University of Manchester. An open science model was adopted supporting a transparent reporting of the independent evaluation, meaning the plans and final report are accessible at this link:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This profile book presents accounts from ten very different schools that support teacher and student wellbeing through becoming a Well School. They showcase their own Well School journey and experiences through real-world school examples. There will be common approaches that all successful Well Schools are embracing, as well as additional bespoke developments to meet the needs of staff and students for each unique context.

This profile book explores what a Well School looks like, considers common approaches schools are implementing and evaluate the impact of such approaches on wellbeing and education outcomes. The school profiles have the potential to inform practice for educational professionals by presenting contextualised real-world examples of how schools could support wellbeing in their school and fundamentally understand its meaning for their school practice, teachers and students.

A growing impetus to support wellbeing in schools

There is growing emphasis on education settings to promote wellbeing and whole school strategies are a successful approach for achieving this. For example, a Public Health England (2015, 2021) report highlighted eight principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges; namely whole school components such as: leadership and management, school ethos and environment, curriculum, teaching and learning, student voice, staff development, health and wellbeing, identifying need and monitoring impact; working with families and targeted support. These components map to the Well Schools approach to support practice that centralises staff and student wellbeing within education.

School programmes for supporting educational outcomes are widely studied and typically focus on quantitative outcomes and impact; whereas direct engagement with teaching staff and education professionals in understanding the realities of supporting wellbeing is lacking. Understanding the context and variability in implementation is a crucial aspect of successful working. Within the book we present a series of case study examples of 10 different accounts of how 10 very different schools approach supporting teacher and student wellbeing and how they view and operationalise their own Well School approach.

What is a Well School?

Well Schools is a whole school approach. A Well School places as much emphasis on wellbeing as it does on academic performance. It understands that children and young people are more effective learners when they are happy and well and that they must take care of their staff and their students' wellbeing to create a culture that allows everyone to reach their potential. It therefore focuses on supporting the wellbeing of school staff, senior leaders and students to improve education outcomes. Therefore, promoting the wellbeing of all staff and students creates a culture that allows everyone to recognise and reach their potential. The Well Schools ideology of school culture and ethos for supporting wellbeing is underpinned by three pillars (see the wellschool model diagram where culture feeds into well led, well prepared and well equipped). Well Schools centralises staff

and student wellbeing to promote a positive and supportive environment for teaching and learning. Students of teachers who exhibit protective factors (such as confidence and resilience) achieve better educational outcomes. The wellbeing of students is associated with both short- and long-term outcomes across learning, attainment, health and future success.

Well Schools steps to success

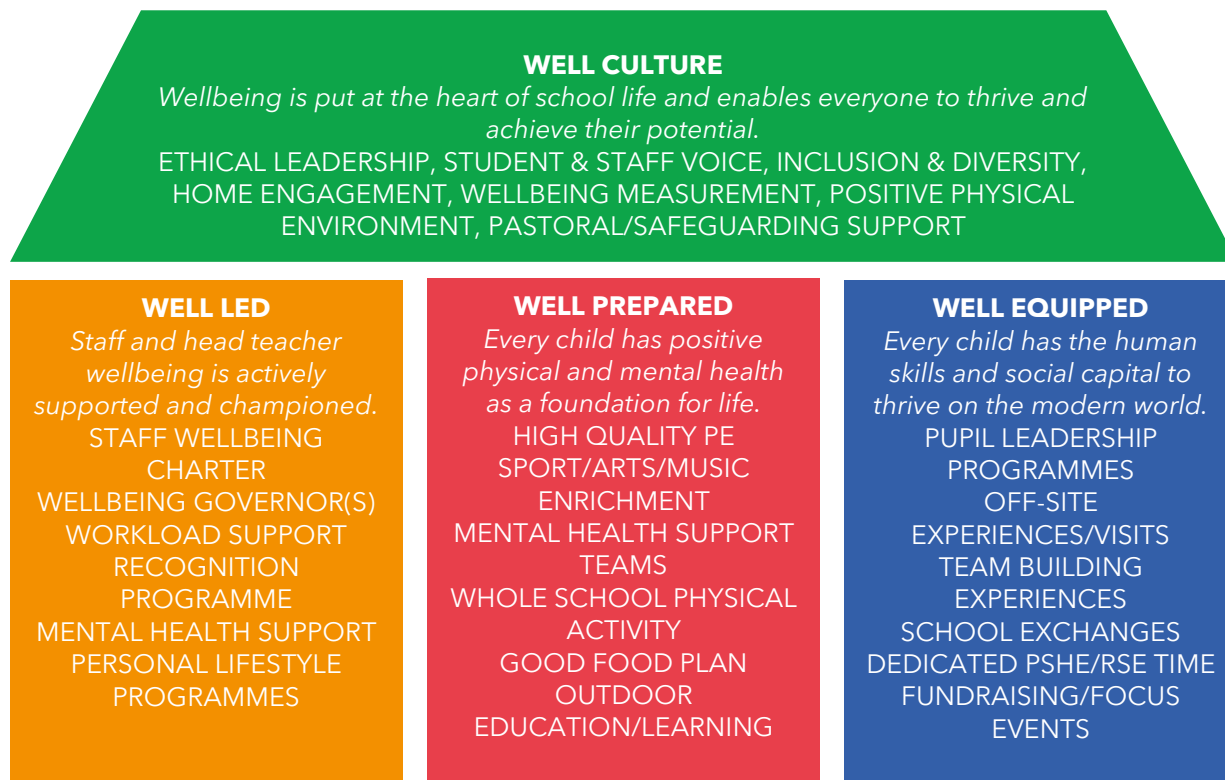


Figure 1: Well School framework

The eight principles from the Public Health England reports (2015, 2021) can be observed in these steps to success.

- Well culture encompasses the student voice, identifying need and monitoring impact, working with families and targeted support.
- Pillar one links to leadership and management, school ethos and environment, staff development and health and wellbeing.
- Pillars two and three link to curriculum, teaching and learning.

Chapter two provides an overview of the ten participating schools that supported the production of these profile. Chapter three provides a two-page summary of each profile. Chapters 4-13 provide a detailed account of each profile.

Chapter 2: Schools profiles, background and context

The characteristics and context of the ten schools are summarised in the table below. A description of key features including a comparison with national averages¹ is provided. Five of the ten schools are Well Schools “founding schools”². This leads into separate school profiles highlighting examples of the work they are doing.

School	Founding School	Setting type	Region	FSM	SEND/ASN	EAL	Page
1	✓	Primary	London	Average	Below average	Above average	9
2		Secondary	South East, England	Average	Below average	Below average	28
3	✓	Special School (ages 2-19)	North East, England	Above average	-	Below average	42
4		Primary (Junior)	West Midlands, England	Above Average	Above Average	Average	53
5	✓	Secondary	East, England	Average	Average	Above average	62
6		Special School (ages 2-19)	West Midlands, England	Above average	-	Below average	69
7	✓	Primary	London	Above Average	Above Average	Above average	76
8	✓	Secondary	North West, England	Above Average	Average	Above average	84
9		Secondary	Wales	Average	Above Average	-	89
10		Secondary	Scotland	Above Average	Above Average	Below average	97

Key: FSM: Proportion of children at school eligible for free schools meals; SEND: Proportion of children at school with special educational needs and/or disabilities; ASN: Proportion of children with additional support needs; EAL: Proportion of children at school speaking English as an additional language.

¹ England/Wales, national averages:

- 22.5% of students are eligible for free school meals (DfE, Schools, pupils and their characteristics - Academic Year 2021/22) (average within 5%)
- 12.2% with SEN support (DfE, Special educational needs in England, Academic Year 2020/21) (average within 2%)
- 19.5% with EAL (DfE, Schools, pupils and their characteristics - Academic Year 2021/22) (average within 5%)

Scotland, national averages:

- 34.2% ASN Proportion of children with additional support needs (Schools in Scotland 2022: summary statistics)
- 18.6% of secondary school students are eligible for free school meals (School Healthy Living Survey statistics 2022)
- 8.6% with EAL (Pupil census supplementary statistics 2022)

² In May 2020 the Youth Sport Trust reached out to a group of schools that inspired the Well School Movement and 33 schools were the first to take the Well School pledge.

Chapter 3 School profile summaries

This chapter presents summary accounts from the ten participating schools. They showcase their Well School experiences and practice through real-world school examples.

School Profile 1

"We wanted to ensure that our children and our communities, were physically well and emotionally well and we held that as just as important as academic outcomes."

Key tags: Primary school; South East England; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; above average number of pupils speaking EAL; below average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

School 1 expressed excitement at being part of the Well Schools movement, as part of their passion for driving change in the education system and moving away from the traditional focus prioritising academic outcomes, Well Schools was *"totally in line with what we are doing"*. They were drawn to the importance placed on creating a supportive environment for staff and pupils alike and driven by an understanding that promoting positive wellbeing and supporting mental *and* physical health should be the foundation for all other school activities. The staff believe strongly in developing a culture that actively promotes health and wellbeing.

Implementation

Well led:

The school leads from the top, emphasising the importance of the shared vision for the school being driven by the senior leadership team. Therefore, the school actively promotes a whole school approach where staff and pupils actively contribute to school level decisions. There is active monitoring of what is happening in the school and changes are made as necessary. They value health and wellbeing support and recognise the importance of developing a culture where staff feel their wellbeing is prioritised and supported. For example, through sports and social events to enhance relationships and cohesion amongst staff, and staff are also given a wellbeing day off a year. Workload support is offered by working to minimise unnecessary burden on staff, *"our staff are supported, we take away so much of the unnecessary bureaucracy that you can, so that our staff can just focus on what they love which is working with kids."* They valuing staff with gestures and an aim to promote a culture where staff feel respected. They achieve this through continuous professional development, encouragement to pursue their interests, and offer opportunities for development.

"Their [school staff] wellbeing needed to be prioritised if we were going to get the best for the children."

"...once you've got that culture then everything else can fall into place so, you know, then all of the stuff around workload and wellbeing for your team, around, you know, putting physical and mental health for children at the heart of your curriculum and for us that's absolutely central to what we do."

Examples of leadership and management practice:

- Staff and pupil surveys – their voice is important to the school and they undertake regular surveys to gain feedback from staff and pupils.
- Weekly meetings for teachers and biweekly meetings for support staff are held to discuss what is going on in school and any support needs for both staff and pupils that need action.
- School leaders also have specific roles with responsibility for promoting health and wellbeing.

Examples of staff wellbeing work:

- One wellbeing day off work every year.
- Bringing staff together socially for quiz nights and organised staff sports sessions like badminton.
- Gestures of thanks e.g., paid breakfast.
- Rich and valuable continuous professional development.
- Ongoing monitoring of staff wellbeing.

Well prepared pupils:

Physical health: There is a focus on promoting healthy lifestyles through positive physical and mental health as a foundation for all other school activities, and healthy lifestyles are actively promoted through a rich curriculum. The school encourages physical activity by embedding in the daily and weekly routines. Fitness sessions are used for breakout sessions and throughout the day to energise the children, help with restlessness and support regulation.

Mental health: The school curriculum includes promotion of strategies to support emotional wellbeing and encourages children to consider their feelings and develop strategies towards self-regulation. They have moved away from traditional behaviourist and punitive approaches in favour of promoting an ethos of kindness, respect and flexibility. Systems and resources are in place to support children who may be struggling with poor mental health too, for example: Place2Be (a children's mental health charity that help children to explore their emotions and work through them); there is a room in school where children can go to express themselves in a number of ways e.g., talking, playing or being creative; and a counselling service is offered.

Well equipped pupils:

The school have redesigned the curriculum to ensure their children thrive in all areas and combine learning activities, development of communication skills and promotion of physical and mental wellbeing - ensuring relevancy for life in the 21st century. The school's curriculum is based around four strands: academic; health; communication; and culture. Children learn about emotional health and physical health activities are built into the daily routine. They focus on developing emotional literacy and support children in discussing their feelings e.g., colour monsters, soft toys, displays and teacher support. The school also actively research what skills are important for children in later life.

Impact

There has been a noted improvement in health and wellbeing. Skills for life and behaviour at the school is reported as being good and staff report that the skills and strategies children learn as part of the Well Schools approach have contributed to improved behaviour and the children are better able to regulate themselves. Sickness and absence records are lower than comparable schools within the Trust and nationally. There has been an overwhelming positive reaction from the school community - parents report that their children are fitter, healthier and happier, and the number of parents choosing the school as the preferred school has increased.

"I feel it, everybody knows this school is an amazing place to work, the children in comparison to where we were when I first started five years ago, we're just a complete different school."

School Profile 2

"We see Well Schools as an umbrella under which we can run our organisation in the best possible way for all of the human beings within it."

Key tags: Secondary school; South East England; average number of pupils eligible for FSM; below average number of pupils speaking EAL; below average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

The school was judged as "requires improvement" in their May 2017 OFSTED report, a new Head Teacher was brought in and has since made strides "to get the school out of special measures" by adopting new programmes and initiatives - Well Schools was one of these. The Well Schools framework was "a good direction for us to go in, we're doing most of these things anyway, this is a really good fit, this is where we should, where our school would be good like healthy wise". It "compliments other initiatives within the school" and aligns with the school ethos of preparing and equipping pupils by building confidence and ensuring opportunities to provide staff and pupils with a safe and supportive environment to thrive. Well Schools has "acted as an umbrella you can see... basically everything we do as a school fits under this umbrella".

"Well Schools is about showing people that you genuinely care about them that their wellbeing is important that they have a place, they have a value, and I wouldn't subscribe to any leadership culture that didn't think that was important."

Implementation

Well led:

Throughout the school staff wellbeing is actively supported and championed and this approach has led to a thriving and successful environment for both staff and pupils. Senior leadership team each take roles and responsibilities and communicate regularly, and a specific Head of Health and Wellbeing role was created. The school are focused on staffing and in reducing pressures such as considering timetabling and resources, and offering to support staff wellbeing.

How do the School put pillar 1 into practice:

- A personal cheerleader programme.
- Employee assistance programme.
- 7 inset days not 5, and 2 are specifically for wellbeing and staff can do whatever they want on that day for their wellbeing (approved at Trust level).
- Deep culture surveys completed by staff and leadership team respond to these surveys.
- Staff clubs e.g., yoga club, running club, after school walks.
- Cuppa with colleagues on a regular basis.

Well prepared and well equipped pupils:

Underlying pillar two and three is an appreciation that mental health underpins success. There is an understanding of the causal chain of mental health based skills and how these build to opportunity and later life success, and that "students need a wide range of experiences that will enrich...". The

school therefore offer provision that fuels wellbeing, rather than being driven by results, and provision emphasises the building of ‘non-academic’ skills in and out of the classroom e.g., a wellbeing club was set up by the new Head of Health and Wellbeing, and the PE department run a host of sports and extra-curricula activities.

How do the School put pillars 2 and 3 into practice:

- Pupil leadership and ambassadors roles, such as literacy coordinators, sports captains, anti-bullying ambassadors, transition mentors and the school council.
- Wellbeing club.
- Manifesto of respectful behaviours.
- A curriculum for personal development including: relationships and sex education; living in the wider world; and health and wellbeing.
- Sailing.
- Duke of Edinburgh.
- Wide range of sport clubs.
- Wide range of extra-curricula clubs, e.g., philosophy club, a humanist society, coding club, drama, gardening, ultimate Frisby, dungeons and dragons, comic book club, film club
- School trips e.g., Ski trips, bush craft trips.
- Alumni visits.
- Arts enrichment.
- 3D sculpture course.

Impact

The school went from special measures to being awarded Good, “our Ofsted report’s been published so amazing stuff... .. and wellbeing gets a good mention”. The staff reaction was positive and “there’s good staff buy in” and it has been “really good” to have wellbeing for all taking a central place. Interactions between pupils has improved, as has staff-pupil relationships, this is attributed to the school culture and ethos of looking after everyone’s wellbeing. School 2 are very keen to build on

“It’s opened our eyes as well about wellness and wellbeing.”

“I think the staff are happier on the whole this year.”

the work and successes of their first year of Well Schools, and prioritising wellbeing is at the forefront of future planning.

School Profile 3

“It’s personal development and it’s life skills through an exciting curriculum that is creative and hands on and practical.”

Key tags: Special school; North East England; founding school; diverse range of children with SEND.

Intent

They school joined Well Schools in 2020 as one of the 33 founding schools, motivated by the opportunity for collaboration with like-minded schools and to share good practice especially in relation to special needs at a national level. They want to be a pioneer in the field and promote mental health and wellbeing as central to school life. They hope to lead a conference in the future to promote these practices and values. They saw the Well Schools community as a source of unofficial research where practises can be tested and learning can be shared. While being a sports college, using physical activity to promote wellbeing that aligns with the ethos of Well Schools so *“it was a no brainer really.”*

“It opens up a network for collaboration and sharing of ideas and things like that, people who have, unofficial research, that have just tried things on the ground and things that have worked and things that haven’t worked and, it’s time saving we haven’t got a lot of time in schools and that helps massively.”

Implementation

Well led:

The school has undergone a cultural shift in the last five years to recognise the importance of wellbeing along with academic achievement. The senior leadership support each other and the importance of nurturing staff health and wellbeing is driven top down. Staff wellbeing is an integral aspect of Well Schools, so this is recognised as essential for good teaching and underpins the leadership practice at the school. The senior leadership apply the PACE approach – being playful, accepting, curious and empathetic – with pupils as well as the staff to improve engagement and ensure the school is a pleasant place to work and there is a feeling of community.

We currently have a good SLT, where there’s four of us in particular who are of a similar mind set and are very supportive of each other.”

“Leaders are sensitive to the amount of work that staff do. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and they feel valued by the school leaders. They appreciate the importance that leaders give to their wellbeing.” (Ofsted 2020).

Well prepared pupils:

Being well prepared means that the school focuses on providing each child with positive physical and mental health. They have an outdoor learning program and provide high quality physical education

for the pupils to enable them to support their emotional regulation, and have adopted Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) as it gives teachers the opportunity to take learning outside of the classroom. A specialist Yoga programme has seen positive impact on the physical development on the children and “*seen first-hand the impact it has had... some of the children focussing on their breathing which helps them calm down.*” A triage system has been put in place so that if there is a concern about a child’s wellbeing then the social and emotional team staff will assess the issue to provide the necessary support, as well as a three-tier curriculum supporting pre-formal, semi-formal and formal provisions based on the cognitive abilities of the children. They are focused preparing the children for life after school so the curriculum is designed to be “*purposeful and attainable and allowing the children to progress around independence and life skills and preparation for work*” to improve their outcomes.

The skills that young people learn when they're outdoors supports with their regulation, supports with their wellbeing, using the green space and just, for a lot of our young people, you know, we need to be teaching the curriculum that's relevant.”

“Everybody likes PE one in one way or another so it's really quite nice to if we've got a young person who's presenting quite challenging and not wanting to be in the classroom then giving them the responsibility of working with smaller young people in a PE lesson.”

Well equipped pupils:

The school are committed to ensuring that their pupils can develop into “*regulated learners*” and have necessary life skills to thrive at school and beyond, “*it's personal development and it's life skills through an exciting curriculum that is creative and hands on and practical*”. They offer transition support, so pupils can come and visit the school, share social stories with pictures of staff and the school, and offer a platform where families and young people can be signposted for emotional support.

Impact

By encouraging sport and physical activity amongst its pupils the school has seen the benefits on for wellbeing and has led improved social and emotional health of their pupils.

“Pupils enjoy attending [School name]. Pupils told us that they really like their school and described it as ‘great and fun.’ They feel happy and safe here because they know that adults care about them.” (Ofsted 2020)

Similarly for staff, a focus on workload support and wellbeing surveys has shed light on ways to improve staff wellbeing and on led to the formation of a working party to achieve this. This impact is reflected in the Ofsted (2020) report wherein staff said they felt that the leadership cared about their wellbeing.

Well Schools has presented the opportunity for collaboration with other like-minded schools and sharing hands on learning through case studies and practise that they find easier to implement than academic research.

School Profile 4

“It was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together, and it is about a school having wellbeing that’s at the core and the heart of what we do, and it’s like the golden thread that permeates through the school.”

Key tags: Primary school; multi academy trust; West Midlands; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; above average number of pupils speaking EAL; above average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

The school had been rated as ‘requires improvement’ by Ofsted and has now achieved ‘good’ overall rating. The changes at the school have been led by a new Executive Principal who took a non-traditional route to turning the school around, namely focusing on wellbeing of both pupils and staff as the foundation for success. So joining Well Schools *“was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together”* – they were already well into their own wellbeing journey when it was introduced by the Youth Sports Trust and it just fitted the school ethos of *‘Healthy bodies, healthy minds, promising futures’*.

“We were on our own journey anyway, this kind of gave me the validation that what I was doing was right.”

“The traditional route of just doing English and Maths all day every day hadn’t worked, so obviously our research around why it hadn’t worked meant that we needed to find another option, and another way was through wellbeing.”

Implementation

Well led:

Leading by example was important so that teachers believed that the school’s *“leaders were going to be here for the long haul, stick out the journey, and really believe in it”*. They created a *“shared ownership”* between senior leaders and staff on the vision of the school, and recognised *“staff coming together and creating that vision as well, meant that everybody played a part, and everybody felt that they had invested in this journey and this process.”*

Valuing staff’s physical wellbeing – an overall focus on physical wellbeing that permeates the curriculum:

- Onsite gym for staff.
- Opportunities within the school day for staff to focus on physical health.
- All staff involved in team teaching PE lessons with support from sports coaches.
- Able to support and lead on different aspects for of Well Prepared and Well Equipped pillars, for example by undertaking mental health first aid training, or training as Thrive practitioners.

Well prepared pupils:

It was about the children starting the day right and they realised that many children were coming to school hungry and unable to focus on school work: *“having a bit of breakfast, then hitting something like fitness and circuit training [...] really changed the attitudes of the students as the day went on”*. This was laying the foundations for a healthy life, so that in early years the children have around eight hours of physical activity built into their week to encourage them to keep physically active, including access to an outdoor classroom, and making sure the children have the opportunity to choose the equipment they want to use.

Well equipped pupils:

The school run a weekly enrichment programme for children to learn other skills outside of the curriculum. This includes activities such as health and beauty, photography, DJ-ing, mountain biking, paddle boarding, darts, gardening and cookery, amongst others. Pupils choose their top three preferences and are enrolled in one of these programmes for a half term. At the end, pupils must demonstrate an outcome, for example by putting on a performance or an art exhibition. In their most recent Ofsted report they were praised for the strength of its curriculum enrichment programme.

“It was really taking the time to strip it all back and say this is going to be a long process and not a quick fix, because that’s not sustainable, we’re just going to be papering the cracks [...] It was absolutely pointless to keep having a diet on the timetable of English and Maths in the morning, and then English and Maths again, and interventions in the afternoon.”

Impact

The decision to focus on wellbeing as the *“golden thread that permeates the school”* received validation - academically results went from the bottom five percent nationally, to top 1%. The school have gone from a *“failing school”* to a school where pupils achieve above the national average. Now rated ‘good’ by Ofsted, they have won awards for their sports provision, and individuals staff members have also received awards. They have been invited to speak about their approach at conferences, both within the MAT and externally. The school are keen to build relationships with secondary schools to ensure pupils in Year 6 are able to continue their wellbeing journeys when they move on.

“Pupils grow and develop, and leave at the end of Year 6, completely resilient and confident, and ready for Year 7. [Before] they would have been running out of the door, ready to leave because they hated it so much, but yeah, that’s quite hard to quantify, but you can see it and feel it.”

School Profile 5

“Opening minds, transforming lives... success for all’ is not just a mantra, but infuses all we do.”

Key tags: Secondary school; East of England; founding school; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; above average number of pupils speaking EAL; below average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

The school joined the Well Schools community with an initial focus on pupils’ access to sport and physical exercise and Well Schools filled a gap in terms of developing an approach supporting staff too.

“We do a lot for student wellbeing and I think obviously that does end up taking the priority doesn’t it? And I was quite conscious that that I don’t do enough for staff wellbeing so I was really keen that’s the area that we really could grow and really support.”

Implementation

Well led:

The main aim was enabling staff to have *“positive feelings”* about their workplace. They wanted to value the importance of recognising that staff include support staff as well as teachers, and that they should be *“doing more to staff praise”*. For example, they have changed *“teacher praise sheets”* to *“staff praise sheets”* so all pupils could recognise all staff and each half term pupils are encouraged to write what they appreciate about staff on these praise sheets.

A specific Wellbeing lead role has been created, and the wellbeing lead predicts that Well Schools will be an important influence.

“When you deliver them [staff praise sheets] to the canteen staff and they read one and have never had one before how, you know, how good they feel, so I think these are wider impact on staff rather than teaching staff, acknowledging everyone.”

Well prepared and well-equipped pupils:

The school focus on embedding mental health support and making it part of a weekly routine for all pupils (e.g., offering a weekly wellbeing tip). They consider what aspects of wellbeing might be most relevant for their pupils, for example exam stress support. They offer directed mental health support for those young people who may be experiencing greater challenges e.g., counselling, small groups focusing on developing skills such as self-esteem building. The school is also establishing healthy habits, they look for opportunities to combine pupil activities; having time to engage with nature and wellbeing initiatives, and look for ways where physical exercise can be integrated into their daily lives, for example *“we do a mindfulness club on a Tuesday but always focus on outside mindfulness like mindful walks, writing chalk things on the floor that record information.”*

"We start very simple, we do a wellbeing tip of the week for example, every week, as part of tutor time the whole school, and this, you know, last week was mental health week and we were focusing on loneliness and it was just like, listen to this podcast or these here's some films that we recommend or, just little things that they can do with loneliness."

Impact

The school have really raised the profile of Well Schools and it is recognised as part of their future wellbeing policy. One of the key aspects of being involved in Well School was the opportunity to reflect on current practice and identify what they were already doing, areas where this could be extended and areas where they could develop new ways to promote wellbeing. Well Schools has been informative in providing a more structured framework to use when thinking about what they are already doing to promote wellbeing and what they can do more.

"I think again sharing that good practice, a bit of everything knowing that we're all probably in in a similar situation, and, you know, what's worked in other schools and what I can use in my school as well which will be good."

The Well Schools framework helped identify areas to improve and where to introduce targeted wellbeing initiatives. By finding out *"how do staff actually feel"* and using this knowledge to expand the ideas such as *"staff praise sheets"* as a way of showing appreciation of the whole staff, not just teachers.

The school are looking forward to using the Well Schools community to make positive connections with other schools and have a space for sharing ideas, highlighting good practice, and what has worked well in similar schools.

School Profile 6

"The children are at the heart of everything we do."

Key tags: Special school; ages 2-19; West Midlands of England; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; below average number of pupils speaking EAL.

Intent

The school joined the Well Schools community during the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, they joined to inform their work in supporting young people's wellbeing during this uncertain period. Pupil wellbeing was to be at the core of what they do, and with a particular focus on building community and developing individual pupils' communication skills. The staff recognised the importance of supporting wellbeing, both as a way of facilitating academic development and for pupil's personal development.

"Well Schools can bring it all under one umbrella and we can then share that's what we're doing."

Implementation

Well led:

The school ensure staff have high-quality training, and specialised training sessions that focus on supporting their pupils' overall wellbeing. There is also additional support staff, such as "*care assistants*", and other specialists that teachers can call on for advice when supporting pupils, including a "*behaviour specialist*". The school aim to offer flexibility and compassion, and create a positive culture around asking for help, "*we do go and ask for advice*".

Well prepared pupils:

Physical activity: They recognise the importance of physical activity for young peoples' wellbeing and have a number of strategies to support this including:

- Make this accessible for the pupils they support.
- Have a positive space for developing social skills and emotional knowledge.
- Invest in "*our equipment and resources on the playground and training staff to help facilitate those activities*".
- Establish a habit of "*active breaks and active lunch times*".
- "*Get coaches to come in*" to lead activities and ensure that pupils are experiencing high quality physical education.

"They won't learn or won't want to come to school if they don't feel welcomed and secure."

Mental health: Mental health is seen as being a firm foundation for young people's ability to participate successfully in their education. The school have counsellors to refer their pupils to if they are worried, and there is both "*talking therapy*" and "*music therapy*" so that there is a range approaches depending on the needs of the individual being referred to this service.

Well equipped pupils:

The school offer the opportunity to act as a leader and see this as being central to their personal development, they do this through a number of approaches e.g., allow pupils to adopt positions of responsibility in their classrooms, have older pupils lead school events and use these skills in the wider community. They see this as a way of developing important *“communication skills”* as well as *“resilience”*. The school also offer a wide range of opportunities for young people to go on external trips, such as *“walks within forests”* and *“sailing”*, and they have an enrichment day at an outdoors centre with *“zip wiring”*. The school have *“made sure there was timetable for pupils to access being outside”*. There are also curriculum days that allow the whole school community to come together.

“It’s giving them some responsibility, through shared ownership of activities, rather than just being told what to do all the time... they’re part of the process.”

The School’s mission statement to support students sets out:

- We develop each pupil’s independence and celebrate their successes.
- There is a balance of academic, artistic and physical education, as well as that of social and emotional well-being that prepares our pupils for future citizenship.
- We offer a wide and exciting range of extra-curricular opportunities such as clubs, educational visits, themed days, sporting events, plays, musical performances and assemblies.

Impact

Due to their flexibility as a special school the school were able to adapt their expectations of pupils and celebrate their achievements and well as dedicating time specifically to wellbeing. As the core focus going forwards was rebuilding activities and opportunities that were offered pre-pandemic, and supporting young people to become more resilient, Well Schools has provided a meaningful structure to guide this process. Going forwards they suggested that seeking out *“a similar school to us”* in the Well Schools community could be useful *“so that we could be sharing ideas”*.

School Profile 7

“There’s a real alignment between what Well Schools is saying and what we’re doing... why wouldn’t we want to be a part of it?”

Key tags: Primary school; London; most pupils speak EAL; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; above average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

The school is a founding member of the Well Schools community. The values and ways of working promoted by Well Schools are firmly aligned with the values and principles of the school. Practice at the school embodied many of the qualities of well culture, including ethical leadership, actively listening to the pupil and staff voice, creating a culture of inclusion and diversity, a focus on wellbeing and a positive physical environment, and pastoral and safeguarding support. This is all underpinned by a whole school approach that considers wellbeing as integral to academic success and puts wellbeing at the heart of everything they do, rather than something you can “tack on”.

“Having a solid, robust mental health, and an understanding of how to keep yourself mentally healthy [...] is something that will benefit [the pupils and staff] for their whole lives.”

Implementation

Well led:

Staff wellbeing is a firmly a priority and “*wellbeing is very embedded into what we do.*” The School constantly reviews policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness – asking “*is this worth it?*”, “*...we’re pushing one another forward, developing the practice right the way across the school, but it’s from the grass roots, it’s not somebody standing with the school learning development and just like, you know, telling people what they have to do [...] the benefits of it to the school as well as to individuals are massive.*”

“Having a solid, robust mental health, and an understanding of how to keep yourself mentally healthy [...] is something that will benefit [the pupils and staff] for their whole lives.”

They keep up to date with the latest research and trial new things in their classrooms. All staff are involved in setting the school’s development objectives and each teacher has a “*growth partner*” who is a member of the senior team who acts as their coach and provides support and mentoring.

How does the School put pillar 1 into practice

- An emphasis on ongoing learning and personal development, driven by individuals, enabling them to focus on areas they are interested in.
- Staff set own goals and objectives, providing autonomy and independence, and are supported to achieve these by senior members of staff.
- Staff also pursue a passion project that is intended to benefit the whole school, and often collaborate with each other on complementary projects.
- 6 wellbeing days for staff every year (1 paid and 5 unpaid) – staff can use these days in whatever way they like.

“It’s wonderful to see them, you know, some children who do struggle with the rigidity of the classroom or the enclosed space of the classroom, get over there, and they’re solving problems with their hands, and they’re climbing, they’re building, and they’re making things, [...] it’s built into our provision that every child in every year group has not only outdoor PE [...] but every child has an element of outdoor learning.”

Well prepared and well equipped pupils

Wellbeing permeates the whole school culture – physical health, social emotional wellbeing, and mental health, are all prominent parts of the school day for all year groups. Physical health and education are promoted and inclusive. They have made use of Well School’s online resources and collaboration with other schools and this has informed the school’s sports curriculum. Social emotional wellbeing and an understanding of the brain and mind is viewed as central to academic success.

How does the School put pillars 2 and 3 into practice:

- The whole school takes part in daily physical activity, with pupils, staff and families all encourage to join in.
- Year 6 PE ambassadors lead different whole school physical activities.
- The sports lead makes use of Well Schools online resources and has used these to inform the school’s sports curriculum that includes a wide range of sports to ensure there is something for everyone, from football tournaments to boccia.
- Students regularly take part in Forest School and canoeing and kayaking lessons.
- Starting in the nursery, students follow an age-appropriate course that teaches them about key areas of the brain and their functions, enabling students to better understand their emotions and reactions.
- Access to a play therapist for students that require extra support.

Impact

The Well Schools values and philosophy underpins everyday school life. The biggest impact of Well Schools has been the school’s re-developed approach to physical activity and inclusion, for example there has been a push for every child to be involved in competitive sport, while also ensuring inclusivity. The Well Schools resources have helped to ensure that new programmes and ways of teaching come from a place of knowledge, supporting the school’s beliefs in the importance of research and evidence-informed practice. The school is keen to use the Well Schools resources more and to learn from like-minded schools.

“I think the next steps is to bring in more people for it to become more of a school wide everyone understanding what it is, how does it differ to some of the other things that we’re involved with and then to connect with other schools, more, again involving more of the staff because I know in some pockets of our school like our Head Teacher, for example, is very connected with other Well Schools Head Teachers and, I think our PE leader’s very connected with other Well Schools PE leaders, for it to become, more permeated across the school and to have more of us involved and knowing what’s available and seeing what we can contribute as well and being involved.”

School Profile 8

“The world is our oyster to give our students that offer and I think that helps them to be those well prepared students and the fact that looking after their physical their mental their social aspects of their life and giving them a future.”

Key tags: Secondary school; North West England; above average number of pupils speaking EAL; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; below average number of pupils registered with SEND.

Intent

The school was invited to join Well Schools by the Youth Support Trust due to good practices. The school undertakes research to continuously improve their practices and share them with other schools. They were especially motivated by the opportunity to share their ideas and learn from others via the Well Schools community and forum.

“If you’ve got an area of concern, Well Schools can help solve it for you because there’s someone you can touch base with there’s someone who’s got a similar demographic school to you where you can think ‘right you’ve got the same demographic area what do you do to tackle this’ and the ideas are there for you to help with and to touch base with people on.”

Implementation

Well led:

- **Planning Time:** The current curriculum change considers staff wellbeing by changing current assessments and marking to ensure staff have time to plan before the summer break and are able to have a restful summer.
- **Flexi Day:** All staff members get one ‘flexi day’ in the year to use at their discretion – birthday, child’s school production, etc.
- **Health Assured:** A programme to support staff during difficulty such as financial hardship, bereavement etc.

“I think one of the things that sticks with me is the ideas of how staff can look after each other.”

“If we want the best out of our kids we need to look after our staff.”

Well prepared pupils

Several members of the senior leadership team have been PE teachers and as a result physical activity to promote mental wellbeing has always been an ethos followed by the school. Staff have a responsibility to recognise pupils who may be struggling with mental health and identify suitable interventions for them.

How do the School implement Pillar 2:

- Facilities for activities such as orienteering, swimming, cycling.
- Trips for climbing, bouldering, sailing.
- Nearly 40-50 extended school activities every day after school wherein students are expected to attend at least 2 a week.
- Interventions for students struggling with mental health.

Well equipped pupils

The school designed a bespoke PSHE curriculum called 'Aspire' that focuses on giving the pupils a sense of belonging and instils values in the pupils, encourages problem solving, and ties in with the careers aspect of education to succeed in life beyond school, so *"it's giving them the opportunity to be a human and learn about resilience and co-operation and teamwork"*.

How do the School implement Pillar 3:

- Bespoke PSHE curriculum to build resilience and sense of belonging – Aspire.
- Large multidisciplinary SEN team.
- Transition support for new starters and leavers.

"They [pupils] are never disconnected from this school so we have a set up with them where we have leaver emails so they can always keep in contact with us from a social and emotional point of view so they are never left they've never left this school, if they're at college and they're struggling they can come back to us and we will put an arm round them and their families and still support them."

Impact

Pupil wellbeing is at the forefront in the school, and Well Schools have helped to re-focus their mindset on staff wellbeing that has resulted in greater staff satisfaction, and *"when we're looking at being a Well School continuing it's something we keep at the forefront all the time"*. To maintain and build on this they want to encourage greater parental engagement through better communication with them.

The school have found it rewarding to share their practices with other schools while also learning from other schools through the Well Schools online forum.

This has in turn enhanced pupil learning and outcomes as is evident from the improvement in the OFSTED report.

OFSTED report (2019) recognised impact across all leadership and students wellbeing provision.

- Dynamic Senior Leadership Team keen for improvement.
- Personalised professional development is used well to support staff at all stages of their careers.
- Leaders are sensitive to the staff workload.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders promote the need to eat healthily and keep safe through the health and wellbeing curriculum.
- Leaders provide a comprehensive PSHE curriculum to help pupils understand these dangers and how to keep themselves safe.
- The school is a vibrant multicultural community, and pupils learn to value diversity as a result.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are being prepared to be well-rounded citizens.
- Leaders have built strong relationships with pupils and their families.

School Profile 9

"I think sometimes at schools we can be quite insular, and we kind of come up with the new sparkly idea or initiative, and sometimes schools are very reluctant to share [...] so I think it's just that willingness to share and to learn from others [...] so that Well Schools for me was an opportunity to see what was going on further afield."

Key tags: Secondary school; Wales; average number of pupils eligible for FSM; average number of pupils registered with SEND; below average number of pupils speak EAL.

Intent

Wellbeing of staff and pupils is a key priority. The school has a dedicated health and wellbeing lead who was appointed as part of a restructure of the senior leadership team ten years ago. The school's wellbeing motto, "We work well when we are well for work" underpins the school's preventative approach to wellbeing that aims to equip pupils and staff with the tools and skills they need for success. The school has been involved in providing feedback on the wellbeing strand of the new Welsh national curriculum that came into force into September 2022. The health and wellbeing lead at the school is part of a health and wellbeing group run by the local authority, and regularly presents on the school's approach to wellbeing at both regional and national conferences. Joining Well Schools was a logical step for the School as the ethos "tied in quite well with all the work that we had been doing" and was an opportunity "to share and to learn from others".

"We used Well Schools to actually improve what we already had [...] I felt that Well Schools would fit really well embedded within our social, mental and physical health model."

Implementation

This model recognises that wellbeing comprises physical health, social and emotional health, and mental health – all "need to be in place for a person to be regarded as healthy".

Well led:

There is a dedicated health and wellbeing lead to ensure that the school has the "freedom to really focus [...] on developing health and wellbeing" in its own right and establish health and wellbeing as a focal part of the school's development plan and a priority within the senior leadership team - this support "makes things so much easier". A staff wellbeing group is run as a professional development community, and this group meets half termly to discuss pupil and staff wellbeing, survey results and suggestions. The school has strong external relationships with the local authority and a School Health Research Network that aims to promote health and wellbeing in Welsh schools, and being part of a larger network of school wellbeing leads facilitates the sharing of ideas and feedback.

How do the School put pillar 1 into practice:

- Staff can make suggestions via a 24/7 electronic suggestion box.
- Staff have dedicated wellbeing time as part of their PPA time every week. Staff are free to use this time as they see fit.
- School G has regular wellbeing weeks for staff when there are no meetings and activities such as yoga and art are on offer.

Well prepared pupils:

There is a preventative approach to looking after pupil wellbeing and this includes physical wellbeing, social and emotional wellbeing, and mental wellbeing. Physical activity and the importance of outdoor learning is recognised and pupils engage in 120 minutes a week of physical education. The school offers a wide range of outdoor learning opportunities and own canoes and mountain bikes for pupils to use, run a forest school where pupils learn different skills such as lighting fires, cooking and food health.

Well equipped pupils:

Ensuring a positive start at the secondary school is key and the school run a comprehensive transition programme centred on the theme of “happiness” for children joining the school from primary feeder schools.

“We have staff that go out to primaries, and then we have days so we've got transition week [...] where they will come in and they will do a series of normal lessons with us so they get that taster. And we actually start that transition with Year 5s, actually Year 4s [...]so they come in and they do a happy theme day, using our facilities and obviously coming to the secondary school getting familiar with the site and what we can offer them obviously.”

Pupils are encouraged to learn leadership skills through activities such as the Forest School, and opportunities to become pupil sports ambassadors and earn leadership qualifications.

How do the School put pillars 2 and 3 into practice:

- A transition programme is focused on the theme of happiness and starts with children in Year 4 and 5 who are invited into School.
- Students in Year 6 benefit from a transition week where they go to into School and take different lessons and can get used to the school environment.
- A wide range of sports and physical activities are offered, including canoeing and mountain biking.
- Forest School provides an opportunity for outdoor learning.
- Pupils in Year 9 have the option to study an outdoor education course that involves activities such as kayaking, gorge walking and climbing.
- The school regularly surveys students to gather insights into how students feel and how this compares to other schools.

Impact

Wellbeing is firmly embedded across the curriculum, and the senior leadership team value both staff and pupil wellbeing. The result is that the school is “a positive place to come into every day”. Staff are trusted to do their jobs and timetabled wellbeing sessions that can be used however staff decide “make such a difference”. The school has a good track record in retaining staff and offering career progression. Pupils seem happier and this is supported by survey feedback. The school regularly presents on its approach to wellbeing and is keen to share the benefits of being a Well School with other local and national schools to increase the number of member schools based in Wales.

“Students seem happier and the data we're getting back from them supports that, and just speaking to colleagues, colleagues stay at this school, it's not somewhere where they're constantly looking to move on.”

School Profile 10

“If we don’t have health and wellbeing, if we don’t have good mental health, if we don’t have good physical health, everything else is such a greater challenge.”

Key tags: 2-18 campus; Scotland; above average number of pupils eligible for FSM; below average number of pupils speaking EAL; above average number of pupils with additionally supported needs.

Intent

The school is situated in an area affected by social deprivation and social challenges away from school (such as substance abuse, domestic abuse, poverty, and high levels of police involvement). It was therefore important to adopt a whole school culture that supports the health and wellbeing of its pupils and staff and also seeks to extend its reach by offering support to parents and the community. This motivation aligned with the Well School philosophy, encompassing a “well culture” where home engagement and wider pastoral support beyond the school domain is an integral part of a positive school environment and successful teaching and learning.

Implementation

Well Led:

Prioritising and supporting staff wellbeing was key to embedding Well Schools into school ethos and culture. The school used a number of approaches to promote staff/teacher wellbeing, including: regular monitoring of staff wellbeing and continuously consulting with staff on how the school can support them better; giving the staff a voice and allowing them to have a say in the culture and ethos of the school; and employing an external Wellbeing coordinator who speaks with staff about their wellbeing.

Staff and head teacher wellbeing is actively supported and championed”.

Well prepared pupils:

Pupil wellbeing is a long-term approach - targeting needs on an individual level and supporting the learner in understanding themselves and who they are as individuals. The school recognises the link between physical health and wellbeing:

- There is a strong focus on outdoor learning and two dedicated and different outdoor learning spaces.
- Staff are comfortable taking learning outdoors and there is a planned timetable boasting various outdoor activities across the 2-18 campus.
- A physical activity element of outdoor learning promotes positive physical health and provides “high quality sport enrichment”.
- They encourage pupils to get involved in team sports and provide equipment for individual exercise.
- They support pupils to get active by getting them outside to take part in the “daily mile” running activity.
- The timetable incorporates two “movement breaks” per day, which aim to get pupils active.
- Staff and leadership team all receive regular training and attend CPD programmes for mental health and wellbeing support.

Well equipped pupils:

The school offers extracurricular opportunities and qualifications that align with the well equipped pillar of the Well Schools philosophy. One of the challenges that the school has faced is younger pupils *“not being able to regulate their emotions and understand their emotions”*. The school therefore puts a lot of emphasis on teaching their early years and primary cohort about emotional understanding, what are the physical feelings, what triggers these, how are they linked to behaviour and how to regulate and communicate emotional responses appropriately. This involves giving *“youngsters the language of their emotions so that they can articulate that in situations where they may be feeling stressed”*.

Impact

After the COVID-19 pandemic, it was identified that pupil and staff physical health and wellbeing was something that the school needed to prioritise - the school used the Well School approach and its three pillars as a framework to work towards achieving the goals of the three pillars. Well Schools framework has provided a guide and reference point for staff and pupils that has supported cohesion and consistency across the whole school campus with regards to positive wellbeing and physical health.

“We are a Well School and we know we’re a Well School because of x y and z and looking at the three pillars, and here’s our evidence. So, for me it’s that potential of a kind of almost the self-value the self-evaluation framework.”

The language used in Well Schools is not the language used in Scottish schools - the differences between Scottish and English schools and the terminology used, the approaches are *“not couched exactly in those terms”*. A lot of different initiatives provided by Education Scotland have been brought into Scottish schools that do not exist in England. As a result, the school has had to use these approaches as well as the Well Schools approach that has led the school into using Well Schools as a framework that absorbs and incorporates the other approaches. As the Well Schools approach is currently concentrated in English schools, the school has not yet connected to the wider Well School community and the Head Teacher has been on to the forums and picked up tips and advice.

The future of Well Schools for the school:

- To continue holding physical health and wellbeing at the centre of the school ethos with the view that it becomes embedded into the everyday life of pupils and infiltrates into the wider community.
- To continue to support and monitor staff wellbeing. The school has recognised that positive staff wellbeing reinforces whole school wellbeing and has also helped to reduce staff absence.
- To continue supporting student wellbeing by targeting wellbeing needs on an individual level and supporting the learner in understanding themselves and who they are as individuals.
- To further the schools use of outdoor learning with the potential employment of a full-time outdoor educator and to expand the activities and resources available to students in the outdoor areas.
- To continue to use the Well Schools framework as a way of monitoring wellbeing across the whole school and ensuring consistent approaches are being used amongst staff and that the concept of wellbeing is held and practiced with high value across the whole school.

Chapter 4: School 1

“We wanted to ensure that our children and our communities, were physically well and emotionally well and we, held that as just as important as academic outcomes.”

1. School background and context

School 1 is a large community primary school within a wider Multi-academy Trust that includes four primary schools and a nursery. The school is situated in a densely populated inner city area surrounded by residential streets. Pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds attend the school. A high majority of pupils at the school are multilingual or speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupil mobility, with children leaving and joining the school through the year, is high. The Head Teacher has been awarded an OBE for their work in education, both in the LA and DfE. Since 2016 the School has been graded ‘Outstanding’ in all areas by Ofsted, two years previous to this the school was graded ‘Requires Improvement’.

2. A whole school culture

Why Well Schools?

The school senior leadership team, driven by the Head Teacher, are keen to establish a school-wide culture putting mental and physical wellbeing at the forefront. This very much aligns with the Well Schools philosophy of placing equal emphasis on wellbeing as academic performance; drawing on evidence that supports a relationship between higher levels of wellbeing and other educational outcomes.

“You know, once you’ve got that culture then everything else can fall into place so, you know, then all of the stuff around workload and wellbeing for your team, around, you know, putting physical and mental health for children at the heart of your curriculum and for us that’s absolutely central to what we do.” (HT)

School 1 highlighted the importance they place on creating a supportive environment for staff and students alike. This is driven by an understanding that promoting positive wellbeing and supporting mental and physical health should be the foundation for all other school activities. School 1 expressed excitement at being part of the Well Schools movement, as part of their passion for driving change in the education system and moving away from the traditional focus prioritising academic outcomes.

School 1 are enthusiastic about the Well Schools movement and emphasised that the philosophy is *“totally in line with what we are doing”* and *“so in tune with our thinking.”* The staff believe strongly in developing a culture that actively promotes health and wellbeing and are *“absolutely convinced that this is the right way for our children for our community for our team”*. They are keen to support application of their approach and ethos in the education community and make a difference to pupils, families and staff in education more widely. School 1 have been instrumental in the development of the Well Schools movement, drawing on their passion and belief in creating a culture that values health and wellbeing. They were keen to inspire and motivate other schools to adopt a similar approach.

“Well Schools as it’s something which is inspired by schools like ourselves and what we’re doing is something new something exciting and it’s supporting children and families across the country.” (SEnCo)

Leadership and management

Leaders have a strong vision for the school: that it is a place where everyone loves to be. (Ofsted, 2021)

The school leads from the top and emphasises the importance of the shared vision for the School being driven by the senior leadership team.

“Yeah I think I think that the, I think that it comes from the top, so the vision and the guiding principles were kind of made clear to the senior leadership team”. (AHT)

“It’s not simply led in like a hierarchical working manner it’s very much (laughs)... each member of SLT oversees their team and makes those decisions based on what they’re seeing day in day out, which means our teams are heard.”

However, while strong leadership is important, whole school engagement is key to developing a Well Culture. School 1 promotes a whole school approach where staff and pupils contribute to school level decisions.

School leaders draw on wider staff experiences to make decisions and staff can influence decisions and express their views on the management of the school. Staff and pupil voice is important to the school and regularly sought via surveys. Surveys ask questions around a range

of topics that inform decision making in the school such as the curriculum, staff satisfaction and pupils' health and wellbeing.

School 1 are keen to monitor what is happening in the school and instigate as necessary. The senior leadership team seek and encourage staff to share their views to support decision making. Developing a Well Culture means staff are empowered to enact change. Weekly meetings for teachers and biweekly meetings for support staff are held to discuss what is going on in school and any support needs for both staff and pupils that need action.

"We also track pupils' physical health, and we track whether or not staff agree that the health curriculum's having a positive impact on them the child's learning and we also ask the children we have a children's voice whether or not they feel the health curriculum's having a positive impact on their learning." (AHT)

School leaders also have specific roles with responsibility for promoting health and wellbeing within the school. This ensures overseeing of this crucial aspect of how the school is managed and maintains momentum for developing emotional wellbeing.

"In terms of leadership we actually have, middle leaders who oversee wellbeing and emotional health, in general and they the part of their role is looking at children looking at the playground looking at what's happening in day to day life and researching themselves about emotional health and how we can support that and to come to an emotional health curriculum at the very beginning I think was very, it was a challenge but it's very effective." (SENCo)

Staff also model an active lifestyle to promote a "shift in culture" and there is less focus on formal wear in school, with "everyone wears trainers. I'm a senior leader, I we walk around in tracksuits" and staff taking part in healthy lifestyle activities, such as sport, organised within the school. Inclusion and diversity

School 1 has a diverse population and they are working to ensure they understand their school communities. Pupil mobility is high, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. One of the current focuses for the school is multilingualism, fuelled by ongoing enquiry within the school to support their understanding of children's development and trajectories tied to learning and health and wellbeing.

"The school ourselves we actually carry out a lot of research we've got an Assistant Head soon to be Deputy Head who's doing a lot of her own research into neuroscience and she's studying to help us support our learning and teaching where we are." (SENCo)

This aligns with the Well Schools philosophy of ensuring that inclusion, respect and diversity are valued as part of developing a Well Schools culture.

“The impacts on multi-lingualism on, children’s brain development on children’s learning, so, just trying to get a better understanding of the, you know, the trajectory for children who are -lingual and how that affects them, both in school and in their learning, but also, more widely in terms of, you know, determinance of health, of poverty, of all of those aspects as well.”
(HT)

School 1 are keen to ensure all of the needs of their pupils are met, as part of maintaining a supportive culture. They collect data around key performance indicators (KPIs) so they can identify and support the specific needs of their cohort of children, rather than setting general targets. For example, rather than pushing an arbitrary attendance figure, they have examined trends in attendance fuelling the development of action plans that enable targeted support that boosts punctuality and attendance within the school.

“So our family engagement, lead is now working to understand about why {poor attendance in particular group} that is and, you know, what it is that we can do, as a school.”

Collaboration, connection and community

School 1 emphasised their ambition to support changes to the traditional education system, noting being able to work with others of similar mind set is important in maintaining momentum and their confidence to complete such a goal. Collaboration is at the heart of the Well Schools movement, with connections between Well Schools being promoted e.g., through joining the Well Schools community.

“I think it’s a movement what I understand of Well Schools is it’s a movement around a selection of schools, which are all coming together to share ideas share knowledge, of what’s successful and hopefully spread that across more schools putting that into practice.”

Part of developing a culture involves the wider school community and everyone coming together with shared purpose and values. They aim to understand the communities in which they function *“that is a part of being a Well School you know that’s a part of, it’s supporting children to understand families and community”* (SENCo).

School 1 recognises this through their focus on parental engagement and encouraging parents to be partners with the school. The school recognises that health and wellbeing support and development operates inside and outside of the school and that it is important to have continuity for children from school into their home lives. Connection between school and home lives is a priority for School 1 and they foster such connection by hosting events for parents to become part of the life of the school. Parents are regularly invited into the school, through *“parent gym sessions where we have gym parents come in and we give them coaching around parenting, around healthy eating and, healthy living and we also do learn with your child so we invite parents to come into the school and to see their children in classrooms and so we have a real kind of community feel it’s a very community based school”* (AHT). Parents’ evenings are seen as an opportunity to create connection with *“food it’s noisy, it’s an event. It, you know, and our parents love it so we’re a real kind of a focus point for the local community”* (AHT).

School 1 also provide sessions to include and inform parents of the aims and values of the school. They “talk to them about what emotional health looks like what physical health looks like and it’s lovely just to see their reaction to that because it’s good to see that they’ve come from other schools and what they see here something they really really like and suddenly they want to come here” (SENCo).

School 1 heavily emphasises working in collaboration with staff and families to support a community-focused culture. The school aims to understand the community and ensure what they do supports and meets the needs of the families within it. They want everyone in the wider school community to feel connected to the school.

“The leadership team we support that but it goes out wider than that, you know, it’s about teachers it’s about the support staff it’s about the families it’s about, the borough as well there’s so many different aspects of it and actually getting all of those parties together that was well led I think.” (SENCo)

School 1 also wants to promote teacher ownership and engagement to the work happening in the school. Staff are given autonomy and their professional expertise are drawn on, rather than a top-down approach. Development of the curriculum is overseen by leaders and developed by teachers who “teach those sessions every single day so that will always always develop as long and then every year” (SENCo). This allows for the curriculum to be “very fluid and that’s because we give the teachers that freedom to teach what they think is right, there’s a baseline there but what they think is right what’s most effective for those children.” (SENCo)

Being part of the Well Schools movement also allows schools to share ideas around promoting health and wellbeing.

“We’ve learnt so much about wellbeing and that’s been transferred onto staff from leaders who are consistently for example {HT name}’s consistently involved in that and that’s shared and trickled down to us, throughout staff training throughout briefings on Friday mornings and he takes on inspiration from other schools and our wellbeing lead takes on that inspiration from other schools.” (SENCo)

Ways to collaborate within the Well Schools community:

1. Join the movement and become part of the Well Schools community.
2. Share and gain ideas through the Well Schools online forum.
3. Get familiar with the Well Schools Steps to Success.
4. Make use of the Well School network and reach out to a range of schools.
5. Share good practice.

3. A well led school

A Well Led school ensures that it takes care of the health and wellbeing of all staff members. Staff wellbeing is prioritised and supported at School 1 and this is reflected in their sickness and absence records that are lower than comparable schools within the Trust and nationally. There is emphasis

on a Well Led school that the senior leadership team model and champion health and wellbeing support. School 1 understand the importance of developing a culture where staff feel their wellbeing is prioritised and supported. This is driven by the Head teacher who feels *“really strongly about the fact that, you know, staff in schools, you know, their wellbeing needed to be prioritised if we were going to get the best for the children”*.

School 1 recognise the culture of overwork that has become prevalent in some areas of education and seek to change the attitudes around such expectations and develop a focus on promoting staff wellbeing as a central feature of each role across the school.

“It’s having health and wellbeing at the heart of what we’re doing it’s, you know, having a culture, an approach as a school that values health and wellbeing for the reasons I’ve already set out, you know, if I’m turning up and I’m stressed and I’m exhausted, if I’m, you know, not feeling my best I’m not going to do a great job of teaching children.” (HT)

“But there was almost this, you know, this martyr culture at times of, you know, I talk about it, you know, I’d go into staffrooms but it was almost this competitive sort of ‘oh I was up till midnight planning’ ‘midnight? I was up till 2’...You know. ‘2? I haven’t slept’ you know, this kind of like that that showed that you cared for the children and it was kind of like well actually if all the evidence shows the most important thing is how you turn up ... then marking till 2 o’clock in the morning isn’t an indication of, you know, isn’t you doing your best for the children isn’t the right thing isn’t the best thing so, you know, that teacher wellbeing teacher workload thing was absolutely a focus right from the beginning.” (HT)

This approach is also key to fully establishing a whole school culture that places health and wellbeing at the forefront, where teachers are role models. It is important that they appear relaxed and are able to manage stress appropriately, so this is embedded within the whole school ethos. This is championed by the Head Teacher who recognises the difficult role held by teachers and aims to create an environment where teachers thrive.

“Our job is to support and encourage people to do that, to, you know, to find the way the things that are obstructing them from doing that and to remove those blockages, you know, to work on that as a team together to do something that’s really really hard, really hard to teach 30 kids, you know, it’s just a really difficult job and our job is to try to do our best to make that as accessible and as possible and where people are struggling with that, understand why they’re struggling, you know, help them with overcoming the barriers that are there, you know, give them that support and encouragement.” (HT)

Workload support

School 1 recognises the challenges that teachers face with increasingly heavy workloads and the impact this can have on staff wellbeing. A theme over the years promoted by the Head Teacher is consulting with staff and asking them *“what gets in the way of you doing your job?”*. There is recognition that there are superfluous tasks in education that take a lot of a teacher’s time and may actually be unnecessary and *“actually stop us doing the best job we can do.”*

The school are working to minimise unnecessary burden on staff through a number of ways. They review working practices regularly and engage in a whole school process called “keep, tweak, ditch”. This process allows them to consider the work that they are undertaking and consider its impact to eliminate unnecessary work.

Keep, tweak or ditch?

“We did a whole we for many years we did a process called ‘keep tweak ditch’, where we looked at everything that we were doing and we got all different teams to kind of say yes we should keep this, this needs to go because it’s making no demonstrable difference to children or to what we’re doing at the school and these are things that are that we think we should keep but this is how we need to tweak them to make them more effective and that is a really good way of, you know, that workload.” (HT)

This process involves staff and allows them to consider how inefficient working practices can be adapted or removed to manage workload.

“Our staff are supported, we take away so much of the unnecessary bureaucracy that you can you can so that our staff can just focus on what they love which is working with kids.” (AHT)

There is recognition among staff that there are efforts to ensure workload is kept manageable and tasks that staff engage with are considered essential. This supports staff in managing their workload effectively, reduces unnecessary pressure

and frees up time for staff to build relationships with and support pupils in the school.

School 1 also set realistic expectations of staff workload and highlighted the importance of being flexible to develop a culture of support for wellbeing. The school aims to ensure teachers feel supported, rather than scrutinised.

“We’re going to put staff wellbeing at the heart of what we’re doing but we’re going to come into your classroom and we’re going to go through your books and if someone’s missed a learning objective then we’re going to haul you over the coals for that.” (HT)

Health and wellbeing support

School 1 support staff to consider their health and wellbeing and employ enhancement strategies. The senior leadership team understand that promoting positive staff wellbeing is the foundation for promoting a culture where everyone feels valued and respected, leading to a wider positive impact on the entire school community.

“But, you know, think that the staff really, can see and feel that they’re, you know, that they’re important that their wellbeing is valued and, you know, that has all sorts of benefits, it has benefits around the general atmosphere and engagement at the school. (HT)

To promote positive staff health and wellbeing, a number of tangible strategies have been implemented, such as badminton and football matches to support fitness and social events to enhance relationships and cohesion amongst staff. Staff are also given a wellbeing day allocation once a year.

“There’s a quiz night coming up, there’s loads of stuff that we do to just try to bring people together and so that they feel like they’re valued as a person not just as a as a kind of a role in the school.” (AHT)

Staff wellbeing is monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure the focus is maintained and find out if there are any challenges that need to be addressed. The outcome of a school led staff wellbeing survey suggested *“100% of our staff said they felt they would be well supported if they were struggling with their wellbeing, so that was a real, positive I think” (HT).*

Valuing staff

School 1 values staff and understands the often challenging nature of working within a school. They show their appreciation through small gestures and aim to promote a culture where staff feel respected.

“It’s simple things like just every now and then we’ll have a morning breakfast which is paid for us.” (SENCo)

Teacher expertise is valued within School 1 and the autonomy staff are given allows them to make decisions to support the specific needs of children in their classes. This is also reflected in their commitment to ensure teacher voice is present in decision making.

“I think the whole point of being a Well School is that we give teachers and we give the SLT and we give the staff that free rein to make them feel that what they do is supporting the children supporting the families.” (SENCo)

The school also ensures a rich continuous professional development support as part of the commitment to support staff to thrive.

“There’s a really rich kind of CPD culture at the school. We want staff to feel valued. There’s a there’s a professional development policy which is, which is pretty strong and, and yeah there’s staff wellbeing I would say is one of the strengths of the school.” (AHT)

Staff are encouraged to pursue and research their interests and are offered opportunities for development.

“We have phase leaders who oversee, key stage 1 key stage 2 and lower key stage 2 and early years, and they’re on the ground they are their role is not an office role their role is going into classes team teaching supporting the teachers making the best progress give pointing them in the direction of CPD. We have a leader our Deputy Head oversees CPD so she’s always in and around.” (SENCo)

School 1 keep up to date with educational research and disseminate their learning across the school. They note that they are *“quite fortunate in that we've got some quite forward progressive thinking senior leaders at the school that are very close to the latest research and not only are they close to it they're using it, practically within the direction of the school”* (AHT).

A current focus for the school is around how children learn and they have integrated their '7K' approach *“which taps into how, for example, memory works and how children are best placed to learn at different times”*. As part of this the school are *“going through a series of CPD with our staff around all of that”*.

Examples of staff wellbeing work:

- One wellbeing day off work every year.
- Bringing staff together socially e.g. quiz nights.
- Organised staff sports sessions e.g. badminton.
- Gestures of thanks e.g. paid breakfast.
- Rich and valuable continuous professional development.
- Ongoing monitoring of staff wellbeing.

4. Promoting healthy lifestyles

“What's worked well has been what we are seeing is the links between physical health and attention in class so we're seeing that by running daily fitness sessions and by, by having our physical health lessons, sports days, work out Wednesday, all of those initiatives, active learning breaks, all of those initiatives that are working at the moment we are seeing an improvement with attention and focus when it comes to reading or writing so that's like a real big benefit that we're seeing.” (AHT)

Being a Well School includes preparing pupils for learning by supporting their physical and mental health. This is prioritised by School 1 who situate positive physical and mental health as a foundation for all other school activities. Healthy lifestyles are promoted through a rich curriculum, including strategies to support good health. School 1 recognise the challenges faced in their community and they support families to promote healthy lifestyles, for example through the set-up of a nutritious food bank. School 1 continuously monitor the work that they do and this includes physical wellbeing.

“Once a term they'll do like a different hopscotch challenges or different, star jump challenges and they just slowly monitor, you know, just not for the sake of the children just for the sake of just knowing we we're measuring impact and seeing that our curriculum does work our fitness sessions do work, even if it's just counting star jumps etc. but, (laughs) that's one way we measure impact in physical health, in terms of emotional health that's monitored along with the same way we monitor English the same way we monitor maths.”
(SENCo)

The school encourages physical activity across the day in different forms. Fitness sessions are used for breakout (unplanned) sessions to energise the children, help with restlessness and support regulation. Fitness sessions are used to support a quick burst of fitness and staff draw on *“things like Just Dance or Joe Wicks or whatever and it’s just break out time.”*

“The fitness sessions they’re all about getting out running around playing a game etc. just getting them pumped and that’s all linked to, you know, obesity in the area and it’s and it’s about health and that’s one thing which is we’ve seen huge differences we actually monitor that. We’ve got a physical health lead who actually monitors the fitness of the children it’s just really interesting just to see what that impact is over the space of three years, it’s been it’s really been great.” (SENCo)

Whole school quality physical and outdoor education

School 1 carefully plan their approach to physical health and activity programmes. Physical and emotional health is given equal priority to the academic curriculum and this extends to the number of taught hours for maths and English that is comparative to the hours given to physical and emotional health teaching. This includes *“a progressive curriculum that is, very much focused on,*

“Ultimately what’s more important is it more important to be physically fit and physically well to have a foundation so physical health balance strength flexibility or is it more important to let them know the rules of hockey?” (HT)

children developing the skills and understanding in those areas that they need, to be, physically and mentally well, our physical health curriculum is very much focused on physical health rather than sport” (HT). The focus is to support children to develop health and fitness skills and to understand the importance of these, rather than focusing on competitive sports.

Quality physical education is embedded in the daily and weekly routines of School 1. As well as fitness breakout sessions, specific timetabled sessions for fitness take place three times per week with physical health sessions occurring twice weekly. These are *“a bit more developed than the fitness”* and include *“for example, throwing and catching or gymnastic skills etc.”*

Outdoor learning plays a vital role in School 1. The School has a dedicated outdoor lead, testament to their commitment towards outdoor education. The outdoor lead has developed initiatives such as *“a fantastic edible playground”*.

“Everything is outdoor everything is, we have outdoor learning maths as well we have outdoor learning in English it’s just making it much more, you know, creative for those children getting them out there getting them seeing things.” (SENCo)

Compassionate support

School 1 focus on developing the skills and strategies children require to manage their emotional wellbeing and mental health and target this through the school’s emotional health curriculum. The school curriculum includes promotion of strategies to support emotional wellbeing and encourages children to consider their feelings and develop strategies towards self-regulation. *“Our behaviour*

policy at the moment is pretty much non-existent” (SENCo) because there is so much focus on self-regulation and making the right choices promoted through the emotional health curriculum.

“It’s not us telling the children ‘you’ve done this you’ve done this’ they know themselves what their emotion is like what their regulation is like and it’s about them supporting their own regulation, we have regulation break out corners in each room, for example, which is like not a naughty step it’s the children can take themselves to the regulation corner if they want to choose” (SENCo).

A nurturing approach is central within School 1 to support the mental health of their children. They have moved away from traditional behaviourist and punitive approaches in favour of promoting an ethos of kindness, respect and flexibility.

“You know, ‘if you’re not walking in the corridor when we’ve asked you to we’re going to, you know, shout at you about it, we’re going to put you in detention, we’re, you know, ...’ that’s the biggest thing for me it’s got to be part of the culture.” (HT)

The culture promotes understanding and compassion with regards challenging behaviours to ensure children are supported if they are finding things difficult in school.

“The same with the children, you know, if their behaviour’s such a big one for me and this idea that that, you know, if children can’t read well teach them to read but if children can’t behave we’ll punish them, you know, if some child turned to you you’ve been teaching a child for two years their phonics and they can’t do it what so now you start to sanction them for that ‘cos that’s not good enough and they should be able to do that, well, you know, you if you if you said that to anyone they’d be horrified at the idea ...their child was going to be punished. Well why is behaviour any different?” (HT)

A component of being a Well School includes also have systems and resources in place to support pupils who may be struggling with poor mental health too. School 1 works with organisations to support mental health, including Place2Be – a children’s mental health charity that help children to explore their emotions and work through them. There is a room in school where children can go to

How does School 1 put pillar two into practice:

- Mental health support and compassion for pupils who are struggling.
- Supporting families to access good food.
- Fitness sessions throughout the school day for energy, restlessness and regulation.
- Teaching pupils the importance and value of health and wellbeing.
- Developing strategies for self-regulation and encouraging these to be used through the school day.
- Outdoor education and learning programmes.
- Ongoing monitoring of health and wellbeing.

express themselves in a number of ways e.g., talking, playing or being creative and a counselling service is offered through this work too.

5. A bespoke curriculum to ensure children thrive

“The world is changing really rapidly, that presents, a whole range of opportunities and a whole range of challenges and those opportunities and challenges due to the pace in which the world is changing are evolving very quickly and they are very different to the opportunities and challenges I faced when I was 8 years old, and therefore what we are doing as schools as educators needs to change in order to address those opportunities and challenges and fundamentally what is currently the system in its broadest sense doesn’t do that.” (HT)

School 1 sets out there is significant overlap between Pillars 2 and 3. School 1 manages this overlap by emphasising the importance of equipping their pupils for life through a range of development and enriching experiences and providing a considered curriculum to support whole child development.

Redesigning the curriculum

School 1 strive to equip pupils with life skills and relevant knowledge for understanding their world. They understand that education has remained relatively static over the years and want to revolutionise their approach to make it more fit for purpose.

“We are working hard to kind of redress the imbalance in the curriculum, and we have re-written our curriculum so that health is at the forefront of, of everything that we do.” (AHT)

“Our Head will tell you is, you know, our curriculum, our national curriculum before we moved to this was written in a time of post-war and people were mining or working in factories, and now we’re in a state where we’re miles and miles away from that in terms of what’s going on in the future, what’s happened in the last twenty years even from when I was at school, to where we are now is completely different. So why are we still working on a curriculum based on the stone age or based on, we still do bits of history, do loads of history, but it’s still it’s based more on what’s relevant and what’s current and it’s good that teachers have the opportunity to influence that.” (SENCo)

School 1 have developed a bespoke curriculum to ensure their children thrive in all areas. Their approach combines learning activities, development of communication skills and promotion of physical and mental wellbeing. A holistic approach to curriculum development is achieved by placing health and wellbeing at the foundation of their curriculum. Pupils learn about emotional health and physical health as relevant activities are built into their daily routine. The school’s curriculum is based around four strands: academic, health, communication and culture. Cross-curricular links are developed to link learning across these areas.

“The whole curriculum is run on themes so each term the teachers will create a theme, it can be the same theme every year, for example, we had a book in year 1 called The Love Monster

which our emotional health curriculum is very much based on as well (laughs), and that would be the same theme for autumn one and autumn two and we do a monster day which linked into our culture and music etc., and we do some cooking based on monster cookies and maths etc., the whole term would be based on the colour monster.” (SENCo)

As well as the curriculum content, School 1 is focused on ensuring teaching is effective through integrating their “7K” strategies. These have been identified through their research to support children to acquire, develop and retain what they are taught.

Key components of bespoke curriculum designed to ensure children thrive:

- Four main strands: Academic, Communication, Health and Culture.
- Developing mastery.
- Spiral curriculum.
- Cross-curricular themes.
- Ensuring relevancy for life in the 21st century.
- Strategies to support children to acquire, develop and retain their learning.

Developing emotional literacy

“Our emotional curriculum is all about supporting that and giving children the opportunity to think about their emotions of what causes behaviour what causes, sadness what can make them happy what can support them moving forward etc. And then on top of that we also have a communication curriculum so that is sort of links to English I’d say, but it’s about communicating (laughs) those emotions.” (SENCo)

School 1 promote a number of strategies to support children in discussing their feelings. Children at the school report the strategies they use to share their feelings including colour monsters, soft toys, displays and teacher support. Children at the school understand the importance of sharing their emotions and report that it helps them to concentrate better in class. Children are encouraged to develop strategies to help them calm down if they are feeling heightened emotions. Across a sample of children surveyed the school reports children are able to communicate the strategies they use including counting to five and taking deep breaths.

“So we have based a whole emotional health curriculum around this, and supporting those children preparing those children for life.” (SENCo)

“The children come in from playtime they come in from lunch time and they select how they’re feeling, and it’s interesting because it’s not us telling the children ‘you’ve done this you’ve done this’ they know themselves what their emotion is like what their regulation is like and it’s about them supporting their own regulation.” (SENCo)

Developing cultural capital

School 1 have dedicated time to researching and identifying skills that are pertinent for children to thrive in the modern world and have considered the range of tools children can use to cope with challenging times. They aim to encourage children to think past their school and understand the wider world and integrate this into the curriculum “*you know, not just geography lessons we want them to understand [city] and [city’s] link to England and England to Europe*” (AHT)

Pupils’ personal development is threaded throughout the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to debate topical ideas in lessons. They are taught to be reflective of their feelings and the impact that these have on them and others. Pupils have access to a wide variety of before- and after-school activities, such as gymnastics, drones and technology, and investigators and inventors. (Ofsted, 2021)

They also tailor their approaches based on what is happening in the world.

“We never knew a pandemic was coming. We tailored our whole emotional health curriculum to support families and support children through that pandemic so we don’t know what’s going to happen in a year’s time it could be something completely different, you know, it could be a global affair it could be something in the community it could be that things are quite smooth and then we (laughs) we actually go back to teaching our original plans for the curriculum so yeah we it’s all one big project it’s all really fluid.” (SENCo)

The school also research skills that are important for children in later life. Their research suggests that communication skills are vital and have implemented a “*whole communication curriculum*”. There is a strong focus on preparing and equipping their children for the world beyond primary school.

“It’s a big change because, you know, coming from a Well School going to a secondary school which probably isn’t a Well School... is, is going to hit those children hard so we spend that time really preparing them for real life, you know, and it’s about giving them the tools to really cope with that transition.”

How does School 1 put pillar three into practice:

- Bespoke curriculum which has high quality health and wellbeing education at the foundation.
- Whole school focus on developing communication skills.
- Recognising the potential impact on digital technology and lockdowns on children’s social skills and providing opportunities to develop these.
- Focus on developing emotional literacy.
- Making teaching and learning relevant to the modern world.
- Teaching skills to equip children and young people to cope with the wider world.

6. Improved health and wellbeing and skills for life

“We get comments regularly by visitors about the feel of the school, that it feels different it feels, the buzz of the school staff are happy staff are smiling.” (AHT)

A range of positive outcomes were highlighted from being a Well School. School 1 report positive benefits to children’s physical health, including their fitness and healthiness and the general positive environment within the school. School 1 monitor their children’s fitness levels so they can measure the impact of their approach.

Success story:

“At the beginning of this academic year 58% of our key stage 1 children could pass a basic fitness test, and we’re not talking about the bleep test here we’re talking about like star jumps or something yeah, something that’s age appropriate, we felt that that was pretty shocking only less just over half of children could achieve what we felt was the expected standard of what they should be able to do, and we’ve since done the tests again and that’s gone up to like 90%”. (AHT)

The physical benefits are also regarded as having a positive impact for classroom-based learning with *“all of those initiatives that are working at the moment we are seeing an improvement with attention and focus when it comes to reading or writing so that’s like a real big benefit that we’re seeing.” (AHT)*

The emotional health curriculum is a vital part of the school’s approach and is embedded within everything they do. School 1 report their children engage with the content of their curriculum that fuels learning and recognisable benefits in terms of developing relationships, transitions beyond the school and managing challenging situations.

Success story:

“We’ve gone into meet with our old our pupils that have gone to secondary school and they have overwhelmingly, commented on how the emotional health curriculum at our School has supported them with the challenges that they faced, particularly in the early couple of weeks. One girl mentioned how she was able just to talk about her feelings to somebody next to her and that other girl was didn’t know her and she said ‘yeah I feel exactly the same’ and now they’re best friends and the other girl opened up her circle of friends to this this only child from our school and she’s really happy and she was able to talk about how being able to talk about her feelings openly has helped her to deliver that friendship so that was like a real success story as well.” (AHT)

School 1 also feel that the work they did in developing their pupils’ skills and strategies in emotional literacy prepared children to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The work that we did around emotion coaching the work we did around physical health before the pandemic really helped us to set up we had lots of children that were used to

using digital classroom lots of children that were, were used to talking about their emotions so when they came when they returned to school, when we did emotional circle time emotional health circle time the children already had the language that they could use to be able to explain how they felt, so that's been a huge success." (AHT)

Positive environment

'A place everyone loves to be' (school vision)

Staff at School 1 emphasised the positive environment of the school that stems from being a Well School and putting health and wellbeing at the heart. Staff talked about the difference in the school over the past few years and that *"the children you can feel that they're happier."*

Behaviour at the school is reported as being good and staff reported that the skills and strategies children learn as part of the Well Schools approach have contributed to improved behaviour as children are better able to regulate themselves and *"children are happy the children are responsive the children are wanting to be at school they're engaged"*.

Additionally, making staff wellbeing a school priority means *"the staff across all levels they have they enjoy their role they enjoy working at this school they feel supported"*

Staff report positive changes reflected in the school environment and pupil behaviour following the adoption of new approaches in line with becoming a Well School.

"It's not a quiet school at all, you know, we (laughs) the children they blast round this School but they're happy and they want to be here and it's really really positive." (SENCo)

"I have a really well structured emotional health curriculum to follow, you feel the difference in the children when they're around the school. You feel confident as you can go back to that curriculum and support those children through using that whereas before this curriculum was in place it was very much 'okay first warning next door, second warning you're going to see the Assistant Head Teacher, third warning we're calling your parents' etc. It doesn't work it's you can't follow through with that, there isn't an Assistant Head Teacher going to be next door every single time something's happened it doesn't work and it's about getting back to the basics of really supporting those children and talking to them about their emotions and making them realise the impact that they're having on us as teachers or on their peers or on their family." (SENCo)

Recognition of such changes led to a positive impact on staff wellbeing and staff retention. The school strongly believe that by looking after the health and wellbeing of their staff, they are supporting them to thrive that has benefits for teaching and learning more widely. Further, staff rarely

"They're [staff] fresh they're happy they love their job and so (laughs) they teach better because they're in a better place. If they're happy and they're relaxed then the lessons they teach are generally going to be better so yeah we see that every day." (AHT)

leave the school and report their *“first teacher in four years who’s leaving this summer. Because she’s moving too far away basically to be able... to commute anymore.”*

The ongoing in-school monitoring also allows the school to understand how their staff are feeling and their recent survey reported that *“100% {of staff} would recommend the school to a friend who was looking for a job, 100% {of staff} would recommend the school to a parent who was looking for a school for their child” (HT)*

A positive reaction from the school community

The reaction to being a Well School has been very positive through the school community. Parents report a range of benefits to the school including *“that their children are fitter they’re healthier they’re happier that they that they have, for example, we’ve got data around parents, appreciation of how well their children have coped with the return to school after the pandemic” (AHT).*

The School has achieved a significant overhaul having redeveloped their curriculum and embedding physical and emotional health at the heart of everything they do. Such changes have been received positively by parents in the community.

“I feel it yeah everybody knows this school is an amazing place to work the children in comparison to where we were when I first started five years ago we’re just a complete different school.” (SENCo)

“In terms of our, I think when parents see their children happy and they see what we’ve done and where we’re at I think they’re very much on board with that.” (SENCo)

Such awareness of these changes is also reflected in the number of parents choosing School 1 as the preferred school for their child to attend. The wider community understand the aims and values of the school, and these are viewed favourably by parents.

“The parents are begging for it they’re asking for that, you know, and that’s part of them knowing this is a Well School we’ve got children coming from other schools to join our school it’s a lot of pressure for us with funding and supporting children with need etc. but we do it because we know that we can support those families here so yeah just that that want and need you can really see a difference in the community who see that we are now this sort of hub who can help and who can support. We’re not all out there just to, just to, you know, get children through school it’s different.” (SENCo)

The school also received a very favourable Ofsted report in 2021, in which inspectors reported positively on the School’s achievements that included wellbeing and curriculum development.

Being part of the Well Schools movement also allows School 1 to share the good practice they feel so passionately about.

“What I said at the beginning stands, to change the world. I mean yeah I could not be more convinced or committed to the ideals around which Well Schools is founded, you know, I’ve said so many times already in the last half an hour that if we are not making sure that the

people who are working in schools are well are mentally and physically well then we are missing a massive opportunity” (HT)

7. The future of Well Schools for us

“Education is has not significantly changed for 150 years since the Victorians introduced free universal education, so changing that is clearly a big undertaking.” (HT)

Systemic change

The school recognises that changes to the education system are needed to sustain the approaches they have adopted. Their aim as part of the Well Schools movement is to inspire and motivate other schools to join and effect change from the ground up.

“Actually sometimes a better way {to effect change} is from the bottom up is, you know, is to get that mass of that groundswell of kind of, energy and full momentum to bring about that change and so the Well Schools movement is really about trying to empower schools, to enthuse schools to make those changes. Almost regardless of the system.” (HT)

Being part of Well Schools also allows collaboration and sharing good practice to sustain momentum in the movement. Well Schools encourage being part of the community to gain help, ideas and support to plan and implement the components of being a Well School. School 1 are open to working with other schools and reflecting on their practice as part of developing and progressing.

“We’re always learning and there’s always, you know, it’s been brilliant kind of, having the opportunity to talk, you know, to people like {names of individuals} and, you know, others who’ve been involved and, you know, always we’re always learning we’re always reflecting and thinking about what we’re doing and thinking about, you know, things we can do differently things that we can tweak things that things that we can improve so I think being part of that conversation is great, and really helpful.” (HT)

Working with others also provides reassurance regarding the approaches they are adopting within school, stating *“it can be lonely doing things differently”* and that working with like-minded schools who share similar values and ethos allows *“that confidence to continue on the path that you’re on.”*

“You know, I mean it’s amazing over a thousand schools that have joined up (to the Well Schools movement) but, you know, what is the best way to communicate that to the other 21,000?” (HT)

Next steps

School 1 are also keen to continue to raise awareness and promote the Well Schools approach more widely. They believe that the movement embodies *“where the vast majority see education going where they want education going, this is what people want for their children this is what, everybody*

wants out of a future of education”, however, they understand that this requires quite a shift in current educational thinking, so it’s important to consider “just how to communicate that.”

School 1 indicate that a next step for them is supporting driving the Well Schools movement forward and considering how they build on the work already done to progress, considering “what does being part of that Well Schools movement what does that look like? You know, is that about getting together and waving flags and coming up with a chart, no but seriously what does that really mean?”

The Well Schools ethos is firmly embedded in School 1 and they are keen to ensure the progress they have made is maintained and developed in the future. School 1 emphasised the importance of maintaining what they are doing, avoiding becoming complacent with the work they have already done and manage the temptation of introducing new programmes and initiatives. School 1 highlighted the importance of keeping the Well Schools approach at the forefront, keeping current staff motivated and ensuring new staff joining are consistent in the approach. The school noted that they were “always going to have new staff cycling through, to be fair it hasn’t happened in a while, but in next year we’ve got new teachers coming through” and the importance of “supporting people to understand what a Well School is supporting parents supporting families and just keep going with it and keep going and keep going.” (SENCo)

“It’s continuing to try to take that message, more widely and to try to influence more schools and more school leaders, more teachers to think about what they are doing in terms of the Well School approach and, you know, how they can bring that into their school and like I say continuing to be reflective, continuing to, you know, reflect on what we’re doing to refine it to look at others and what they’re doing, you know, continue to better understand the impact.”

(HT)

School 1 are keen to continue to monitor the impact of the Well Schools approach on a range of outcomes and consider the longitudinal gains for the children at their school and not just focus on the immediate benefits. They consider the work they do in school as laying “the foundations for their {children’s} lives” and want to “continue to develop and understand more about because this is not just about today it’s about these children’s lives and so, you know, really try and understand the impact of all of that in a really complex environment”. This is pertinent when considering preventative approaches since the benefits might not be immediately seen.

Looking forward:

- Continue to be part of the Well Schools movement to promote change in the education system.
- Collaborate with other schools to share good practice and ideas.
- Reflect and evaluate practice to develop approaches.
- Ensuring the Well Schools approach is consistent and visible within school to maintain momentum.
- Consider the longitudinal benefits and outcomes of being part of the Well Schools movement.

Chapter 5: School 2

“We see Well Schools as an umbrella under which we can run our organisation in the best possible way for all of the human beings within it.”

1. School background and context

School 2 is a secondary school located in a village in the south East of England. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with under 600 students on roll and has an attached sixth form. The proportion of special educational needs and disabilities pupils has increased over the years and many have complex needs.

The school was judged as “requires improvement” in 2017 OFSTED report. The current Head Teacher joined in 2018 and led the school to become an academy. The School have since made strides “to get the school out of special measures” and a number of schemes, programmes and initiatives have been adopted to develop the school. For example, it is part of the Activate Learning Education Trust, they brought in a programme called Leadership Matters and they joined the “Well Schools” community in 2020 during the pandemic.

2. A whole school culture

Why Well Schools?

School 2 joined Well Schools as part of a larger school improvement plan and timed well with planning at the school and the directions they wanted to take. The

“This is like designed for us.”

connection with the Youth Sport Trust and foci on physical wellbeing and the “*tie with sport*”, with a belief “*that sport is the solution to most things*” and then “*it and just started to connect*” for them. Yet, this initial conception of what is to be a Well School soon evolved and Well Schools has been provided with a prominent place within the school culture and philosophy, indeed the embedding of Well Schools within the school’s existing and current practice was part of the success story. For instance, School 2 have included Well Schools as part of their website with its own page and prominence and it “*starts off with why do we believe in the power of a Well School*” and how it “*ties into our learning philosophy*” (Head Teacher).

Well Schools compliments other initiatives within the school, in particular, Activate Learning Education Trust (ALET) group of schools and colleges to ‘transform lives through learning’ aligns with the Well School ethos of preparing and equipping students, by building confidence and ensuring opportunities to provide staff and students with a safe and supportive environment in which to thrive. For School 2, Well Schools has “*acted as an umbrella you can see... basically everything we do as a school fits under this umbrella*” (Head Teacher).

“It’s just more natural think obviously we need to be aware but if it’s less like forced it may last longer and may actually just become ‘this is our school’.”

The Head Teacher was keen for Well Schools not to be recognised as *another* intervention or programme, conscious of the perceived pressures such initiatives can place on staff. Instead, efforts were made to “*slowly embed*” and align with current practice and policy. Well Schools “*underpin*” practice while adopting the “*terminology*” to embed through the school and this has supported the leadership team in

understanding why they joined Well Schools and how it connects to practice, without adding additional pressures.

“We haven’t made a thing of it because if you make a thing of something it becomes something people have to do, so we’ve just really put it there by stealth” (Head Teacher)

Within the school the attitude to Well Schools has therefore been positive and staff comment on finding it clear, “*easy to identify with*” and “*good to base ideas off*” and how it “*just embedded quite naturally into the school life*”.

“The benefits of having the framework there it’s good for guidance and good from what we can set our schools out as teachers, particularly middle leaders involved in it to try and also speak to students and to plan things for students to embed those ideas and practices.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing).

It was perceived to sit at the “*core of the school*” and fit well with existing practice while offering opportunity to head in the right direction. Staff valued being part of the decision-making processes involved in Well Schools, supporting whole School 2 buy-in.

“It is a good direction for us to go in, we’re doing most of these things anyway, this is a really good fit, this is where we should where our school would be good like healthy wise, so yeah, it was definitely like talked to us about in that sense it wasn’t like ‘oh’ it wasn’t a joint decision.”

It is clear a facilitator of the adoption of Well schools, has been the suitability of the framework for School 2. Comments on how it fitted and embedded into existing practice, how decision-making was inclusive and support across the entire staff and school community evidence this. Indeed, as part of the initial considerations for a potential setting to take up a new innovation, programme, intervention or approach, are based on decisions of ecological fit, social validity and perception of need and benefit. Some suggested strategies for schools to consider when adopting a new innovation are shared by School 2 who believe when these are integrated into early decision ensure a foundation for successful implementation.

Strategies and steps for implementing new initiatives:

1. Assuring leadership team are involved in the decision-making process and see the innovation is needed and will benefit the school.
 2. Aligning the innovation with the school's mission and values.
 3. Identifying practice and policy that compliment and fit with the innovation.
 4. Identifying champions/leaders for the innovation who will advocate for its use and support others.
- All stakeholders must understand what the innovation is, what it consists of and what using it entails, therefore secure buy-in from staff.

Reference: Meyers, D. C., Durlak, J. A., & Wandersman, A. (2012). The Quality Implementation Framework: A Synthesis of Critical Steps in the Implementation Process. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50, 462–480. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9522-x>

What Well Schools means for our school

At the heart of the Well School philosophy is understanding the role wellbeing plays and adopting a curriculum that puts as much emphasis on wellbeing as it does on academic performance to create a culture that allows everyone to reach their potential. Thus, prioritising wellbeing, whole school, pupils and staff, pays dividends in multiple ways, such as learning and achievement. This is a message recognised across the whole school community.

“We see Well Schools as an umbrella under which we can run our organisation in the best possible way for all of the human beings within it.”

“Parents appreciate and value that... when we have open mornings, you know, parents say, you know, ‘what about exam results?’ and we don’t show exam data, you know, we say ‘well okay first and foremost let’s talk about what’s what gets us to those exam results’, and as soon as you say that half the room start nodding” (Head Teacher).

“I always feel like it’s a community school, it’s softer, it’s not so driven by the academics.” (Class teacher).

“We’re seeing more and more is that parents are becoming less interested in academic outcomes and more interested in the wellbeing of their children. Parents want their children to be safe happy and okay.”

Well Schools has offered the opportunity to prioritise wellbeing across the whole School “*putting wellbeing at the top of the, so it’s more of I guess it’s like part of our daily conversation*” and recognising its whole school potential “*is it culture setting, is it preventing, is it promoting*” (Head Teacher)

As a small village school, connection to the community was important and Well Schools has offered the opportunity to “*reconnect*” with the community.

“It’s a marathon not a sprint.”

“I’ve understood it as the school is growing back to the strength it could be and also it’s felt a little bit out of touch with the community when it went into its special measures a while ago and it’s a very tight knit place and I think they wanted someone to try and reconnect, help reconnect pupils to families to wider community stakeholders as well as actually push the Well School agenda.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

3. Leadership

“Looking after people is good leadership.”

Throughout the school staff wellbeing is supported and championed and this approach has led to a thriving and successful environment for both staff and students “*I think fundamentally as a leader I know that if people are in a good place, we get the best out of them*” (Head Teacher). The adopting of this approach requires thought, planning and the careful introduction of programmes and strategies that compliment and strengthen each other. It also requires a senior leadership team each taking roles and responsibilities and communicating regularly. For example, the Head Teacher meets with the wellbeing lead, the safeguarding lead and the assistant head in charge of behaviour leadership to strategise.

“...what are our four roles here, because the safeguarding lead is probably the person who is responding to mental health, the teacher, you know, we’re looking at his role and saying okay his role is to promote positive mental and physical health, the assistant head in charge of behaviour etc. her job is to set the culture of no bullying, respectful behaviours and my job is to oversee the strategy so we we’ve had a couple of instances recently where, you know, between us all or other people we’re all trying to do things and go ‘well hang on that we’re already doing that and that’s really similar’ and so we have got a meeting booked where we’re literally going to go back through everything we’ve got here, shrug it out, rebuild it and try and, sort of compartmentalise it a bit better.” (Head Teacher).

A Head of Health and Wellbeing: a re-structure and recognition of a wellbeing roles and responsibility was developed, with “management responsibility payments” specifically as part of the Well Schools remit and a Head of Health and Wellbeing position and focus was created.

“And so we put in a temporary TLR for wellbeing, interestingly there was some CPD offered by, and I think the YST were connected to it, called Inspire You ... I’m sure the YST put us in touch with it and it was about training PE staff to do more with wellbeing in schools and my PE staff are really overworked as it is and I thought actually I’ve got other staff this doesn’t have to be PE staff but because it was YST I think so I had a geography teacher who, you know, really passionate about sport and enrichment so he went on this CPD, which was, you know, it was about a thousand pounds worth of training which for schools is a lot ... and it was sort of, you know, it was aimed at middle leaders and wellbeing, you know, how somebody could be a middle leader and lead wellbeing so then I put in a temporary TLR so he oversees wellbeing for the school, but in a in, a if I say a preventative way he promotes positive wellbeing. So he does things for students he does, he gets students doing things, he gets staff doing things so that, yeah a cuppa with colleagues that’s come from him and the HR officer who organise social chat time at lunch or coffee time, you know, there are various bits and pieces on here that have come about as a result so I think what’s different since we’ve introduced this I think that was your question is it’s just become more of the culture it’s become part of the culture.”
(Headteacher)

As team the school are “looking for moving forward” and where there are “areas to improve” and through meetings with the Head Teacher. A class teacher also recognised “there’s definitely been a shift” but this has been a “gentle shift”. They appreciated the Head Teacher has been careful not overload or over burden “as a school that has had lots of new initiatives and staff that have been here for a long time” and “she’s kind of done it carefully in the fact that it’s almost like just slipped in”.

Embedding a culture of wellbeing

School 2 integrated a number of approaches to embed and centralise staff wellbeing and reflect that longer term engagement requires careful consideration: “sometimes wellbeing can be seen as a tick box ‘oh well we do this’ but does it have any impact?” (Head of Health and Wellbeing) to understand how it will work for the school.

“Well School is about showing people that you genuinely care about them that their wellbeing is important that they have a place, they have a value, and I wouldn’t subscribe to any leadership culture that didn’t think that was an important.”

School 2 introduced specific and named training programmes, such as the ‘Leadership Matters’ model by Andy Buck.

“...he talks about opportunity and recognition raising aspiration and he talks about feedback and success building self-belief... and if you have aspiration and self-belief you have motivation and if you have motivation out of that builds resilience self-regulation

independence and if you have those things you're likely to get, and this is where we've adapted it, you know, you have your self-worth you get your qualifications whatever they look like and it takes you to that next step destination and we were then linking this idea of opportunity and recognition to the well prepared pillar.” (Head Teacher)

Staff wellbeing staff clubs have been set up, such as a yoga club, running club, scheduled after school walks, small things to keep active and improve wellbeing. The schools have specific wellbeing days, *“we have seven inset days not five, two are specifically for wellbeing staff can do whatever they want on that day for their wellbeing, that’s approved at Trust level”*. Teachers responded well to this additional personal time and feel as if they are getting *“something in return”* and *“there's that conscious awareness of your wellbeing that you feel like you're cared for”* (Class teacher).

“I feel like the wellbeing days if you feel like you're getting a bit of a win, like you're getting something in return you don't mind all the extra stuff and all the bits and things, you know, so I think it helps you feel like it's noted, so you just feel better about doing it.” (Class teacher).

Staff wellbeing has also been supported through smaller day-to-day initiatives, such as simple activities as having a *“personal cheerleader programme, we have we do cuppa with colleagues very regularly”*. Offering flexibility and understanding staff needs was signposted as very relevant, as one teacher commented they these two additional days for wellbeing for a part time member of staff came these were on days off and a discussion amongst staff was had to make decisions on the best days for all. Important that such discussions have become regular practice is recognised as moving towards *“genuinely put wellbeing more at the top of the pile”* (Head Teacher). It is also *“do[ing] little things to show appreciation”*, for example there is a mug that is passed from colleague to colleague when they see someone do something good as a means to offer a small gesture of appreciation and staff have commented *“I was having a really bad day and I've got this and it's just highlighted why I do this job and it's helped me feel happier”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing). The Head of Health and Wellbeing has also been a listening ear for staff and while they may not be able to *“solve”* they can *“signpost”* and *“bring it to leadership meeting”* and this has presented an opportunity to highlight how they as a school can *“help improve”*.

“If we're not in a good place there's no way you can handle, do you see what I mean, it's a pretty hard job like teaching full time the kids and I think you've got to you've got to be on your on your game and got to be looked after to be able to do it effectively.”

The attitude focused on staffing and in reducing pressure, considering timetabling and resources.

“My understanding like that there was concessions about making sure that staff weren’t overloaded, we’re looking at kind of making sure that things fit well in the calendar so it’s not all kind of bunched together and there’s time, and things stripped back that aren’t necessary to make sure, you know, that staff aren’t overloaded. But yeah making sure that we are thinking about our wellbeing even simple things like emails after 6 o’clock are a bit of a no no, emails over the weekend are a no no like and having that culture of like when you go home that’s you go home.” (Class teacher)

Examples of staff wellbeing work:

- A personal cheerleader programme.
- Employee assistance programme.
- 7 inset days, 2 are specifically focused on wellbeing and staff can do whatever they want on that day for their wellbeing (approved at Trust level).
- Deep culture surveys amongst the staff to which the leadership team respond.
- Staff clubs e.g., yoga club, running club, after school walks.
- Cuppa with colleagues on a regular basis.

Monitoring staff wellbeing

The school also engage in monitoring staff wellbeing through the provision of *“deep culture surveys amongst the staff so we can then as a leadership team response”* (Head Teacher). These culture surveys were based on the Sir John Whitmore coaching for performance model and allow *“really fantastic deep culture survey into your organisation so that’s all the stuff that enables staff to prioritise their wellbeing, here’s a load of stuff that enables students to prioritise their wellbeing. Some really powerful stuff”* (Head Teacher). Teachers also commented that to record and monitor practice staff have been asked to complete internal surveys once or twice a year from the leadership team as well as external surveys from the academy Trust body.

“We’ve had research given to us as staff surveys, to complete varying depth about cultures of the school, about practices in the school, about what we actually do our goals our philosophies and how we far we align to those as well as how effective we think they are and it’s helped shape the next steps of our development as our own development as a school.”
(Head of Health and Wellbeing)

School 2’s recent OFSTED report (2022) recognised efforts into leadership:

- Leaders have worked with determination to raise the school profile in the community.
- Parents, staff and pupils are incredibly positive about school leadership.
- Staff feel that their workload is supported well. They say that they are proud to work at the school. They have every reason to be proud.
- Governors and trustees know their school well. Regular visits by link governors ensure that governors and trustees are well informed. They are supportive, challenging and enthusiastic. The trust offers considerable support to the school in terms of finance and expertise.

4. Well prepared and well equipped students

“A lot of pupils float through school life just they float and it’s finding them something they are passionate about and if we can help nurture that then that is preparing them well for the future.”

“It’s not just textbooks it’s not just exams, what you’re going to do in this is potentially going to help you in the future or it’s not, it’s up to you to engage with it, it’s up to you to help try and find your passion, and if we can help you do that then we’ve succeeded in making you a better person and improving your life which is the whole point.”

Pillar two of the Well Schools framework has a focus on preparing children via a foundation of positive physical and mental health. While Pillar three concerns building and developing skills to thrive and “*well equipped students need a wide range of skills and knowledge*” for “*creating success*” (Head Teacher). Within School 2 the provision of support for students under these two pillars tended to overlap.

“So that’s all about opportunities under well prepared and then under well-equipped, which is the school’s knowledge this is everything to do with, you know, our curriculum, our careers for life, SEND, equality and diversity, British values, everything we’re doing to improve literacy, how we bring alumni into the school to share their skills and knowledge with students.” (Head Teacher)

School 2 have a “*strong focus on health, welfare and wellbeing*” (OFSTED 2022) and it was the “*looking after people*” and “*the fact that it was tied into sport*” that drove the Head Teacher to join the Well School

“Students need a wide range of experiences that will enrich...”

community. School 2 recognise that within pillar two is an appreciation that mental health underlies success. School 2 believe that understanding of the causal chain of mental health based skills support short-term opportunities and feed into later life success. The role of student “*aspiration and self-belief*”, “*motivation*” and “*out of that builds resilience, self-regulation, independence, and if you have those things you’re likely to get, and this is where we’ve adapted it, you know, you have your self-worth*” and “*it takes you to that next step destination*” (Head Teacher). At the heart of these pillars for School 2 is a recognition that teaching and learning should be more than just classroom-based learning and should provide “*opportunity and recognition*” to give a “*wide range of experiences to enrich*” and this links to the ‘Leadership Matters’ model by Andy Buck.

“...you could have a kid in the classroom just learning subjects, go to school do your five lessons leave, you’re not then educating them for the rest of their life you’re not providing them with opportunities to find something that they can then take forward. Yeah they may be a brilliant scientist and they want to be a doctor, fine you get those, but you also get those

that are artistic are creative are different are unique, musically, sportily, artistically as I said but we try we want to give a broad education.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

Embedded in this notion is that education within School 2 is *“more about their wellbeing, rather than it’s all about the results”* and building non-academic skills too and *“staff actually engaging with pupils on a level other than just ‘I’m not just your teacher I’m going to help you do something that I enjoy you enjoy that can help you, develop social skills”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing).

Wellbeing curricula

School 2 are looking at ways to support student wellbeing and consider avenues where the school could develop *“which we can improve the school experience both academically and in extra-curricular ways and everything else in-between”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing). It is recognised that teachers are educators and there to support with learning and that it *“involves taking on a bit more of a nurturing role”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing). This can be through offering opportunities students would not normally have and *“chances to do things that outside the school norm”* and *“chances to engage in things which are going to only broaden their minds and help them in the future in the world if that makes sense”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing).

“We have a big onus on actually we are here to help but we’re not here to spoon feed you the whole way, actually we are here to educate you to deal with lots of things, particularly on wellbeing.”

A manifesto of respectful behaviours was developed and covers *“bullying, tolerance, racism, sexism, misogyny, particularly ethnic racism”* and this *“the first year of this manifesto has had a visible effect on that that level of abuse shall we call it, verbal abuse, and that’s kept building from there so that’s been one of the main things we’ve seen from that which has been really positive”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing). These feature as part of a new RSHE programme that discusses gender and sexuality.

A wellbeing club was set up by the new Head of Health and Wellbeing for students who have *“struggled”*, this was set-up specifically in to fit in with the Well Schools framework, so *“there’s a lot more opportunity for them to go and talk to people about their mental health and their wellbeing”* (Class teacher).

“...they come to the wellbeing club I run. For example, there’s a space to try and talk and actually, get to the bottom of certain things, which isn’t counselling, I don’t provide counselling I tell them that before they start. They’ll come out worse than they go in if they come to me for counselling, but the, it’s more open pupils have become more open.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

Physical and outdoor education

At School 2 there is an emphasis on the opportunity for physical and outdoor learning to play a significant role in preparing children. Post school closures (during the pandemic) School 2 are really trying to grow this area as they *“value it”* it is acknowledged *“at the moment it looks probably more*

like trips rather than, you know, curriculum” and “learning outdoors isn’t built into our curriculum” but instead “these are all the things that we do additional to day to day life”

“...we’ve got sixteen free school meals children currently sailing once a week, you know, the sort of Duke of Edinburgh house captains leadership sport clubs all of that so that’s all about opportunities under well prepared.” (Head Teacher)

“...we connect with the sailing lake down the road so we can try and build some outdoor learning experience for our disadvantaged students, you know, we value massively value ski trips and Duke of Edinburgh and bush craft trips and, you know, and clearly sport is massive but it’s not built into our curriculum.” (Head Teacher)

The PE department offer a range of sports and extra-curricular activities, providing a range of provision so there is something for everyone. Including: football, rugby, hockey, cricket, athletics, trampolining, sailing and watching sports.

How do School 2 put pillars two and three into practice:

- Student leadership and ambassador roles, such as literacy coordinators, sports captains, anti-bullying ambassadors, transition mentors and the school council.
- Wellbeing club.
- Manifesto of respectful behaviours.
- A curriculum for personal development including: relationships and sex education; living in the wider world and health and wellbeing.
- Sailing.
- Duke of Edinburgh.
- Wide range of sport clubs.
- Wide range of extra-curricula clubs e.g., philosophy club, a humanist society, coding club, drama, gardening, ultimate Frisby club, dungeons and dragons club, comic book club, film club.
- School trips e.g., Ski trips, bush craft trips.
- Alumni visits.
- Arts enrichment.
- 3D sculpture course - a mix between design and art tailored to boys to be more practical and hands-on using machinery.

5. The impact of Well Schools for us

“Everyone wants to focus on their wellbeing and it’s definitely something that’s at the forefront at the moment.”

“I think it’s the same with all wellbeing trying to do things that actually have impact and not just there because it’s a tick box which I do think sometimes wellbeing can be seen as a tick box ‘oh well we do this’ but does it have any impact?”

The Well Schools framework came at the “right time” for School 2 and the impact was already noted and reflected in the school’s very recent OFSTED report (Summer 2022). The School went from special measures to being awarded a Good, “our Ofsted report’s been published so amazing stuff... .. and wellbeing gets a good mention” and “to come out of the pandemic having been in special measures or requiring improvements for over a decade, to come out with the report that we’ve got, I don’t think you get that unless your staff are in a good place” (Head Teacher).

“If I read the first couple of bits off the Ofsted report which is ‘what is it like to attend this school?’ it says pupils are proud of their school they feel safe they feel happy, relationships between staff and pupils are respectful, pastoral support is extremely effective, a broad extra-curricular programme, you know, these are all things students have said”. (Head Teacher)

A positive reaction from staff

Staff have responded positively to the embedding of the Well Schools framework into school practice and “there’s good staff buy in” as wellbeing is “on the agenda” and “to actively be doing something that’s trying to improve it for everyone I think is really important” (Class teacher).

“It’s opened our eyes as well about wellness and wellbeing.”

“I don’t think there’s no negatives from it, you know, I mean staff are well aware of making sure that we are looked after and staff wellbeing’s good and there’s still more that can be done. That’s like everywhere, you know, so there’s no kind of like ‘urgh here we go’ ‘cos it was it was going to benefit everyone, you know, everyone wants to focus on their wellbeing and it’s definitely something that’s at the forefront at the moment.” (Class teacher)

“I think the staff are happier on the whole this year. Not that we weren’t happy in the first place if that makes sense but I just think we’ve little things have helped.”

A class teacher commented that it has been “really good” to have wellbeing for all taking a central place “on the agenda” and “that it is a focus for staff”. They were pleased to see an employer willing to have conversations about staff wellbeing and try to make a difference for their staff.

“It’s not just a fad, it’s not just a something else is going to come in a year’s time, you know, and making sure that it hits all the right people that actually really need it, and that it’s all can access the benefits of being a Well School, you know, ‘cos like yeah making sure we can all benefit from it.” (Class teacher)

The leadership team have recognised the impact on staff in terms of *“retention of staff without a doubt, reduction in absence of staff”* (Head Teacher).

“You ask any teacher in any school they’ll say they’re overworked and that’s the challenge of it. I’ve seen it from both sides and I’ve tried this year, on the whole our staff are quite good at self-regulating, we have very little sickness, we have very little absence, due to particularly wellbeing.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

Improved relationships

The interactions between pupils has notably changed. The Head of Health and Wellbeing noticed improved relationships between peer groups and suggests the whole school culture and ethos of looking after everyone’s wellbeing and the fact *“they’re embracing this as what we’re trying to do”* has contributed to these improved relationships.

“There are students who really recognise that they have really, you know, great opportunity and that we’re working hard to do a lot for them.”

“I’ve seen it in the way pupils interact with each other, I’ve seen pupils from inter-year groups ... hang out together, they will work together, they will have lunch together, and that has definitely increased this year. And I don’t know if it’s that culture, we’ve tried to build in the tolerance of respect of, breaking down those barriers, and pupils have been, maybe it’s also coming back to school after COVID, pupils have been more keen to interact with each other.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

Staff-student relationships have improved and there has been a sharing of *“passions”* and *“that’s helped pupils connect with staff”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing) and this connect is vital to student success and learning.

“Pupils have their best relationships with staff that they can then accept, the feedback and the, not criticism’s the wrong word, but the guidance maybe in a way that that wouldn’t normally they’d maybe down tools or they wouldn’t be very resilient to ‘you’ve not done particularly well here’ so it helps develop those relationships and be able to have those conversations.” (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

6. The future of Well Schools for us

“I think this coming year the profile’s really going to grow.”

School 2 are keen to build on the work and successes of their first year of embedding Well Schools and wellbeing into practice and *“moving into the next academic year, we’ve got three strands to our strategic plan and Well a Well School is one of the three key strategic plans”* (Head Teacher). Prioritising being a Well School in this way puts wellbeing at the forefront of future planning and strategising.

“I know it’s big in leadership team agenda it really is, and I don’t know if it’s quite disseminated down to staff yet, I think there are plans to... I know there was a meeting about it among leadership team, to talk about how we can embed this further next year.”
(Head of Health and Wellbeing)

Staff buy from the start will be crucial and this means there is interest in being part of this long term plan for wellbeing and *“staff saying actually we’d like to be involved in this we’d like to help prioritise this”* (Head Teacher) will be vital to the future development. There is planning for *“much more of the discussion”* with staff and a concerted effort not to overload and over burden staff.

Next steps

With wellbeing forming a central strand within the school’s strategic plan, there are discussion on how this can develop and consideration of actions that will make it an *“everyday part of life”* and while there is a *“really good foundation”* they are *“looking at expanding”* (Head Teacher).

“It’s just raising this, the profile of it, I believe is something first year, next year will be trying to raise it even further.”

There are strategic meetings and a process of evaluation in place: *“moving forward and to identify where we are doing well and maybe where we have areas to improve... We look at maybe things that we can take off our Well Schools list or not or things we need to add on and areas where we need to target for improvement”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing). The Head of Health and Wellbeing believes there is more they can do to ensure wellbeing is at the forefront and *“build this culture that we are trying to be a Well School”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing)

One step is to expand across the Trust and School 2 have invited the Youth Sport Trust, the founders of the Well School movement, to talk to the Trust about the Well Schools philosophy.

“What I want to do from that is across the Trust see because it is our, you know, it’s inherently our ethos across the Trust. No one thinks it’s not important. But I think what we want to do is kind of explore what that could look like because we have two schools and four UTCs and UTCs are technical schools sort of year 10, 10, 11, 12, 13... ...so we want to sort of explore how this can, I guess, leap across the Trust, you know, what we’ve learnt is you can we’ve learnt it really works when you pull it into your school”. (Head Teacher)

There is a plan for a Key Stage 3 to work the Anna Freud Centre on improving mental health in in schools and *“actually embedding that more into everyday curriculum”*. A whole school project concerning food provision in the school is planned to be available and work with an organisation called Bite Back 2030 who believe every young person deserves access to healthy and nutritious food. This recognises the role food plays in health and wellbeing.

“more stuff I'm sure will come up through the year...”

A focus across School 2 was making sure that they are sustaining and developing current practice: *“continuing with what we do currently we don't we've brought back, for example, the clubs which we brought it back in this year post-COVID and it's just hoping that they don't drop off”* and *“knowing when we need to adapt evolve and change things”* (Head of Health and Wellbeing).

Strategic plans for the future:

- Make wellbeing a Well School a strategic priority.
- Expand Well Schools across the Trust.
- Increase visual presence e.g., posters.
- Build notion of wellbeing for all into assemblies.
- Continue the development and sustaining engagement of extra curriculum sports clubs and activities.
- Improving mental health in in schools project in association with the Anna Freud Centre.
- Bite Back 2030 - Food provision in school project.

Chapter 6: School 3

“It’s personal development and it’s life skills through an exciting curriculum that is creative and hands on and practical.”

1. School background and context

School 3 is a special school in the North East of England. It is larger than the average special school with over 200 students between the ages of 2-19 years. Students have autism or profound, moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties and some pupils have additional medical, physical, sensory, linguistic or behavioural difficulties. Nearly half of the children come from disadvantaged backgrounds and receive free school meals. It is a sports college with focus on physical skills and also provides further education where pupils are supported between the ages of 16 and 19.

The school has been graded ‘Good’ by Ofsted since 2016 and maintained this grading in the inspection in 2020. They adopted the Thrive approach and Trauma informed approach in 2017 and they joined Well Schools in 2020 as one of the 33 founding schools.

2. Whole school culture

“We’re a special school so health and wellbeing of our pupils is in the middle of everything we do here. So we’ve probably been a Well School for quite a while.”

Why Well Schools?

The leadership in School 3 place great emphasis on health and wellbeing of staff and students. As it is a special school, all students have an education and health care plan and this feeds into their health and wellbeing and social and emotional targets. Being a sports college, they believe in using physical activity to promote wellbeing that aligns with the ethos of Well Schools so *“it was a no brainer really”*.

“Our motivation then wasn’t to start the journey, it was probably more to fine tune what we were doing.”

“It’s every person in the school having that in mind really and in the heart of what they do so as much as we’re teachers and we teach we also have these teachers who are very much engaged with looking after the children and making sure that they’re alright.”

Physical activity and sport are already an important element of the practices in School 3, “we’ve always been motivated by sport, we’ve always been motivated by physical activity so active work, we’ve always done it here”. They have been involved with the Youth Sports Trust for several years and were one of the ambassador schools to be recruited by Well Schools based on the recognition of the importance of wellbeing within the school.

“Using physical activities to promote mental health and wellbeing which is a major drive for being at this school so I would say for us as a school, physical activity, promoting, wellbeing, helping children regulate themselves, helping children cope with some of, a few issues they might be having.”

Existing initiatives within the school to promote staff and pupil wellbeing are aligned with Well Schools make it easy to adopt:

- Active in Mind highlights the importance of physical health and mind set of pupils to improve mental health and wellbeing in schools thus weaving in with the philosophy of Well Schools.
 - The local county’s physical and emotional framework was developed in collaboration with School A.
 - The local County Resilience Project for staff wellbeing.
 - Bronze award for Better Health at Work.
- The Deputy Head is a Thrive Practitioner.

Well Schools focus on improving education outcomes by placing wellbeing of pupils, teachers and senior leadership at the heart of the school practice; thus, enabling School 3 to formalise what they are already doing and have an action plan and a framework to work with.

“Social and mental health and wellbeing it very much is an umbrella here so, you know, you might just sorry you might stop somebody in the corridor and say, ‘well what do you mean by a Well School?’ they’ll just probably come out and say ‘well everybody’s happy and getting on.’ Everybody’s happy able to learn able to thrive things like that.”

Collaboration

The leadership at School 3 are motivated by the opportunity for collaboration with like-minded schools to share good practice especially regarding special needs education. They have been working with a private school in promoting the benefits of Yoga for the children and staff appreciate the benefits that stemmed from this collaboration. It has made them appreciate the potential of the Well Schools program.

“It opens up, a network for collaboration and sharing of ideas and things like that, you know, people who have, you know, unofficial research, you know, that, you know, have just tried things on the ground and things that have worked and things that haven’t worked and, you know, it’s time saving we haven’t got a lot of time in, in schools and know that helps massively.”

“We’ve got two links with two schools, right, why can’t we have links with fifteen schools. Why can’t we be a whole school for some kind of events now that we’re coming out of COVID times? We are within {local authority}, why can’t we have that wider and we’ve got a national forum now of likeminded schools that are coming together.”

Being an ambassador school for Well Schools, they want to be a pioneer in the field; promoting mental health and wellbeing as central to school life and hope to lead a conference in the future to promote these practices and values. They also see Well Schools community as a source of unofficial research where ideas can be tested and learning can be shared.

3. Staff wellbeing

“The same thought process that I have about pupils and understanding them as a whole person, I have about every member of staff in the school.”

Staff wellbeing is an integral aspect of Well Schools and recognised as essential for good teaching. This underpins the leadership practice at School 3 and this culture is driven by the senior leadership team with the support of the governors. They view staff as their greatest resource and believe in supporting and promoting their mental and physical health. This ethos encapsulates the first pillar of Well Schools.

“We currently have a good SLT, where there’s four of us in particular who are of a similar mind set and are very supportive of each other.”

The school has undergone a cultural shift in the last five years to recognise the importance of wellbeing along with academic achievement and understand individual backgrounds. The senior leadership support each other and the importance of nurturing staff health and wellbeing is driven top down. This is reflected in the Ofsted report from 2020:

“If we have an ethos that’s driven by me in that way then class teachers will have that ethos with their support staff. Teachers and support staff are more likely to have that ethos with children and you create a culture and so the culture is about staff wellbeing.”

“Leaders are sensitive to the amount of work that staff do. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and they feel valued by the school leaders. They appreciate the importance that leaders give to their well-being.” (Ofsted 2020)

The senior leadership apply the PACE approach – being playful, accepting, curious and empathetic – with students as well as the staff to improve engagement and ensure the school is a pleasant place to work and there is a feeling of community.

“Lisa Cherry sort of had a really good quote that, we’re all facing the same storm at the moment, but we’re in very different boats.”

Initiatives to support staff wellbeing

School 3 has programs to ensure that staff can realise their potential and feel they are part of a team in the school. There is a dedicated staff wellbeing lead responsible for ensuring that teachers and support staff are looked after. Staff wellbeing is on the monthly meeting agenda where the staff call themselves “Hashtag Team {school name}”.

Better Health at Work: Staff have trained to become “health advocates” and a working party was formed that looks at providing mental health support and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Themed monthly activities were used to raise awareness of different issues such as alcohol consumption and healthy eating. Clubs have been set up to encourage physical and creative activity such as cycling, walking, crochet and cooking. The school has achieved a bronze award in Better Health at Work and are now working towards the silver award.

Resilience Project: Staff completed questionnaires anonymously to find out about workload support and other aspects they may be struggling with to improve their resilience and wellbeing. This is usually something put in place for children and “we said well can we have it about staff”. Difficulties that staff were experiencing around communication were noted and the senior leadership acted on these findings to set up resources to address these issues.

“We have a section on the 365 where we put up, resources and courses and Teams around kind of resilience and assertiveness training, menopause, breast cancer awareness, around basic mental health training, we have got people coming in and delivering after school sessions around mindfulness and meditation..... We have cycling groups we have walking groups we have cooking groups we have crochet groups. So we are feel we feel like we’re getting our, you know, getting a handle back on this well led this aspect this wellbeing and the governors are on board as well.”

Making staff feel valued

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is seen as essential for teachers, and they have access to training to enable them to deliver their roles competently. While all staff may not be well versed with the language of Well Schools, being a special school there is a focus on mental health and wellbeing and staff are trained to achieve a whole school capability. There is a pupil emotional lead and a staff wellbeing lead who ensures that training is available to those who want to advance their learning in supporting themselves and others with their emotional, physical health and mental wellbeing.

“We’ve got a lot of staff who have individual roles in school who literally lead the line on those areas. So, we’ve got two more staff developing as a thrive practitioner and then obviously as I said before we’ve got this senior health mental health lead, we’ve got mental health first aiders but early mental health ones as well so we’ve got all that set up here. So, I would say there’s a fair bit of what you would call CPD that would go under the umbrella of Well Schools.”

They have an informal staff recognition event every Friday where staff get nominated and get a pack of Rolos as a reward. Although, a small gesture, it helps with wellbeing by acknowledging the hard work put in by teachers. The deputy head emphasised the importance of giving staff autonomy and bringing them into any new programs early so they could feel involved. This was corroborated by the Well Schools lead and staff and pupil wellbeing lead who agreed that they had autonomy in managing their programs and felt empowered to deliver them with the support of the governors and the senior leadership team.

Examples of Staff Wellbeing work:

- Community building initiatives such as cookery groups, crochet group and active groups such as walking and cycling groups.
- After school sessions on mindfulness and meditation for staff.
- Friday Rolos to recognise staff going the extra mile.
- Surveys to understand staff workload issues.

School A's OFSTED report (2020) recognised efforts into leadership:

- Leaders make sure that pupils are ready for the next stage in their education.
- Governors share leaders' ambition for all pupils to succeed and achieve well. They visit the school regularly and provide effective support and challenge. Staff feel that their workload is supported well. They say that they are proud to work at the school. They have every reason to be proud.
- Leaders are sensitive to the amount of work that staff do. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and they feel valued by the school leaders. They appreciate the importance that leaders give to their well-being.
- The majority of parents have shared their appreciation of the staff's hard work to support their young people.

4. Well prepared students

"The skills that young people learn when they're outdoors supports with their regulation, supports with their wellbeing, using the green space and just, for a lot of our young people, you know, we need to be teaching the curriculum that's relevant."

Being Well Prepared means that the school focuses on providing each child with positive physical and mental health. As School 3 is a special school and all children have an educational health care plan, their focus is on providing facilities and a curriculum that is linked the outcomes of their individual plans. They have an outdoor learning program and provide high quality physical education for the pupils to enable them to support their emotional regulation.

Physical activity and outdoor learning

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) is a program that School 3 have adopted in their practise. It gives teachers the opportunity to take learning outside of the classroom. They recognise the therapeutic effect of being in nature. Children have access to their swimming pools, fields and classrooms have access to outdoor areas during lessons. They have an outdoor classroom that is complemented by specialist equipment such as trim trails, sensory climbing equipment and a mini forest school.

"If the children aren't happy, well they're not going to be they're not really going to be learning or focusing on anything are they...I've literally just heard a member of staff outside the door here. Somebody struggling a little bit and they're saying 'let's go grab a football and go on the muga' so, you know, that that is a Well School initiative getting these kids involved all linked to physical activity. You know, that child doesn't want to go and sit in the class."

Outdoor play is also used as a regulation strategy for children who may get dysregulated during the day to enable them to get back into the state for learning. Flexible learning approaches are used to ensure children are happy. They found that autistic children preferred to do sport on their own so one on one support was tailored for them

that mitigated challenging behaviour during PE lessons. Staff were trained to support children on trampolines so they could be physically active without having to be involved in games with rules.

School 3 are established in their methods of how physical activity can have a positive impact to enable young people to cope with daily issues and improve mental health. A specialist Yoga teacher teaches yoga. Staff have noticed the positive impact of Yoga and physical development on the pupils as they have learnt the skills from the teacher and teach the techniques in their classrooms daily.

“It’s just something more that they’re interested in, you know, not all learning takes place in the classroom and you’ve got to try and leave it as hands on and make it as relevant for young people as you can.”

“I have learnt so much from our Yoga sessions. She has given me the confidence to work in my class delivering Yoga and I have seen first-hand the impact it has had on my class. I see some of the children focussing on their breathing which helps them calm down.”

Emotional support

As the children have severe learning difficulties all staff are trained to support the emotional and learning needs of the children. A triage system has been put in place so that if there is a concern about a pupil’s wellbeing then the social and emotional team staff will assess the issue to provide the necessary support. Some members have trained to be Thrive practitioners and there is also a therapy dog and in house counsellors who provide support to the pupils. Enrichment afternoons are organised on Fridays where pupils can engage in a range of non-academic activities such as bowling, mindful meditation and self-care.

New curriculum

Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school designed a recovery curriculum that focused on the children *“just around being in school and tolerating being in school and kind of reconnecting”*. As their cohort have moved into more children having severe learning difficulties, School 3 have rolled out a 3-tier curriculum supporting pre-formal, semi-formal and formal provisions based on the cognitive abilities of the children. They are focussed on delivering a curriculum model that considers the next steps for the pupils, whether that is to prepare them for the next Key Stage of their development or for later life. Learners are at the centre of the curriculum design. Based on their individual profiles pupils may be supported with college or work-based learning and include skill development such as preparing them for adulthood with as much relative independence and communication skills to ensure their safety and enrich their lives.

- The pre-formal provision is for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties and individualised while aiming to promote independence.
- The semi-formal provision focuses on developing more life skills and personal progress so they may join the further education provided by the school. These pupils join the post-16 provision to attain levels 2 and 3 in personal progress. They may progress to supported work after school.

- The formal provision is for pupils with higher cognitive abilities so they may gain accreditation, vocational learning and specific subject learning to enable them to work in a supported or independent capacity after school life.

They are focused preparing the children for life after school so the curriculum is designed to be *“purposeful and attainable and allowing the children to progress around independence and life skills and preparation for work”* to improve their outcomes.

How School 3 implement Pillar 2:

- Outdoor play and learning facilities for the children such as an outdoor classroom, trim trail, swimming pool.
- Equipment for outdoor play such as trampolines and scooters.
- Acknowledging the individual needs of the pupils and allowing a break from learning when needed.
- 3-tier curriculum tailored to the cognitive abilities of the children.
- Highly trained staff who can support the emotional and physical needs of the children.
- Triage system to address social and emotional difficulties.
- Enrichment programs with non-academic activities to engage the children in self-care, meditation, cookery etc.

The Ofsted Report from 2020 acknowledges these efforts:

- Leaders are working with staff, governors, parents and carers and pupils to develop this new curriculum, which is guided by the national curriculum where the school feels it is appropriate, given the pupils’ special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers plan learning opportunities using the three-tier curriculum, selecting the tier which is best suited to the needs of the class group.
- Teachers and support staff help pupils to make progress in their learning and build their confidence.
- Pupils’ personal development is enriched by many interesting activities and opportunities.

“A lot of the skills that they’re learning, that they have and what they need to get from the curriculum is around communication around tolerance of being around people and developing life skills and personal development. Taking the learning outside and having the learning offsite and developing skills through really fun activities means they learn better. Then the skills that they learn they provide the opportunity for them to become more transferable in different situations.”

5. Life skills to thrive at school and beyond

“It’s personal development and it’s life skills through an exciting curriculum that is creative and hands on and practical.”

Well equipped refers to every child having the skills to thrive in the modern world. The school are committed to ensuring that their pupils can develop into “*regulated learners*” and have necessary life skills to thrive at school and beyond. The new 3-tier curriculum has been designed to meet the long-term needs of the cohort. Given the special needs of the pupils at the school, the focus is on communication skills, tolerance of people and life skills transferable to different situations. The school ensures that children have a wide range of real-life experiences to gain and develop these skills.

Pupil leadership

Providing opportunities for leadership to pupils enables them to build their self-esteem and confidence. School 3 encourages sixth form pupils to become leaders in PE for the primary school. Pupils are provided with the experience of a responsible position that can be beneficial for addressing behavioural issues by engaging them in some physical activity and also provides role models for younger pupils.

“Everybody likes PE one in one way or another so it’s really quite nice to if we’ve got a young person who’s presenting quite challenging and not wanting to be in the classroom then giving them the responsibility of working with smaller young people in a PE lesson.”

The Ofsted Report from 2020 praises pupil enthusiasm and capabilities:

- Pupils are able to link their trips and visits to their learning in the classroom. This leads to valuable work-related learning and opportunities for future employment.
- Staff in the sixth form help students to feel more independent. Students have their own common room, which they value as being a ‘grown-up space’.
- Teachers support students to learn skills and knowledge that will help them to be independent in the community or at work.

RSE curriculum

The school have been proactive in new initiatives for the wellbeing of the students. They were the first special school to implement the RSE curriculum even before it became statutory.

“It was a challenge because trying to create an RSE curriculum for our young learners that range from PMLD SLD to the MLD and discreet autism, 2-19 spiral curriculum is what was required and I did that, I’ve done it.”

The staff lead for pupil emotional wellbeing acknowledged it was an area the teachers were uncomfortable delivering and has taken the responsibility for delivering the curriculum across the school.

“We need to really embed the consent and the safety and the personal development of our young people. They need to be leaving us at 19 fully understanding who they go to for help, what the trusted adults are, what's right what's wrong at the very basics.”

Transition support

Pupils join the school at various stages and the *“transition needs to be a slow gradual transition and a really supportive one.”* There is the opportunity to visit the school several times. Social stories with pictures of staff and the school are used to support both pupils and parents. The same strategy is used when pupils transition through the school and when they leave school to go onto college or another provision. There is a platform where families and young people can be signposted for emotional support in the wider community to support them.

“I want everybody to understand children and that they are children, you know, and they're going to turn into adults and we have a responsibility not only to educate them academically while they're here, we have a responsibility about society, you know, we can have an impact on society.” (Deputy Head)

Example of putting Pillar 3 into practise:

- Dedicated RSE curriculum.
- Sixth form pupils lead PE lessons for primary school children.
- Transition support at all stages.
- Support for parents and families.
- Visits to local supermarkets and cafes.
- Work experience within the school and in school cafes.
- Raising money by decorating cakes and biscuits in enterprise projects.

6. Impact

The ethos of Well Schools fitted in with the physical and emotional health framework that School 3 were already implementing. The primary impact that Well Schools has had for the school is the opportunity for collaboration with other like-minded schools and sharing hands on learning through case studies and examples perceived to be easier to implement than academic research, *“I read that case study and you know I've copied that and that's what we're doing now.”* They have used physical activity to help dysregulated children and shared that practise on the forum. *“I've had a few schools say to me, you know, 'I don't know why we didn't think of that.’”* By promoting Well Schools across the county they hope to drive it forward and help other schools are inspired to develop their health and wellbeing provision.

Pupil and staff wellbeing

Initiatives such as OPAL (outdoor play and learning) and Yoga have encouraged the use of physical activity to improve social and emotional health of the pupils. Outdoor play has also been used as a regulation strategy for pupils who may get dysregulated during the day. Being a sports college, the school has always encouraged sport and physical activity amongst its pupils and have seen the benefits on their wellbeing.

“Pupils enjoy attending [School name]. Pupils told us that they really like their school and described it as ‘great and fun.’ They feel happy and safe here because they know that adults care about them.” (Ofsted 2020)

Staff completed workload support and wellbeing surveys to shed light on the difficulties they were having which led to the formation of a working party to improve staff wellbeing. This is reflected in the Ofsted (2020) report where staff said they felt that the leadership cared about their wellbeing.

“We’re about physical development not only in terms of sports and things but physical development in terms of helping a child to understand what it what the feelings are that they have inside their body to help their body understand how to self-regulate. That’s going to have a huge impact on how they react in different circumstances when they’re older and then the impact on others. It’s a huge thing but the driver is to impact on other schools as well and have a wider impact than just in {school name}.”

7. New curriculum roll out

School 3 have been at the forefront of Well Schools and the pillars and ethos of Well Schools were easy to embed into the culture as they were already focussed on pupil and staff wellbeing. Staff are given autonomy to implement changes and the senior leadership are supportive of them. The current Well School lead is retiring and her successor will ensure that mental health and wellbeing remain at the heart of the school. He will be encouraged to raise the profile of Well Schools within the school and the wider community. The leadership are keen to share their learning with other schools to promote staff and student wellbeing across the country.

“We are within {local authority} why can’t we have that wide and we’ve got a national forum now, of likeminded schools that are coming together. We’re in the north east but how can we run something which is, you know, a mental health and wellbeing, Well School conference, you know, can we host that up here can we be the lead school for it, you know, they’re the kind of things that I’ll be challenging him for. That’s for me having a plaque on the wall just to say Well School is not something you get recognition from. Leading it from the front and being a pioneering school and taking things forward is where you get the recognition from ‘cos you’re actually making a difference then.”

Given the special needs of the pupils and the expertise needed to support them in their daily activities, the staff are highly skilled in SEND and are the school’s greatest resource. Currently School 3 have achieved the Bronze award and will be looking forward to achieving the silver award in Better Health at Work to improve staff wellbeing. More opportunities for outdoor education will be explored in the next school year. The revised curriculum will be rolled out and continuously enhanced to include art, music and high- quality physical education.

Top tips for implementing Well Schools:

- Focus on a small thing before moving on.
- Work with a ‘buddy’ school to choose a project that both can benefit from.
- Have a team of people who can effectively work together and lead on a particular strand.

Chapter 7: School 4

“It was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together, and it is about a school having wellbeing that’s at the core and the heart of what we do, and it’s like the golden thread that permeates through the school.”

1. School background and context

School 4 is a larger than average sized primary school incorporating a nursery and infant school as well as a junior school. The two schools are legally separate entities and they operate as one school for children aged 3-to-11 years and will be referred to as ‘the school’ for the purposes of this case study. The school is also part of one of the largest multi academy trusts (MAT) in England. The MAT includes primary, secondary and all-through schools, across the country.

School 4 is in an area of deprivation and poverty, with little access to green spaces (both in and out of school) and high levels of obesity and located in the West Midlands, England. The majority of pupils are eligible for free school meals and there is a higher-than-average proportion with SEND. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language is also above average. Pupil mobility is low with most pupils starting in nursery or reception and staying with the school until they leave at the end of Year 6.

Both schools were previously rated as ‘requires improvement’ by Ofsted and both have achieved ‘good’ overall ratings in their latest Ofsted reports. Changes at the school have been led by a new Executive Principal who took a non-traditional route to turning the school around, namely focusing on wellbeing of both pupils and staff as the foundation for success.

2. From failing to thriving with a focus on wellbeing

“The traditional route of just doing English and Maths all day every day hadn’t worked, so obviously our research around why it hadn’t worked meant that we needed to find another option, and another way was through wellbeing.”

School 4 has gone from a school that ‘requires improvement’ and where pupils fail to meet the expected standards in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 SATS, to a school where pupils enjoy a well-balanced curriculum and achieve above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. The Executive Principal notes such progress was achieved by taking a non-traditional approach and this was the start of the school’s journey with wellbeing.

Prior to being appointed as executive principal of both the infant and junior schools, the current executive head held senior leadership roles at both schools. Along with their new leadership team, they knew they would need to take a “*calculated risk*” to turn the schools around as a focus on academics had not and was not working. In addition to poor academic results, attendance figures at School 4 were low and staff turnover was high – “*neither pupils nor staff wanted to be there*”. After taking the time to observe pupils and talk to staff about what had been happening at the school and why both pupils and staff were unhappy, School 4 refocused its curriculum on wellbeing and physical activity, enabling more effective academic learning and ensuring staff were happier and able to teach. School 4 trialled offering physical activity at different times of the day and recognised this change influenced how children accessed other areas of the curriculum.

“Some people are having cognitive overload in the morning, because they’re having English and Maths on an empty stomach, they can’t focus, but actually coming in, having a bit of breakfast, then hitting something like fitness and circuit training [...] really changed the attitudes of the students as the day went on, so that because they were having successes in those morning lessons of PE, they felt confident and resilient then to access the maths lesson which a few months before they’d been throwing a chair at the wall and running out [...] it was all about kind of character development and, you know, shaping their ability around growth mindsets, and you know, accessing the wider curriculum.”

Staff wellbeing was a key pillar in School 4’s turnaround strategy. Previously, the school had relied on “*supply staff after supply staff*”. However, School 4 recognised the importance of a committed, engaged workforce who shared the school vision to achieve their vision. Further, for many of the pupils at the school, their teachers were some of the only consistent adult role models in their lives.

“Children see a lot of adults come in and go over their lives anyway at home, so to have that, you know, complete, you know, person, the same face every day, that’s going to be there every day, that knows them and cares about them was really important.”

Joining Well Schools “was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together”

“It was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together, and it is about a school having wellbeing that’s at the core and the heart of what we do, and it’s like the golden thread that permeates through the school.”

School 4 had begun its own wellbeing journey when it was introduced to the Youth Sports Trust and Well Schools. School 4’s ethos: ‘Healthy bodies, healthy minds, promising futures’ “fitted perfectly” with the Well Schools approach and the three pillars of Well Schools - Well Led, Well Prepared and Well Equipped.

External validation for their approach was one of the key reasons School 4 joined Well Schools. While the leadership team, led by the executive principal, had considered different research and evidence when developing their wellbeing-led approach, they encountered resistance where staff shared concerns regarding moving away from a focus on academics and situating wellbeing and physical activity as the foundation for success. Joining a group of like-minded schools that also placed equal emphasis on wellbeing and academic results substantiated School 4’s decision-making.

Validation came not only from Well Schools as an organisation and also from the opportunities Well Schools provided to collaborate and work with like-minded schools. For example, when School 4 joined Well Schools, they were paired with another primary school to “get some joined up thinking and ideas”.

“We were on our journey on our own anyway, this kind of gave me the validation that what I was doing was right [...] others thought we were bonkers for taking the risk.”

“...it’s just [...] having that professional conversation with somebody else that, because obviously at the time I didn’t have very likeminded people, that I could share ideas with, so that was quite helpful.”

In addition to the validation provided from being part of the Well Schools programme, School 4 also worked with several universities who evaluated their approach, underscoring the importance of evidence-based research to School 4. While the results spoke for themselves in the end – academically “results went from the bottom five percent nationally, to top 1% nationally”, while staff retention and pupil attendance also improved – the process took several years and it was useful for School 4 to be able to understand the potential impact of its approach through external research. School 4 continues to evaluate provision and successes and make adjustments as necessary. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic many pupils had lost fitness as they did not have access to a garden or outdoor space. Following their return to school, School 4 made adjustments to its physical activity curriculum to account for this.

Support, collaboration and the opportunity to join the larger wellbeing movement

In addition to validation, School 4 also recognised that the Youth Sports Trust had some “really fantastic people” and resources that could support them on their journey. In addition, School 4 valued the collaborative opportunities Well Schools offered as it provided validation of good practice as well as learning opportunities to expand school wellbeing provision. For example, the Youth Sports Trust came in

“It’s really important in learning about the good and the not so good, and how you can move forward.”

and talked to them about best practice approaches to wellbeing and physical activity, while School 4 and its partner school shared ideas about different ways to structure PE. School 4 has since adopted some of these ideas. This openness to new ideas ties into School 4's attitude and approach to research that underpinned the decision to place wellbeing at the heart of the school.

Joining Well Schools also provided School 4 with the opportunity to be *“part of that wider movement to get this out nationally and make, kind of make it more prominent in terms of policy and in terms of education.”* The executive principal who led the school turnaround is passionate about the importance of wellbeing and had taken a *“calculated risk”* to put wellbeing at the heart of the school. Since then, School 4 had seen the positive results from this approach in their own school and received validation from Well Schools, as well as external researchers. School 4 welcomed the opportunity that Well Schools presented to help spread the message about *“the importance of [putting] wellbeing at the heart of education, particularly post-COVID.”*

3. Leading by example

“Staff coming together and creating that vision as well, meant that everybody played a part, and everybody felt that they had invested in this journey and this process.”

School 4 believes in leading by example. This can be clearly seen in the senior leadership team's approach to turning the school around and their vision for wellbeing and physical activity to permeate the curriculum and whole school culture. For example, the executive principal, while not a trained PE or sports teacher, has taken responsibility for physical education within the school. For School 4 it was important that teachers believed that the school's *“leaders were going to be here for the long haul, stick out the journey, and really believe in it”*. This leadership by example, combined with an open attitude that valued and brought teachers on board, helped to create *“shared ownership”* between senior leaders and staff on the vision of the school. The result was that staff were engaged and believed in the school's vision and ethos.

“If staff are happy, they stay [...] I've got a fantastic staff that are really passionate and committed, and I think if they're happy, the children will be happy, they love what they're doing, they want to be part of the journey, part of the identity of who we are and the process.”

School 4 could identify benefits across the academic achievements of pupils and in improved attendance rates and staff retention and believed such changes were connected.

When School 4 joined Well Schools, they realised the importance of a school being Well Led as a pillar of success. This was something that prior to joining Well Schools, the senior leadership team had not always considered explicitly, although implicitly staff wellbeing was firmly embedded within the school culture.

“Looking at the well led bit, and actually looking at how much we actually did do for staff wellbeing as well, and we didn’t really realise it, so looking at that pillar, and actually going yeah, we do a lot to protect our staff and look after our staff, and also each other as senior leaders.”

While the executive principal and senior leadership team ensured that staff and teachers were well supported in their development, support for the executive principal was initially limited. This was partly why joining Well Schools and receiving support and validation from the Youth Sports Trust was crucial at this level.

Similarly, external evaluation and research carried out by university researchers was also important for this reason. Now that the approach is proven in practice, there is much more support from the MAT and the Executive Principal is to take on a role leading PE and physical activity across the whole MAT.

An organisational structure built on the three pillars

School 4 talked about character development, both of pupils and staff, as central values for the school. Regarding staff this is supported by an organisational structure built around the three key Well Schools pillars – Well Led, Well Equipped and Well Prepared. School 4 provides CPD opportunities around these pillars for example mental health training, Thrive training and PE training:

“If you can get all those three pillars correct [...] it’s going to create that foundation that’s going to support better progress and attainment, not just academically but socially and emotionally as well.”

“We’ve got a lot of expertise that we’ve shaped up over time that enables people, staff, to develop their own leadership [...] we’ve got lots of structures in place to support staff with personal development which obviously is our character, part of our curriculum, which is like our golden thread if you like that runs through.”

In addition to supporting staff members’ personal and career development, School 4 also values staff’s physical wellbeing. This is in line with the overall focus on physical wellbeing that permeates School 4’s approach and curriculum and is evidenced by the availability of an onsite gym for staff. There are also opportunities within the school day for staff to focus on physical health with all staff involved in team teaching PE lessons with support from sports coaches. Staff are also able to support and lead on different aspects of Well Prepared and Well Equipped pillars, for example by undertaking mental health first aid training, or training as Thrive practitioners.

4. Laying the foundations for a healthy life

“The time to stand back and look at the children, and really observe what it was they actually needed.”

Starting the day right

When the executive principal and new leadership team were appointed, there was an urgent need to turn the school around. Rather than repeating what had been tried before, this team took “the

time to stand back and look at the children, and really observe what it was they actually needed.”
What they noticed was that pupils were demotivated; their behaviour was extremely poor and they lacked social and emotional skills to deal with setbacks and failure.

School 4 is in an area of high deprivation with the majority of pupils eligible for free school meals. When reviewing the underlying reasons for the school’s poor performance and the behavioural problems with the children, School 4 realised that many of their pupils were coming to school hungry and unable to focus on schoolwork. Pupils were being taught English and Maths in the morning and failing to concentrate and make progress. By afternoon lessons pupils were lacking confidence in themselves and their abilities. School 4 radically overhauled the school day so that pupils felt successful and confident in accessing all areas of the curriculum. The foundations for this approach were built on wellbeing and physical activity.

“It was really taking the time to strip it all back and say this is going to be a long process and not a quick fix, because that’s not sustainable, we’re just going to be papering the cracks [...] It was absolutely pointless to keep having a diet on the timetable of English and Maths in the morning, and then English and Maths again, and interventions in the afternoon.”

“...having a bit of breakfast, then hitting something like fitness and circuit training [...] really changed the attitudes of the students as the day went on, so that because they were having successes in those morning lessons of PE, they felt confident and resilient then to access the maths lesson which a few months before they’d been throwing a chair at the wall and running out [...] it was all about kind of character development and, you know, shaping their ability around growth mindsets, you know, accessing the wider curriculum.”

Embedding physical activity

The focus on physical activity underpins the curriculum at School 4. In their most recent Ofsted reports, inspectors commented on the breadth of physical education and sports which is embedded across the whole school from reception to Year 6. This directly supports the school ethos: *“Healthy bodies, healthy minds, promising futures.”*

In early years provision, children have around eight hours of physical activity across the week to encourage them to keep physically active. This includes access to an outdoor classroom which children in reception use *“pretty much every day [...] they’re out come rain or shine, they have their wellies and their waterproofs.”*

“In reception [...] they do a lot of fundamental skills and it enables us then to kind of assess the children and where they’re at, and then we do have focused interventions, particularly on gross motor for our younger children as they come in, because we find if they haven’t been to our nursery or another nursery they’re quite lacking in fundamental skills.”

This time spent on physical activity also provides staff with the opportunity to observe children and assess their fine and gross motor skills, as well as other related competencies such as spatial awareness and balance.

Physical development is both pupil-led – children can choose the equipment they want to use, for example there are trim trails in both the infant and junior school – and directed by teachers to target the development of specific fundamental skills. This is a particular focus during the Autumn term of reception to ensure all pupils reach the desired developmental levels and are therefore in the best position to learn going forward.

“We’ve got a lot of outdoor equipment for them to be able to sort of pull themselves up and do lots of different activities outside, and we do balance ability, but we also do for the gross motor once we’ve assessed them and screened them upon entry, they all then go off in and be taken out into targeted smaller groups, so they’ll do different things like throwing and rolling a ball, catching a ball, you know, just different things that are going to help with their gross motor, and [...] they’ll be targeted by my sports staff and they’ll have other work that’s planned into their early years curriculum time during the day or during the week.”

The focus on physical activity as a fundamental part of the school day continues as pupils’ progress through the school. School 4 offers a wide range of traditional and non-traditional PE sports including circuit training, boxing, street dancing and break dancing. School 4 also has access to a running trail and its own mountain bikes and runs bike-ability courses for pupils. Further, all staff and pupils attend a week long, off-site team building event at the beginning of every school year that includes activities such as orienteering, treasure hunts and building campfires. School 4 also has members of staff trained in outdoor learning.

The importance which School 4 places on physical activity evident was also evident in the school’s approach to remote learning for pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic with pupils completing PE lessons online every day. Local secondary schools also comment on how well pupils at School 4 understand different sports and how well they are doing academically. Again, this success in both sports and academic achievements validates School 4’s and the Well Schools approach. Anecdotally, teachers at School 4 also talk about pupils who have left to go to secondary school and who return to tell their teachers that they have decided to take PE for GCSE. However, School 4 notes that despite having staff and pupils on board with the importance of physical health and wellbeing, engaging parents and families has been more difficult.

“We’d got this great momentum going with the parents, and we could talk about that and say, you know, with Youth Sports Trust, you know, it does align itself with all of the three pillars but then COVID came and everything kind of stopped, so the momentum has halted.”

Better engaging the parents and community in the Well Schools approach is a priority for School 4 going forward, *“We have these fantastically well rounded children in school but then we don’t have them for six weeks in the holidays and we want it to carry on outside of school building.”* Similarly,

School 4 is keen to build stronger links both with local secondary schools and with schools within the MAT, to ensure that the benefits of the Well Schools approach is not lost when pupils leave.

5. Equipping students with social and emotional skills

For School 4, with pupils living in an area of high deprivation and with the majority on free school meals, a focus on physical wellbeing resulted in better social and emotional wellbeing too. Pupils were provided with breakfast and the curriculum focused on a wide range of sports activities in the morning. As pupils were no longer hungry and had experienced success in PE, they were then in a better place to access the academic curriculum in the afternoon. This approach is supported by several teachers and staff who are also qualified Thrive practitioners and by staff who have undertaken mental health first aid training to better support pupils.

In addition to supporting social and emotional wellbeing through both physical wellbeing and dedicated mental health and social emotional support, School 4 also offers a weekly enrichment programme for pupils to learn other skills outside of the curriculum. This includes activities such as health and beauty, photography, DJ-ing, mountain biking, paddle boarding, darts, gardening and cookery, amongst others. Pupils choose their top three preferences and are enrolled in one of these programmes for a half term. At the end, pupils must demonstrate an outcome, for example by putting on a performance or an art exhibition. In their most recent Ofsted report, School 4 was praised for the strength of its curriculum enrichment programme.

6. Impact

The decision to focus on wellbeing as the ***“golden thread that permeates the school”***.

School 4 has gone from a *“failing school”* to a school where pupils achieve above the national average. The decision to focus on wellbeing as the *“golden thread that permeates the school”* was taken after careful observation and consideration of the barriers that were currently preventing pupils from succeeding. This considered approach was backed up by external researchers who approached School 4 and evaluated their approach.

While School 4 has already begun its journey to place wellbeing at the heart of the school before joining Well Schools, the values and ethos of the school and the Well Schools programme are firmly aligned. The achievements experienced by School 4 and its pupils underline how a focus on wellbeing as the foundation for success can work in practice. Teachers at School 4 also talk about successes that are less tangible.

“Pupils grow and develop, and leave at the end of Year 6, completely resilient and confident, and ready for Year 7. [Before] they would have been running out of the door, ready to leave because they hated it so much, but yeah, that’s quite hard to quantify, but you can see it and feel it.”

While initially, the executive principal and their leadership team found some resistance to their approach, the school is now often invited to speak about this at conferences, both within the MAT and externally. School 4 is now rated 'good' by Ofsted, it has won awards for its sports provision. Individual staff members have also received awards.

7. Sustainability - putting wellbeing at the heart of the curriculum and school life

School 4 is part of a large MAT. Following the school's success in putting wellbeing at the heart of the curriculum and school life, the executive principal has been appointed to lead personal development and PE across all primary schools within the MAT. The executive principal is passionate about the importance of wellbeing for academic success and success in life and for School 4 this focus on wellbeing is centred on physical activity and wellbeing as the foundations for mental and social emotional wellbeing. In addition to continuing to evaluate and adjust the programme as necessary in School 4, there are now plans to roll out the Well Schools programme across all primary schools within the MAT.

As well as spreading the word about Well Schools within the MAT, School 4 is keen to build stronger relationships and engagement with parents so that the benefits of wellbeing and physical activity are not forgotten or abandoned during the school holidays. School 4 did achieve engagement with parents and is keen to build engagement now that COVID-19 restrictions have been removed. As part of this, School 4 will be inviting new reception parents into school to learn about the school's approach, its ethos and the role of Well Schools and the Youth Sports Trust in this.

In addition, School 4 is keen to build relationships with secondary schools to ensure pupils in Year 6 can continue their wellbeing journeys when they move to secondary education.

"I think that's where we need to kind of link in because I don't want everything that we're doing to stop, and the children to lose focus or lose sight of how, you know, we've built something that's so magnificent that can carry them right through to when they're adults, for it to stop at the secondary because, you know, there's like three thousand children or however, many there are there, and they get lost."

More generally, School 4 believes that Well Schools needs to raise its profile, particularly within the larger MATs to better share the messages around the importance of wellbeing in education, as well as profile schools which have already successfully undertaken this journey.

Chapter 8: School 5

“Opening minds, transforming lives... success for all’ is not just a mantra, but infuses all we do.”

1. School background and context

School 5 is an average-sized secondary school located in a small town. Over half the students who attend speak English as an additional language and the representation of students from ethnic minorities is high. A higher-than-average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. However, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is lower than the national average. There is a high rate of pupils leaving and joining the school outside of normal transition points. The school joined the Well Schools community around two years ago and have become a founder member of the Well Schools community. In 2019 Ofsted awarded the school a Good status in all areas.

2. Whole school culture

Why Well Schools?

The decision to join Well Schools was guided from the top by the Head Teacher. School 5 joined the Well Schools community with an initial focus on pupils’ access to sport and physical exercise and in the last year has developed a greater focus on staff wellbeing. This development was felt necessary as the school had developed a comprehensive approach to supporting student wellbeing and had dedicated less time to supporting staff. Joining Well Schools and taking the time to evaluate the current wellbeing approach allowed School 5 to identify this gap, prompting them to put in place initiatives to address this.

“We do a lot for student wellbeing and I think obviously that does end up taking the priority doesn’t it? And I was quite conscious that that I don’t do enough for staff wellbeing so I was really keen that’s the area that we really could grow and really support.”

The school recognised that there is an issue nationally with staff *“leaving the profession”* and identifies the reason for this to be *“workload and it is to do with wellbeing”*. They suggested the build-up of pressures led to teachers feel overwhelmed and that there was insufficient support to help them navigate these difficulties, meaning staff were more likely to move to jobs outside of

education. Thus, promoting staff wellbeing and reducing the pressures that are causing people to consider leaving was identified as being important to maintaining staff. The school was already doing several things to promote staff wellbeing and saw Well Schools as a way to look *“at the stuff that we already do making that a little bit more organised a bit more structured a bit more, measuring the impact”*.

What Well Schools means for our school

In School 5 it is the Head Teacher and senior leadership team who interact with the rest of the Well Schools community and look for ways in which Well Schools ideas could contribute to their school. They fit these new ideas into a pre-existing set of initiatives for supporting wellbeing. This is supported by connections with mental health organisations. Teachers leading the wellbeing programme find ways to pull together all the potential wellbeing resources available and apply these in a way that is effective for their school.

“Also, with organisations like Well Schools but the and the organisations with workplace and things like Anna Freud, knowing there is so much out there and there’s so much that we can do and it’s pulling on those, agencies and to support us.”

They describe how a whole school culture that promotes wellbeing and encourages people to communicate openly about their own mental and physical wellbeing is starting to develop and is

“There’s still lots of lots of wellbeing concerns within our school community, but that’s yeah I think it’s that’s becoming more part of our culture.”

becoming an expected standard of school practice. They recognise that over the period of a few decades in education *“things change a lot”* and it will take time to fully embed this culture around wellbeing. School 5 acknowledges they have made progress to establish a school culture that promotes wellbeing they consider their school a work in progress with additional work ahead.

3. Enabling staff “positive feelings” about their workplace

The main aim is enabling staff to have “positive feelings” about their workplace.

When School 5 joined Well Schools, they identified staff wellbeing as an area that may have been overlooked in the past. They identify their main aim is enabling staff to have *“positive feelings”* about their workplace, which they believe will be beneficial for the individual and help maintain staff morale. School 5 identify the scale of involvement needed to create this change. Indeed, in the future the school’s wellbeing lead will reduce their wider responsibilities across the school supporting a tighter focus on wellbeing. Thus, School 5 recognises the importance of supporting wellbeing, as well as the time and consideration necessary to make this aim of supporting wellbeing practically feasible. The

“In fact my role, so like I said I’m head of health, head of year 7, but I’m also the wellbeing lead but next year in September I’m giving up the head of year so I can do more with Well Schools and kind of more with staff wellbeing. It’s just so massive isn’t it?”

wellbeing lead predicts that Well Schools will be an important influence when they have sufficient time to explore these resources in greater depth.

Additionally, through examining the current approaches to staff wellbeing, School 5 realised the importance of recognising staff wellbeing includes support staff as well as teachers. This inclusive perspective has encouraged them to ensure that all members of staff are appreciated and celebrated for their individual role within the school. Thus, they expanded their current approach to wellbeing to ensure that support staff also benefit from schemes to promote teacher wellbeing. They have expanded their system of “praise sheets” where each half term pupils are encouraged to write what they appreciate about staff. These used to be referred to as “teacher praise sheets” and

“When you deliver them to the canteen staff and they read one and have never had one before how, you know, how good they feel, so I think these are wider impact on staff rather than teaching staff, acknowledging everyone.”

they have now been changed to “staff praise sheets” so that support staff are also given the opportunity to receive one. School 5 also mentioned “doing more staff to staff praise” to encourage a culture where all members of staff recognise and appreciate their colleagues’ contributions.

Underlying these shifts in habits and approach School 5 has been formalising pre-existing initiatives, for example the praise sheets used to be filled in sporadically and now they are organised to be filled in every half term. Additionally, School 5 are also focusing on monitoring the effect of these schemes to ensure they are “impactful”. This emphasis on evaluating their current approach is a part of the school’s aim to ensure that they are being “smarter” about what they are doing to support wellbeing. By understanding what approaches work for staff, the school aims to ensure that the wellbeing schemes being chosen to have the greatest potential positive impact. School 5’s wellbeing lead has also attended a Well Schools webinar that helped them to identify aspects most useful for the school to consider.

“Also I’ve been to some of the, webinars as well which talked about, staff wellbeing itself and our own wellbeing and we just kind of shared ideas and things that really helped us, you know, the importance of sleep the importance of routine and we kind of shared ideas of, you know, what works for us as teachers.”

4. Student wellbeing and personal development

School 5 identifies its current approach to student wellbeing and personal development as being very positive, the school has already established a number of contacts with “outside agencies”, including the Anna Freud centre and a “drugs and alcohol service”, to enrich the support they are able to offer. They also see Well Schools as something that could also potentially contribute to this in the future.

Embedding mental health support in school

In daily school life they aim to embed wellness by making place for it in the weekly routine of all students. They consider what aspects of wellbeing might be most relevant for their students. For example, when students are doing their exams *“we focus quite a lot on tips for exam stress”*. They also have a weekly wellbeing tip that allows teachers time to focus on certain aspects of wellbeing and highlight resources students could look at in their own time.

“We start very simple, we do a wellbeing tip of the week for example, every week, as part of tutor time the whole school, and this, you know, last week was mental health week and we were focusing on loneliness and it was just like, listen to this podcast or these here's some films that we recommend or, just little things that they can do with loneliness.”

School 5 also has more directed mental health support for those young people who may be experiencing greater challenges. This includes one to one counselling support and support within small groups focusing on developing skills such as *“self-esteem building”*. By ensuring that these services are available and accessible to students the school is aiming to be *“constantly reminding the students “this is where you come for support”*.

Transition support

School 5 are aware of the need to provide additional support to students in times of transition. When welcoming new students moving from primary to the secondary school they prepare students for the practicalities of getting used to a new building and moving around school for their classes *“they have a like a timetable for the day so they might do Maths English or whatever”*. However, they also consider the emotional impact of transition and work to prepare new pupils for what this might be like through *“a wellbeing, session and that will involve the kind of emotions that come with changing a school and the changes and things that you can do to, help with those anxieties”*. The school also has systems in place for supporting students who arrive at the school outside of the typical transitional periods, which is relatively frequent in this school. This includes making sure these pupils have the opportunity to *“have a meeting with the Deputy if they're joining our school kind of mid-year”* this allows the school to know if pupils would benefit from extra support. If this is the case these students are referred to the wellbeing lead so that they can be offered additional support, such as *“a buddying programme”*.

Examples of supporting transition with a focus on wellbeing:

- Clear timetables to support building familiarity.
- Wellbeing sessions – recognise the emotions and anxieties associated with moving to a new school.
- Meeting with Deputy headteacher to identify support.
- A buddying programme.

Establishing healthy habits

The school also looks for ways that support physical exercise to be integrated into pupils' daily lives, rather than pupils being active "just in P.E". For example, in advance of the commonwealth games the school held a competition with different groups of students counting their steps "to reach the

"We do a mindfulness club on a Tuesday but always focus on outside mindfulness like mindful walks, writing chalk things on the floor that record information."

commonwealth games". The school also recognises the importance of young people having time outside "connecting with nature". They look for opportunities to combine pupils having time to engage with nature and wellbeing initiatives.

School 5 also recognises the importance of supporting young people to build their social skills so that they are able to navigate the complex social challenges that they may experience. Part of this includes young people being "trained in safeguarding" so that they are able to support their peers and respond well if a peer makes a disclosure to them.

5. Impact and being "that bit more organised"

"It's looking at the stuff that we already do making that a little bit more organised a bit more structured a bit more, measuring the impact but also knowing that there's a lot more that we can do."

One of the key aspects of being involved in Well School for School 5 was the opportunity to reflect on their provision; identify what they were already doing well, consider areas where this effective provision could be extended and areas where they could develop new ways to promote wellbeing.

School 5 has found the three pillars of Well Schools helpful in forming a framework to use when thinking about what they are already doing to promote wellbeing. It provided a way for the school to reflect on their current practise, especially in the area of staff wellbeing that had received less attention in the past.

"It enabled us as a school to see what we're doing well, and that we are doing stuff for staff wellbeing especially but we just need to do it better smarter."

Additionally, the Well School framework encouraged the school to be more structured in the way that they were evaluating the impact of their current wellbeing approach. Once they had identified areas to improve and introduced targeted wellbeing initiatives, for example expanding the teacher praise sheets to staff praise sheets, School 5 allowed time to evaluate the impact of these praise sheets. They did some research to find out "how do staff actually feel if they don't get one if they do get them". This research showed that staff really appreciated these praise sheets. This knowledge led the school to expand the idea to "staff praise sheets" as a way of showing appreciation of the whole staff, not just teachers. Here monitoring has played an important role in identifying both

where current practise is currently successful and how it could be expanded. They also have plans to continue collecting staff feedback about the schemes they are putting into effect.

“I would like to do at the end of the year definitely to see if, that, you know, that has made the impact that we hoped it would”.

6. Sustainability and sharing good practice

“I think again sharing that good practice, a bit of everything knowing that we’re all probably in in a similar situation, and, you know, what’s worked in other schools and what I can use in my school as well which will be good.”

School 5 only joined the Well Schools community a few years ago and describe themselves as being “very early stages” in their aim of integrating the Well Schools structure in their current approach to wellbeing. However, they see a lot of potential for how the Well Schools pillars can be used to guide their future approach as well as providing a framework to examine the success of school provision. When talking about their future plans for promoting wellbeing they say that they have “not even scratched the surface” of what Well Schools could mean for them.

Although, School 5 has only been part of Well Schools for a short period, they recognise the potential for positive connections with other schools within the Well Schools community. They see this as an important space for sharing ideas, highlighting the practical aspect of finding out what has worked well in similar schools. They are enthusiastic to use this knowledge to inform their provision and to maximise the impact of changes contributing positively to pupil and staff wellbeing.

Thus far School 5’s emphasis has been on staff wellbeing, as this is the area that they felt the largest improvement could be made. However, the school also recognises that the Well Schools approach could be useful in their work on pupil wellbeing that has been supported so far through school connections with several organisations who share advice about pupil wellbeing. In the future they are intending to use the Well Schools community as an additional source of ideas and are eager to consider and apply Well Schools for young people’s wellbeing “doesn’t mean that we’re not going to use Well Schools for students as well it’s just not something I’ve tapped into yet”. Indeed, they highlight areas where Well Schools could help inform their ongoing development, such as in outdoor education.

When thinking about the future of Well Schools in their school, they also highlight the importance of communicating with the whole school community about what they are doing. Thus, in addition to continuing to work on promoting staff wellbeing and beginning to use Well Schools to inform work with student wellbeing, they are thinking about the importance of raising the profile of Well Schools within the school community. Currently the decision to join

“I think we can make our community staff parents and students know a lot more that we are a Well School and what that looks like, and linking what we are doing to the fact that we are part of the of the Well Schools.”

Well Schools is being led by the senior leadership team and awareness of the Well Schools approach remains low across the rest of the staff. Raising the profile of Well Schools within school staff is therefore part of the future wellbeing policy. This would help ensure that staff are all aware of these ideas and what they could do to promote wellbeing in their daily work. The school also recognises the importance of considering the wider school community and intends to also make parents aware of Well Schools so that they can understand what the school is working towards and see how this is supported by the Well Schools pillars.

To support this increasing emphasis on wellbeing School 5 is also ensuring that staff responsible for such developments have ample time for such tasks. The current wellbeing lead plans to reduce their wider responsibilities to dedicate time in the new school year to prioritise wellbeing. The school recognises that currently the wellbeing lead does not have the time to develop the kind of changes that are necessary within the school, however, by reducing future responsibilities they are laying the foundations for being able to do more work in this area in the next academic year.

“I can’t do both jobs so it’s kind of been noted this year that, the wellbeing lead needs to focus on that for staff and students so currently we can definitely do more but that’s obviously being addressed for September.”

Chapter 9: School 6

“The children are at the heart of everything we do.”

1. School background and context

School 6 is a special school that caters for children and young people ages 2 to 19 who have a range of physical disabilities, learning disabilities or complex health needs. Most students have or are in process of receiving an Education, Health and Care Plan. Most students remain at school until the end of the year in which they turn 19. The school is situated in a semi-rural area close to a large city in the West Midlands of England and the students who attend come from a range of towns in the local area. Since 2012 Ofsted has awarded the school an ‘Outstanding’ status. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average and a lower than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The school joined the Well Schools community in early 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several experienced teachers retired so the school has recently had an influx of staff new to the school.

2. A Whole school culture

Why Well Schools?

School 6 places student wellbeing at the core of provision, with a particular focus on building community and developing individual students’ communication skills. Staff recognise the importance of supporting wellbeing, both as a way of facilitating academic development and for student’s personal development. Staff are *“focused on the whole pupil”* and take a *“holistic approach rather than just [focusing on] the academic side”*. Pupils have a wide range of support needs and School 6 recognises the importance of celebrating their pupils’ successes by looking at their progress as an individual rather than making a comparison with standards suited to mainstream education. Their website states that they focus on *“the progress that pupils do make in relation to their starting points and this is something that we are all very proud of”*. This focus on the student as a whole person, where wellbeing is seen as being as important as academic development, is a core part of the Well Schools approach.

“I think it’s really important because our children come to school with lots of difficulties whether they’re physical difficulties or learning difficulties or their mental wellbeing and often they have to be addressed before you can do your teaching and learning so it [wellbeing] really does underpin everything that we do.”

The school joined the Well Schools community during the COVID-19 pandemic to inform staff's work in supporting young people's wellbeing during this uncertain period. There was some initial uncertainty regarding the role that Well Schools could be integrated within the school. Well schools is increasingly being seen as a way of bringing together and celebrating all the diverse work that staff engage in to promote wellbeing and thus a means to formalise and unify practice.

"But perhaps we haven't brought it all under the one umbrella, so lots of different, lots of teachers are working lots of different areas doing wellbeing but I think the Well Schools can bring it all under one umbrella and we can then share that's what we're doing."

Although, the daily practise of the teaching staff is consistent with Well Schools principles, awareness of the Well Schools community and the potential is at an early stage. However, School 6 recognises the potential benefits of raising the profile of Well Schools amongst staff and sees this something to work on for the future.

Well culture in daily practise

Several aspects of School 6's daily practise embody the principles of Well Schools. In particular, the emphasis placed on students' personal development and the development of a whole school community. The most recent Ofsted report acknowledges that *"staff place huge importance on helping pupils to communicate well, from speech technology, through to communication boards, pupils have the tools they need to be understood."* The school focuses on communication skills, recognising they are the foundation for students to have a voice in their own learning and in their school.

"Pupils have got their own hand and it's got on there who they could go and ask for help from so that could be, a friend in their class or it could be a TA in their class or it could be some somebody outside their class."

The school also highlights the importance of supporting wellbeing during experiences such as transition. The school is split into Lower and Upper School. Although, the school location for pupils remains the same, they do experience transition. School 6 provides time for pupils to acclimatise and get used to Upper School. Such planning and action shapes transition into a positive experience where pupils are encouraged to build cross-age friendships.

"I think we're trying to do that transition the whole the whole time, so whether that's pupils from lower school going onto the upper school playground to get used to, you know, making friends with the pupils in upper school, whether that's in the curriculum day they're sharing, what they've learnt on curriculum day."

School 6 is keen to ensure that their pupils have a wide range of experiences. Often this is facilitated by flexibility in their curriculums and school days that allow for staff to organise time specifically for wellbeing.

"Because we're not so rigid on, this always has to be a Maths or an English lesson, I think it's the fact that we have curriculum days that allow allows that flexibility to focus on wellbeing."

Rebuilding post-pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all schools and School 6 noted it as being a particularly negative experience for their students. It was suggested young people within School 6 had missed out on key activities and experiences leading to “[have] got more problems because of COVID, I think it’s particularly with the old older pupils because they’ve not had their freedom to be able to go, you know, they’ve missed a lot of things”. School 6 noted that they usually offer a rich programme of outings and activities for their pupils and were unable to provide these during the pandemic and, in some cases, not been able to restart these because of uncertainty about potential lockdowns or COVID cases. Thus, a key aim for the school in this period is “trying to get back to normal” and re-establish the range of activities that were offered in the past.

“It’s been more important to do mental wellbeing.”

Alongside bringing back activities and outings, School 6 recognises that pupils may have struggled during the pandemic and now find it difficult to get used to school life again. As part of this they highlight the importance of supporting student wellbeing and place a particular emphasis on mental health. Staff have really encouraged a focus on student wellbeing; promoting the development of resilience and confidence to equip students to participate in school and the wider world.

“I think it’s always thinking well how can we help these pupils to gain their confidence again ‘cos, you know, you don’t do something two or three years you can lose your confidence in, you know, even from going out into the community or going to a sporting event or taking part in a big sports day or an even just an assembly in the hall some of the pupils struggled.”

School 6 recognises the community created within the school as being particularly valuable in building these skills and during the pandemic, as far as was possible the teachers used Zoom to allow pupils to remain connected to their friends in other bubbles. Now that school are operating more normally, they are placing an importance on restarting events focused on developing school community such as in person assemblies.

3. A positive staff culture

A positive culture around asking for help: “we do go and ask for advice...”

Support and flexibility for staff

Several experienced staff members retired during the pandemic and School 6 has recently recruited several new staff. They recognise there is a lot of learning for teachers when they join a school and are provided with time to acclimatise to their new surroundings and teams. They are empathetic to the amount of time it can take for a new staff member to feel entirely confident.

“I always say when staff new staff start it takes three years to get used to how our school works because it’s so complex, so your first year you’re just it can be a bit of a blur you’re just

learning what is going on and then then you feel a bit secure the second year and then by the third year you sort of 'oh yes I actually know what I'm doing I feel more confident to go and do some of these things.'

The school has also recently increased student numbers and to support these new students have also recruited additional support staff, such as “*care assistants*”. There are also other specialists that teachers can call on for advice when supporting students, including a “*behaviour specialist*”. School 6 emphasises that teachers can seek advice from senior leadership. Thus, when they are uncertain or need additional guidance, staff have a range of experts available to them.

The school has a number of additional schemes to support and reward staff. Before the COVID-19 pandemic one of the staff training days was dedicated to staff wellbeing. The day encouraged staff to “*try different activities one was like an arts theme taster*”. There is also a scheme to reward staff who have had 100% attendance over the year that supports a day of paid leave for a teacher.

Staff at school 6 perceived the school to be supporting when managing circumstances outside of the school that effect their personal wellbeing. When it comes to staff needing to take a leave of absence “*our Head is quite flexible*” and staff are generally given time off if for example “*your children are ill*” or “*you needed to go to a funeral and they weren't a really close relative*”, even if the local council rules would not ordinarily allow for such an absence.

Emphasis on high-quality training

School 6 sees training and continuing professional development as “*some of the biggest steps*” in ensuring staff can do their jobs effectively. There are several additional aspects of training that are necessary for staff working in special education, for example “*as a special school we have an awful lot of training meds training*”. School 6 sees training as a crucial part of “*supporting new staff coming in*” emphasising the importance of making sure that any staff joining the school are given the training needed to be able to fully support the young people they work with. Their 2020 Ofsted report reflects this emphasis on training and the positive impact for staff:

“Leaders invest considerable time and resources into ensuring that staff receive excellent quality training. Staff value it. Because of this high-quality training, teachers know what pupils need and how to help them learn.”

In addition to the necessary training, School 6 ensures that staff are also supported to increase their knowledge, through specialised training sessions that focus on supporting students’ overall wellbeing. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were provided with “*mental first aid training*”, to better prepare them to respond to the challenges that young people might be experiencing at this time. Additionally, there has been a focus on training that will support pupils’ physical wellbeing, where “*new teachers [were sent] on courses for to do yoga and gymnastics, swimming and dance*”.

4. The importance of physical activity for young peoples' wellbeing

"They won't learn or won't want to come to school if they don't feel welcomed and secure."

Embedding physical activity

School 6 recognises the importance of physical activity for young peoples' wellbeing. Moreover, they recognise the importance of making this accessible for the pupils they support. They adapt their pupil expectations to the individual and work to establish good habits that will maximise young people's ability to be active. For example, rather than setting particular targets for what activities pupils will be doing, they aim for *"all the pupils to have at least thirty minutes of exercise a day"*.

"We don't do the mile a day 'cos it's not appropriate for our pupils but we do do walking to help build that stamina and that wellbeing."

To facilitate these habits, the school has also invested in *"our equipment and resources on the playground and training staff to help facilitate, those activities"* and has an established habit of *"active breaks and active lunch times"*. Additionally, they *"get coaches to come in"* during lunch breaks to lead activities and ensure that pupils are experiencing high quality physical education. The emphasis is on young people's wellbeing and their ability to participate, rather than learning the rules of a particular sport. Physical activity is also seen as a positive space for developing social skills and emotional knowledge.

"So, for example, when I'm teaching in PE, I might be yes I'm looking at the physical side but I'm also looking at the emotional side as well and we're looking at the social skills, you know, team work and communication it underpins everything that we do and that's what everybody does in their lessons rather than it just being 'right you're learning x y and z today."

Mental health focus

The Head Teacher of this school has highlighted mental health as the *"big focus"*. This has been celebrated through the school applying for and receiving, a Carni Centre of Excellence for Mental Health gold award. This was used as a way of bringing attention to the numerous aspects that different teachers engage in to promote mental health wellbeing. In classrooms teachers focus on establishing pupils' ability to manage and recognise their own emotions. There is also a system for ensuring pupils know who they can talk to if they are feeling distressed:

"Pupils have got their own hand and it's got on there who they could go and ask for help from so that could be a friend in their class or it could be a TA in their class or it could be some somebody outside their class".

For those young people who are struggling to cope with their mental health there are a range of strategies to support them to manage these challenges. There are counsellors who regularly come to the school and teachers can refer their students to such experts. There is both *"talking therapy"* and *"music therapy"* so there is a range approaches depending on the needs of the individual being

referred to this service. Mental health is seen as being foundational to young people's ability to participate successfully in their education.

5. Equipping young people to be leaders

"It's giving them some responsibility, through shared ownership of activities, rather than just being told what to do all the time... they're part of the process."

School 6 perceives young people the opportunity to act as a leader as central to their personal development. To begin fostering these experiences they start early, giving pupils the opportunity to adopt positions of responsibility in their classrooms. Older students are able to lead school events and also have opportunities to use these skills in the wider community:

"All our pupils learn to be leaders in lessons so that might be leading a partner in a warm up, building up to leading a small group, building up to leading a whole class and we start that from a really young age we start it with like follow my leader, and then build up their skills and confidence in that, we have leaders who run events so some of those events might be in school so we do something called century of walk and or century of orienteering and we've got leaders from key stage 4 or key stage 5 who will facilitate activities that pupils can take part in and then we have some leaders who go external and then go and help with school games."

The school recognises these opportunities for leadership as a means of developing important "communication skills" in addition to "resilience". Acting as a leader can be difficult and by giving pupils the opportunity to become used to this, the school encourages their pupils to challenge themselves and learn how to "keep going" if things don't go as expected. As the school caters for a wide age range, they can start supporting these skills early on and slowly build them as pupils travel up the school, so that these skills become "natural". Additionally, the school sees these experiences as important for making sure that young people are able to participate in their school experience and build decision making skills.

Opportunities for meaningful experiences

The school has developed a wide range of opportunities for young people to go on external trips. There are also programmes where external organisations come into the school to lead events and activities for pupils. This includes a local city orchestra who come into the school to lead music activities with groups of pupils.

The school also has several opportunities for young people to participate in outdoor learning, including "walks within forests" and "sailing". Older students attend an enrichment day at an outdoors centre where they do a range of activities for the day including "zip wiring". During lockdowns when such excursions were not possible the school continued to recognise the importance of young people having time to be outside of their classrooms and, "made sure there was timetable for pupils to access being outside".

“It was a collective everybody in the school was doing it and I think it brought everybody together that community feeling.”

Within school, time is set aside for curriculum days that allows the school community to come together and share activities around a single topic. This allows for young people to have a positive experience with the rest of their peers and a recording is created of the event meaning there is a document of the experience that young people can look back on or share.

School 6’s mission statement to support students sets out:

- We develop each pupil’s independence and celebrate their successes.
- There is a balance of academic, artistic and physical education, as well as that of social and emotional well-being which prepares our pupils for future citizenship.
- We offer a wide and exciting range of extra-curricular opportunities such as clubs, educational visits, themed days, sporting events, plays, musical performances and assemblies.

6. The impact of being a Well School

Much of School 6’s daily practise is consistent with the Well Schools approach, particularly the principle that pupil wellbeing should be seen as equal to academic development and that academic development can only happen with the foundation of pupil positive mental and physical health. As a special school they adapt their expectations of pupils and celebrate their achievements, as well as dedicate time specifically for wellbeing. Moreover, as the school supports young people aged between 2 to 19 years of age, they are able to think in a long-term way about how they support their students to develop habits and skills that will support their wellbeing. Talking of the Well Schools community School 6 says, *“I don’t think we’ve celebrated it enough”*. They recognise the opportunity that Well School presents to showcase all they are doing and *“track that progress”* as well.

7. The future of Well Schools for us

While the profile of Well Schools is developing across School 6, however, they have identified the potential for Well Schools to be promoted as a way of highlighting and celebrating the range of opportunities that fuel promote wellbeing within the school. School 6 noted the content shared in the Well Schools community was *“very mainstream so often they’re not relevant to what we’re doing”*. They suggest seeking out *“a similar school to us”* in the Well Schools community could be useful *“so that we could be sharing ideas”*. As the core future focus of School 6 going forwards is rebuilding activities and opportunities that were offered pre-pandemic and supporting young people to become more resilient, Well Schools potentially provides a meaningful structure to guide this process.

Chapter 10: School 7

“Having a solid, robust mental health, and an understanding of how to keep yourself mentally healthy... is something that will benefit [the pupils and staff] for their whole lives.”

1. School background and context

School 7 is a larger than average-sized community primary school for children aged 3 to 11 years. The school is situated in a large, densely populated city suburb and pupils come from a wide range of different heritages, with most speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is above average, as is the number of pupils with special educational needs. Pupil mobility is high with a large proportion of children joining the school after early years, with *“children leaving every couple of weeks, [and] children arriving every few weeks”*. Children in Year 6 move to between 15 and 20 different secondary schools.

Since 2019, the school has been graded ‘Outstanding’ in all areas by Ofsted. Prior to this, the school was graded ‘Good’. In addition to being a Well School, School 7 offers a number of other programmes focused on pupil wellbeing and social emotional development, including Mind Up and Thrive. School 7 has been awarded a range of prizes for expertise in areas such as coaching and professional development, inclusivity and wellbeing.

2. Whole school culture

“We’re trying to acknowledge the things that impact their lives and make sure that we, you know, benefit them and value them, give time for them.”

Why Well Schools?

School 7 is a founding member of Well Schools and the Head Teacher sits on the Well Schools board. The school originally joined Well Schools as the values and ways of working promoted by Well Schools were firmly aligned with the values and principles of the school. School 7 embodies many of the qualities of Well Culture, including ethical leadership, listening to the student and staff voice,

“There’s a real alignment between what Well Schools is saying, and what we’re doing... Why wouldn’t we want to be a part of that?”

creating a culture of inclusion and diversity, a focus on wellbeing and a positive physical environment and pastoral and safeguarding support – each are underpinned by a whole school approach that puts wellbeing at the core of their provision.

Wellbeing as a priority

School 7’s focus on wellbeing permeates the whole school culture. This is evident through School 7’s focus on physical health, social emotional wellbeing and mental health – of both students and staff – as prominent parts of the school day and week, from nursery through to Year 6. Wellbeing is embedded across School 7 rather than being reserved as an additional factor that you can “tack on”. Wellbeing is considered integral to academic success.

“... having a solid, robust mental health, and an understanding of how to keep yourself mentally healthy [...] is something that will benefit [the pupils and staff] for their whole lives.”

In School 7, Well Schools operates within a larger network of schemes (including Thrive and Mind Up). These together are used by the school to promote the importance of being physically healthy, physically active and emotionally literate and having a good understanding of emotional development, mental health and how the brain works. Some of these programmes are currently used as targeted interventions for pupils that need them and there is a desire to more fully embed these into the classroom so all students can benefit. For example, more staff are currently undergoing Thrive training to ensure the underlying principles and values are adopted in everyday school life. This ambition to embed wellbeing for all at a whole school level, is complemented by an understanding that some pupils may require more help. School 7 employs a play therapist to work with children who need additional intervention and support for their mental and social emotional wellbeing.

Teacher and staff wellbeing is also viewed as crucial by the senior leadership team at School 7 and all staff have an allowance of paid and unpaid wellbeing days that they can take when needed, no questions asked. School 7 recognises that staff have lives outside school and respects family time, for example authorising time off to look after family and children.

‘There’s [...] respect for family time and just people’s time [...] it’s the acknowledgement that actually you might just need a day off [...] but you don’t have to justify [wellbeing days][...] We’re trying to acknowledge the things that impact their lives and make sure that we, you know, benefit them and value them, give time for them, because if your life outside starts falling apart because you’re giving everything to school, then that will start falling apart too. We want people to be [...] whole.’

Ethical leadership, management and organisational structure

Initiatives linked to the Well Schools programme have primarily been driven by certain members of the senior leadership team to date, namely the Head Teacher, the PE lead and the SENCO. However, all staff are aware of the Well Schools programme and the three pillars – Well Led, Well Prepared and Well Equipped. There is a desire to extend knowledge about what being a Well School means both within the senior leadership team and with staff and to make better use of the resources available to school and staff as part of the Well Schools community. This is in line with School 7's management culture which emphasises collaboration and autonomy and listens to and values the voice of staff and pupils. Further, embedding Well Schools in the whole school culture aligns with this way of working and ethos.

“There's also that trust which makes people feel just, you know, school is a much more pleasant place to be when you're trusted to make decisions.”

For School 7, this open way of working with staff, listening to their input and involving them in decision making, also ties into staff wellbeing. Teachers and teaching assistants' opinions are valued and taken seriously. There is a feeling of “*collective responsibility*” with all staff working together to support one another

and ensure the children progress as they should. All staff are also involved in developing new frameworks, programmes and ways of working and teachers have autonomy around how best to implement these frameworks in their classrooms and with their pupils. Involving staff in setting the school's strategic objectives and trusting staff to implement policies in this way, has created a culture where teachers are invested in the school, buy in to the school ethos and values and help the school to meet its objectives. This organisational structure supports the Well Schools idea of Well Culture, listening to the staff voice and enabling staff to thrive and achieve their potential.

There is also an emphasis on ongoing learning and personal development for staff both within school and through additional study if desired. Staff set their own development objectives and are coached and supported by senior management to achieve their goals.

Opportunities for collaboration

This collaborative approach to the management of the school is a central feature of School 7's culture. Staff perceive their ideas and input are valued and they are trusted to make decisions in their classrooms. Likewise, the culture of School 7 also recognises the value of the pupil voice and encourages children to act as ambassadors and lead on certain activities within the school. For example, School 7 has a daily whole school physical activity and pupils, staff and parents are encouraged to not only join in and may lead activities if they wish to do so.

School 7 has strong links with other schools locally, nationally and internationally. The opportunity to build on these existing relationships and collaborate with like-minded schools was another reason the Head Teacher was originally attracted to Well Schools.

Inclusion and diversity

School 7 has a diverse and mobile population and a higher than average proportion of pupils with SEND and English as an additional language. Regarding new joiners, the senior leadership team is keen to ensure all new pupils feel welcomed and that they belong, holding meetings with new pupils

within their first few weeks to understand how they're feeling and to answer any questions they may have. This emphasises to the children that their contribution is valued and that teachers listen to what they have to say. Similarly, the school is keen to reassure new parents that their children are in safe hands.

This open communication extends beyond new joiners to the wider school community of families and is underpinned by honesty and an understanding that home lives (of both pupils and staff) impact school lives. This open and inclusive culture is often commented on by staff and families. In fact, families from neighbouring schools have chosen to move their children to School 7 as they valued the open lines of communication in place between the school and families.

3. A culture of trust built on openness, collaboration and autonomy

"Wellbeing is very embedded into what we do."

A Well Led school supports and champions staff wellbeing. This approach is clearly demonstrated by School 7 within their provision of wellbeing days and through listening to and involving staff in school decisions and policies.

'Is this worth it?'

School 7 is constantly reviewing its policies and procedures in terms of whether they are effective, often using lesson study as part of this process. Everything "is interrogated in terms of is this worth it?"

"It's just part of what we do, we read relevant articles, put that in combination with trying things out in class. Lesson study is a great chance to try things and take on new things."

This process involves reviewing the current evidence base, trialling new things in their own classrooms and collaborating and learning from each other and other schools. School 7 terms this approach: "close to practice research" and it is embedded across the school.

"It's just part of what we do, we read relevant articles, put that in combination with trying things out in class. Lesson study is a great chance to try things and take on new things.... We've also done inter-school, teacher research groups, the hope next year is to have some teacher research groups [...] they'd be kind of spread across the year, and we're hoping to use those to develop some curriculum things that are more long term."

Staff involvement at School 7 reflects their Well Led approach. An example of this approach in action was the development of a new feedback and marking policy and tool kit that has been designed by School 7 to make learning more effective. The policy works by giving teachers autonomy to adopt the most appropriate feedback techniques depending on the context and situation. By involving staff in the development of toolkits and policies, School 7 has ensured that staff are fully brought in and this contributes to wellbeing:

“There’s a combination there in terms of wellbeing, part of it is time saved, part of it is the improvement in your wellbeing because you see the impact [...] the feedback is more in the moment and the improvement is quicker, and so it’s more effective, and as a teacher, what makes you feel better than seeing that you’re being effective [and] that it’s working.”

A whole staff approach to school development

School 7 has adopted a collaborative approach to setting the school’s development objectives, with all staff involved. Senior management are also always willing to listen to the views and opinions of teachers and teaching assistants who are in the classrooms with pupils every day. This open door and listening culture foster a positive, collaborative environment where staff feel valued and respected.

There is an emphasis on ongoing learning and personal development for staff that is driven by staff members rather than senior leadership and enables staff to choose areas they wish to develop based on their interests. Staff have autonomy to set their own goals and objectives and to develop their own lines of enquiry, with the only requirement that at least one should support the school’s development objectives. As the development objectives were developed in collaboration with and with input from staff, individual lines of enquiry are naturally aligned with the goals of the school.

Staff are also encouraged to pursue a passion project that should benefit the wider school and enables staff to pursue other areas they are interested in. This culture of ongoing learning and personal development extends beyond the school setting. Many staff are also undertaking additional study such as postgraduate courses to develop their skills as educators. These courses also often involve research, further instilling the value of evidence-based practice within staff at School 7.

Regarding their lines of enquiries, staff are well supported to deliver these projects. Each teacher has a “*growth partner*” – a member of the senior team who acts as their coach, providing support and mentoring, both through structured meetings and ad hoc when needed. All lines of enquiry are also shared on a big board in the staff room. This means that staff can easily identify others who are undertaking similar projects, can identify where their interests are aligned; thus, promoting additional opportunities for collaboration. This openness and autonomy foster an environment where staff feel empowered to pursue their own interests, while also cooperating and sharing ideas with like-minded colleagues and understanding the value these projects add to the school.

“...we’re pushing one another forward, developing the practice right the way across the school, but it’s from the grass roots, it’s not somebody standing with the school learning development and just like, you know, telling people what they have to do [...] the benefits of it to the school as well as to individuals are massive.”

Leading with humanity: prioritising wellbeing

For school 7 wellbeing is a fundamental part of the whole school culture it is “*very embedded into what we do*” and as outlined above staff are encouraged to share their ideas and work with other teachers and members of the senior leadership team to support both the school’s and their individual development. This approach recognises that wellbeing for staff is associated with feeling that time is well spent and being able to see that teaching is effective.

In addition, school 7 recognises that staff have commitments outside of school and respecting these is also a key feature of the school's approach to wellbeing. All members of staff can take one paid and five unpaid wellbeing days. These days do not have to be justified and are available for staff to be taken as leave as it suits each individual.

"We're trying to acknowledge the things that impact their lives and make sure that we [...] value them, give time for them, because if your life outside starts falling apart because you're giving everything to school, well then that will start falling apart too."

This understanding that people have lives outside of school also applies to the pupils and families at School 7. For example, following the COVID-19 pandemic, School 7 granted requests from families to take pupils out of school during term time, recognising that some of their families had not seen

"We lead with humanity and listen to people and do what we can, in the hope, that it goes both ways [...] people feel valued and included, and we do everything we can to be approachable."

other members of their families for two years. While this was a short-term policy introduced as a direct result of the pandemic and the associated lockdowns and travel restrictions, it is representative of the school's honesty, humanity and commitment to open communication with parents and families.

4. Physical health and wellbeing

"...that's the whole school, everyone coming together, something different every time, but we're really trying to get the children to lead [and] we involve the parents [...] it's just raising the profile of actually being healthy and sport, you know, getting out and getting active every day."

Promoting physical health

School 7 spoke about the link between Well Schools and sports and health and referred to the association with the Youth Sports Trust. One of the ways that Well Schools has most influenced School 7 is in their approach to physical health and wellbeing. Physical activity and health are key parts of every school day at School 7. For example, the whole school takes part in daily physical activity. There are different activities every day and pupils, staff and family members are encouraged to join in and lead a session. This approach emphasises both the importance of physical activity and the inclusive nature of the school where everyone's opinions and ideas are listened to and valued.

The sports lead at School 7 has also made good use of Well School's online resources and has benefitted from collaboration with other schools. This has informed the school's sports curriculum. For example, School 7 provides a broad and inclusive range of competitive sporting opportunities to ensure there is something for everyone, from football tournaments to boccia, recognising that a one-size fits all approach is not suitable for all children and not everyone will be able to enjoy or be able to participate in all activities. In addition, School 7 benefits from a large field and forest, as well as access to a canal. Pupils can take part in Forest School and regular canoeing and kayaking lessons.

Understanding our brains and emotions

School 7 believes that understanding how our brains and mind work is foundational to academic success, aligning with the Well School philosophy that places equal emphasis on wellbeing as academic performance. In addition to being a Well School, School 7 also uses other programmes (some of which were in place before joining Well Schools) designed to better their

understanding of mental health and social emotional wellbeing. From nursery, children follow an age-appropriate course of study that teaches them about key areas of the brain including the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala and the hippocampus. Having an understanding of the different parts of the brain and their functions, enables pupils to better understand their reactions and emotions.

“We want [the children] to read and write and solve problems, we want them to learn about the world, we want them to learn about history and geography, and all of that, but if you can’t make sense of your own mind, all of that will only take you so far.”

“They learn that right back to nursery and to be able to talk for them to talk about their amygdala, and so when they’ve been through, what some refer to as an amygdala moment when they’ve had a wobble or an outburst, it’s so much more productive.”

For all children, social emotional wellbeing and an understanding of the brain and mind is viewed as central to academic success. While all pupils at School 7 learn about the brain, the school also recognises that some children require additional professional help and for this the school employs a play therapist.

5. Leadership skills and social capital

Pupils at School 7 are encouraged to develop leadership skills and social capital through a range of activities. While School 7 did not talk explicitly about teaching these skills, they can be seen across the curriculum, particularly in the physical education programme that nurtures leadership skills and the Forest School programme that encourages problem solving and team building.

“We’ve got a group of Year 6 PE ambassadors that lead, you know, kind of calisthenic type things on one day [...] and there’s dead drumming on another day, [...] laps of the field, and the older ones are out there being encouraging to the younger ones.”

“It’s wonderful to see them, you know, some children who do struggle with the rigidity of the classroom or the enclosed space of the classroom, get over there, and they’re solving problems with their hands, and they’re climbing, they’re building, and they’re making things, [...] it’s built into our provision that every child in every year group has not only outdoor PE [...] but every child has an element of outdoor learning.”

6. Impact

School 7 embodies many of the values of Well Schools, however, it is difficult to discern whether these values and the associated initiatives stem from joining Well Schools or the pre-existing school culture and ongoing programmes of work. Despite this, teachers at School 7 are familiar with the Well Schools values and philosophy and much of this underpins everyday school life.

Perhaps the biggest impact of Well Schools has been in School 7's approach to physical activity and inclusion. Teachers in these areas have used Well Schools online resources, for example, there has been a push for every child to be involved in competitive sport, while also ensuring inclusivity. The Well Schools resources have helped to ensure that new programmes and ways of teaching come from a place of knowledge and fits with School 7's beliefs in the importance of research and evidence-informed practice.

7. An opportunity to collaborate and learn from like-minded schools

School 7 recognises that the Well Schools online resources could be employed more regularly by staff across the school. Similarly, one of the reasons for joining Well Schools was the opportunity to collaborate and learn from like-minded schools. As with the use of online resources, collaboration has to date been limited to a handful of staff, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

"I think the next steps is to bring in more people for it to become more of a school wide everyone understanding what it is, how does it differ to some of the other things that we're involved with and then to connect with other schools, more, again involving more of the staff because I know in some pockets of our school like our Head Teacher, for example, is very connected with other Well Schools Head Teachers and, I think our PE leader's very connected with other Well Schools PE leaders, for it to become, more permeated across the school and to have more of us involved and knowing what's available and seeing what we can contribute as well and being involved."

Chapter 11: School 8

“The world is our oyster to give our students that offer and I think that helps them to be those well prepared students and the fact that looking after their physical their mental their social aspects of their life and giving them a future.”

1. School background and context

School 8 is a non-selective secondary school located in the North West of England. It is a large mixed school with 1,200 pupils aged between 11-16 years. Nearly half of the children receive free school meals and a similar proportion do not have English as their first language. A smaller than average proportion of children have an EHCP and just over 10% receive SEN support.

The school was graded ‘Requires Improvement’ by Ofsted in 2016 and has improved to ‘Good’ in its last inspection in 2019. They were invited to join Well Schools by the Youth Support Trust in recognition of their good practices. The school undertakes research to continuously improve their practices and share them with other schools.

2. Whole school culture

“It’s always reflecting and it’s building up all to the end of the year to embed these habits in our teaching and also for the students then when they go room to room department to department they’re getting the exact same focus.”

Why Well Schools?

The school is part of the Research Schools network and provide training and support to other schools through the findings of their research. They have undertaken case studies in wellbeing and teacher practises to inform feedback and learning. There is a focus on consistent student experience throughout the school that is achieved through reflection regarding teaching practice and embedding effective approaches. Teacher led enquiry forms a cornerstone of teaching in this school and teachers are expected to participate and undertake research as part of their performance management. This has resulted in improved teaching habits where teachers observe and support each other in delivering engaging lessons to their pupils.

"If you've got an area of concern, Well School can help solve it for you because there's someone you can touch base with there's someone who's got a similar demographic school to you where you can think 'right you've got the same demographic area what do you do to tackle this' and the ideas are there for you to help with and to touch base with people on."

They were approached by Youth Sports Trust to join Well Schools so that their initiatives could be shared with other schools. School 8 were motivated by the opportunity to share their ideas and learn from others.

3. Initiatives to support staff wellbeing

"If we want the best out of our kids we need to look after our staff."

The first pillar of Well Schools is being Well Led has an emphasis on staff wellbeing. The senior leadership at School 8 are mindful of introducing change and the impact it has on staff. This has resulted in initiatives being introduced at a considered pace and with the involvement of members of staff and a conscious emphasis on how Well Led feeds into strategic planning.

The SLT are focused on staff wellbeing to ensure that staff feel valued, have a voice and the impact on them as a result of changes in the school.

Planning Time: The current curriculum change considers staff wellbeing by changing current assessments and marking to ensure staff have time to plan before the summer break and are able to have a restful summer.

"I think one of the things that sticks with me is the ideas of how staff can look after each other."

Flexi Day: All staff members get one 'flexi day' in the year to use at their discretion – birthday, child's school production, etc.

Health Assured: A programme to support staff during difficult experiences that impact on their personal wellbeing (including experiences such as financial hardship or divorce).

Examples of staff wellbeing work:

- Staff feedback on marking policies.
- Staff mugs.
- Staff massages.
- Friday heroes to make staff feel appreciated.
- Flexi day.
- Health assured program.

4. Well prepared focus

“Any idea that I had I could run with it, all to do with little things from taking students to Race for Life events, taking them to Gill Head, to doing multiple interventions with the Youth Sport Trust and all the different girls active projects and sports leaders, absolutely everything.”

School 8 have always had ‘well prepared’ as a focus. Several members of the senior leadership team have been PE teachers and accordingly, the connection between physical activity and mental wellbeing has always been an ethos followed by the school. Staff have the freedom to get pupils involved in a range of activities such as orienteering, bouldering, climbing and sailing as part of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to participate in competitive events, leadership programs and off-site trips. In addition to these, extended school activities are offered in the form of after school clubs and all pupils are expected to participate in at least two activities that are offered by the staff.

Staff have a responsibility to recognise students who may be struggling with mental health and identify suitable interventions for them. Feedback focuses on learning together and problem solving rather than pointing out errors.

“If we’re embedding habits where it’s okay for a child to get a question wrong it’s okay for them to not know they won’t be scared about coming in for that lesson.”

How do School 8 implement Pillar 2:

- Facilities for activities such as orienteering, swimming, cycling.
- Trips for climbing, bouldering, sailing.
- Nearly 40-50 extended school activities every day after school wherein students are expected to attend at least 2 a week.
- Interventions for students struggling with mental health.

5. Well equipped

“We make sure that every child has got a career when they leave us and they are okay and they know they're always here and they can come back to us.”

The third pillar - well equipped - ensures that children learn and develop the skills to thrive in the modern world. School 8 have a designed a bespoke PSHE curriculum called 'Aspire' that focuses on giving the pupils a sense of belonging and instils British values in the pupils. It encourages problem solving and ties in with the careers aspect of education to succeed in life beyond school.

The school are committed to supporting the mental wellbeing of pupils and have a large SEN department to support those with additional needs. They have an educational psychologist and a speech and language therapist to assess pupils and guide interventions as necessary. Good relationships with external organisations such as CAMHS are maintained to help those in need of additional support.

"They (pupils) are never disconnected from this school so we have a set up with them where we have leaver emails so they can always keep in contact with us from a social and emotional point of view so they are never left they've never left this school, if they're at college and they're struggling they can come back to us and we will put an arm round them and their families and still support them."

Transitions into and out of the school are managed sensitively. Pupils attend for two weeks in July to ease them into the new environment. Students with SEN receive additional support and start to transition earlier so they can become familiar with the staff and the school. School leavers are supported in securing apprenticeships or college places when they leave.

"It's giving them the opportunity to be a human and learn about resilience and co-operation and teamwork."

How do School 8 implement Pillar 3:

- Bespoke PSHE curriculum to build resilience and sense of belonging – Aspire.
- Large multidisciplinary SEN team.
- Transition support for new starters and leavers.

6. Impact

School 8 were invited to join the Well Schools program as they had a number of initiatives that reflected the ethos of Well Schools. They have found it rewarding to share their practices with other schools while learning from them through the online forum. As pupil wellbeing was already at the forefront in the school, Well Schools have helped to focus their mindset on staff wellbeing which has resulted in greater staff satisfaction. This has in turn enhanced pupil learning and outcomes as is evident from the improvement in the OFSTED report. Recent in-house surveys completed by students once in person schooling resumed following the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need for improving physical activity for the pupils and increasing attendance which is the first step in learning.

“Now we've got a big drive on our school on attendance. By looking after our staff, by looking after students, by having those communications, by making it everyone's focus and everyone's duty it's improving our attendance.”

School 8's OFSTED report (2019) recognised efforts into leadership (pillar 1):

- Dynamic Senior Leadership Team keen for improvement.
- Personalised professional development is used well to support staff at all stages of their careers.
- Leaders are sensitive to the staff workload. Flexible working arrangements are used to help staff who are facing difficulties.

School 8's OFSTED report (2019) recognised efforts into student welfare (pillar 2):

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders promote the need to eat healthily and keep safe through the health and wellbeing curriculum.

School 8's OFSTED report (2019) recognised efforts for equipping students (pillar 3):

- Leaders provide a comprehensive PSHE curriculum to help pupils understand these dangers and how to keep themselves safe.
- The school is a vibrant multicultural community and pupils learn to value diversity as a result. Leaders ensure that pupils are being prepared to be well-rounded citizens.
- Leaders have built strong relationships with pupils and their families.

7. Next Steps

School 8 have gained the benefits from the focus that Well Schools has provided and *“when we're looking at being a Well School continuing it's something we keep at the forefront all the time.”* To maintain and build on this School 8 want to encourage greater parental engagement and develop enhanced communication with them. While pupil wellbeing underpins all school values, staff wellbeing was the initial focus with Well Schools and the school have made good progress with it. The next step is to revisit pupil wellbeing and see how that can be developed.

“A lot of what we're doing in our well prepared and our well equipped, it's something that we wanted to have a little bit of a focus on but they're always ticking over in your head. So, I know a big one for us next year is to look at our well prepared and well equipped now as well and leave well led rolling but keep on touching base with it.”

Chapter 12: School 9

“We work well when we are well for work.”

1. School background and context

School 9 is a medium-sized, English-speaking, comprehensive school in Wales. An average number of pupils receive free school meals and the number of pupils with additional learning needs and statements of special educational needs are in line with national and local authority figures. Most pupils come from a White British background and speak English as a first language. Around one in ten come from Welsh speaking homes. Approximately one in 20 pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Less than two percent of pupils come a deprived area.

In 2018, the Care Inspectorate Wales rated School 9 ‘good’ for ‘wellbeing and attitudes to learning’ and ‘care, support, and guidance’, noting that ‘the school’s inclusive, supporting and nurturing ethos has a significant impact upon pupils’ wellbeing and personal development’. The report also noted there are rigorous processes to ensure pupil wellbeing and academic progress.

The school has strong connections with outside agencies such as educational psychologists, mental health teams and counsellors. As such, School 9 is prepared to provide additional support for pupils who need it. School 9 also works closely with parents and families.

2. Whole school culture

“We work well when we are well for work.”

Wellbeing, of both staff and pupils, has been a focus and core part of School 9’s curriculum for nearly ten years. Across this duration, a dedicated wellbeing lead has been in place in the school. This appointment was part of a restructure of the senior leadership team by a new head teacher at the time and coincided with the announcement of plans for a new health and wellbeing curriculum in Wales.

School 9 notes it was one of the first schools to focus on wellbeing in this way. It has subsequently helped to share information and knowledge about the importance of wellbeing and how to support this in school, presenting its approach at regional and national conferences. School 9 has been involved in feeding back to the local authority and providing input into the final national curriculum

that was introduced in September 2022. The new curriculum is split into six areas of learning and includes 'Health and wellbeing'.

The school's wellbeing motto is 'we work well when we are well for work', recognising wellbeing's role at the heart of the school and underlining the importance of wellbeing for success. This is in line with Well School's philosophy that a focus on wellbeing enables pupils and staff to achieve their potential.

Using research to help students achieve their best

School 9 believes it is important to look outwards to what other schools have done and consider relevant research findings. Through both sets of knowledge School 9 can make informed decisions when considering improvements and changes.

Regarding wellbeing specifically, the school has been involved with the School Health Research Network for several years and the wellbeing lead was seconded there in 2020. Through this network and experience, School 9 has insights into what data they should collect to monitor wellbeing of staff and pupils and how to compare themselves with other schools both regionally and nationally. Such knowledge enables School 9 to understand where they are, consider improvements regarding all areas of wellbeing including healthy behaviours, mental, social and physical health, across the school.

"Research is something we would constantly need to be looking at to see if there are any new developments, to see if we can help assist or support our students to achieve the best they can [...] or what students are going to need moving forward into an ever changing world."

From fire-fighting to a preventative model of wellbeing

The initial appointment of a dedicated health and wellbeing lead in School 9 was reactive. School 9 quickly moved to a preventative model of wellbeing that focused on ensuring students and staff had an understanding and knowledge of wellbeing principles. This model recognises that wellbeing comprises physical health, social and emotional health and mental health – that each "need to be in place for a person to be regarded as healthy".

"It was a bit like fire fighter role [...] It was one of those jobs that was never-ending. Literally there was a problem coming up, and having to intervene, step in, and try and sort that problem [...] it would get to point where it would be a whack-a-mole – you'd sort one issue out, then something else would come up."

School 9 now recognise they have moved to a proactive approach regarding health and wellbeing that aims to equip staff and students with the skills they need to deal with issues when they arise. Having these principles ingrained in the school curriculum prior to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that staff and students had the resilience required to manage and cope with the associated challenges.

“Having them [...] there as part of our toolbox for when things do arise [...] then it actually alleviates and helps out a lot of the issues that can arise and I think that was a particular strength pre COVID, in the sense that we had that toolbox, we had that framework to work off, and it wasn’t something that we were suddenly telling the students and staff about the importance of wellbeing. They had that toolbox, they had that reference point to be able to [...] be that little bit more resilient [...] to the challenges that the last two years have thrown at us.”

Joining Well Schools: ‘an opportunity to share and to learn from others’

The decision to join Well Schools was a logical step in School 9’s wellbeing journey. The school had a strong and dedicated focus on health and wellbeing and when they were introduced to Well Schools, they discovered that the ethos *“tied in quite well with all the work that we had been doing”*.

Further, joining Well Schools provided opportunities for School 9 to share their experiences and learn from other schools in the network. This reflects the school’s openness and willingness to work with and learn from other schools and external research, to improve teaching approaches and how they deliver knowledge to pupils.

“I think sometimes at schools we can be quite insular, and we kind of come up with the new, sparkly idea or initiative, and sometimes schools are very reluctant to share [...] every school is different [...] so I think it’s just that willingness to share and to learn from others [...] so that Well Schools network for me was an opportunity to see what was going on further afield.”

As health and wellbeing were already central to School 9’s core framework, Well Schools has been integrated into existing programmes of work rather than being considered as a standalone feature. This approach was taken partly because the school’s wellbeing programme is already well-established and partly to avoid confusion of adding another wellbeing approach to the mix for students who were already familiar with other approaches, for example five ways to wellbeing and five a day.

“We’ve used Well Schools to actually improve what we already had [...] I felt that Well Schools would fit really well embedded within our social, mental and physical health model, just to keep giving that the prominence it deserves [...] They might not have the titles that Well Schools use, but [...] the majority of staff and the majority of students would be able to give you that consistent understanding of what a Well Schools is, and how that would be represented.”

“You said, we did”

School 9 has an open and listening culture and the opinions of staff and students are valued. There are many opportunities for both to share their views and school 9 ensures that staff and students understand when these views are listened to and acted upon.

“Having posters around the school saying ‘you said, we did’ just to make sure that students and staff are seeing that we are acting upon feedback [...] They’re actually seeing the benefits, and they’re seeing that their voice is being listened to.”

With students, this listening often takes the form of surveys and questionnaires. All students from Years 7 to 13 also complete the School Health Research Network survey every two years, providing insights into how students feel and how supports comparison with other schools.

Staff can share their views via an electronic suggestion box that is available every day of the year. Additionally, School 9 also conducts an annual staff survey, supporting the views of all members of staff including teachers and non-teaching staff to fuel school development.

While School 9 encourages students and staff to share their views, the school is also pragmatic and understands that not everyone will prioritise wellbeing to the same degree. However, by being open and demonstrating that they listen and act on feedback, the majority of students and staff are on board.

“There are some students you will never crack [...] There are some staff you will never crack, but as long as you’ve got the majority, they tend to bring others along with them, and I think you need that momentum, that people are saying ‘well yeah, it is worthwhile doing this, because this is what we’ve gained from it.”

3. Staff wellbeing: a priority from the top

“When you say wellbeing it covers such a massive range of issues, I just think that linking in with that leadership, I think that we have been able to be successful as a school.”

School 9’s organisational structure supports the importance of health and wellbeing and ensures it remains a strong and consistent focus for the school. There is a dedicated wellbeing lead and health and wellbeing is part of the school’s development plan and a priority for the senior leadership team. This support *“makes things so much easier”*.

School 9 has also separated out the responsibility of health and wellbeing from safeguarding and child protection. This ensures that wellbeing can be prioritised and does *“not take a back seat”* if and when safeguarding issues arise. By separating these responsibilities, School 9 has ensured that it has the *“freedom to really focus [...] on developing health and wellbeing”*, supporting the school’s proactive approach to wellbeing.

This organisational structure is supported by a staff wellbeing group that is provided as a professional development community. Members include teaching and non-teaching staff, including a school governor and representatives from the local authority and other bodies and organisations connected to School 9. This group meets half termly to discuss student and staff wellbeing, survey results and suggestions.

A collaborative and sharing culture

This collaborative approach to structuring staff health and wellbeing internally within School 9 is also reflected in School 9's willingness to work closely with local agencies and other organisations to share information and best practice.

"I've worked with the school health research network [...], presented our work at national conferences and regional conferences and [...] we've worked alongside Public Health {area} and so I've presented our work at their national conference [...] We have the children's commissioner for {area}, she's come in to look at our PSHE programme and the wellbeing programme which we deliver, and [...] she was very complimentary and the previous children's commissioner of {area}, said that that it's a school that she would happily send her kids [to]."

School 9 consider one of their strongest external relationships is with their local authority. A health and wellbeing coordinator from the LA has introduced School 9 to a larger network of school wellbeing leads. Together, this network supporting by the local authority coordinator; share their ideas, provide feedback, distribute information about available funding and grants to develop provision.

"Having her as that sounding based, having that [...] regional support really does help because she's got access to funding that we wouldn't necessarily be able to access [...] we've set up our own working group of health and wellbeing leads which she leads, and we get the opportunity to feedback to her about what we're seeing in our schools and is it a similar trend in other schools and so on."

The opportunity to collaborate and learn more about how other schools approach wellbeing was also one of the reasons School 9 joined Well Schools. While there are sometimes differences between School 9 and other member schools (most of which are based in England), School 9 values

"I think it's more finding sort of like little solutions to problems that I might have faced [...] Usually somebody's solved it at some point, so it's sometimes [...] just looking at some of the threads [...] that have been put on there."

and uses the Well Schools online forum. The health and wellbeing lead sets a regular time aside every week to review the forum, pick up new ideas and find out what is happening in other schools and how others have approached problems.

A flexible approach to working

When staff provide feedback via the electronic suggestion box, the senior leadership team consider their suggestions and take action. This ensures that staff feel that their voice is heard and valued. For

example, following the COVID-19 pandemic, staff asked for greater flexibility in how they work, having become accustomed to a greater degree of flexibility when teaching online. School 9 agreed that some teacher PPA time could be dedicated to health and wellbeing, shaped by teachers own preferences and needs. Some staff use this time for marking and assessment as PPA is typically used and others use it for other activities such as taking their own children at school, or cycling to work – activities that had not previously been possible. There is an understanding and trust that teachers will also continue to prepare lessons and mark work and *“having a little bit of flexibility in out day to day work makes such a difference”*.

Building on this flexible approach to PPA time, School 9 also has wellbeing weeks for staff. During these weeks, there are no scheduled meetings during lunchtime, or before or after school. Instead, the school provides a range of other activities for staff.

“There are programmes such as yoga, Pilates, we have some mindfulness work where we've done some art design [...] that extra time gives you quite a lot of flexibility to be able to do lots of things that you won't traditionally be able to do in a standard school week. So that always gets some good feedback from staff that we're listening to some of the suggestions of what they'd like to do in those weeks as well.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, School 9 also prioritised staff wellbeing and took the approach that *“you look after your family first”*. The school also set up an electronic staff room to enable staff to meet and talk to each other.

“So people would bring their cups of tea, and just have like a chat, like a group chat, and I think that really helped a lot of staff, and especially the staff that may be living alone and didn't have that social interaction [...] it was quite nice to have a break and just that touch of normality.”

4. Preparing students

Ensuring a positive start at secondary school

School 9 notes that wellbeing initiatives happening in local primary schools are *“incredible”* and that the school has learnt most *“from colleagues in the primary sector”*. Keen to ensure the wellbeing work started at primary school continues into secondary school, School 9 provides a comprehensive transition programme focused on the theme of happiness. The aim is to ensure that all pupils joining the school in Year 7 have a positive start to secondary school. To achieve this, School 9 works closely with local primary schools to introduce pupils to different aspects of secondary school and has created a transition programme around the theme of happiness. This transition actually starts in Years 4 and 5 when pupils are welcomed into School 9 to experience the school. For Year 6 pupils, there is a transition week where students acclimatise to the school environment and different lessons taking place in different classrooms throughout the day.

“We have staff that go out to primaries, and then we have days so we've got transition week [...] where they will come in and they will do a series of normal lessons with us so they get that taster. And we actually start that transition with Year 5s, actually Year 4s [...]so they come in and they do a happy theme day, using our facilities and obviously coming to the secondary school getting familiar with the site and what we can offer them obviously.”

Physical activity and the importance of outdoor learning

School 9's latest Estyn report highlighted that pupils engage in 120 minutes a week of physical education. Further, the school's own data shows that 83% of pupils enjoy PE and sports at their school. While health and wellbeing are now part of the national curriculum in Wales, School 9 has prioritised physical health for many years. This is a key strand of the school's wellbeing programme that includes physical wellbeing, social and emotional wellbeing and mental wellbeing. For School 9, all three components are needed for a person to be regarded as healthy and well. This is line with the Well Schools approach that underlines the importance of both physical and mental health for wellbeing. In Year 7, pupils at school 9 start the school emotionally and mentally prepared, having followed the transition programme. Activities at school 9 build on this to ensure pupil wellbeing is supported.

Pupils at School 9 enjoy a wide range of outdoor learning opportunities. The school benefits from a coastal location and has its own canoes and mountain bikes for pupils to use. In addition, School 9 provides a forest school where pupils learn different skills. These are often aligned to other learning objectives for example lighting fires and cooking also provides pupils with an opportunity to learn about food technology and nutrition from their teachers. These lessons might involve discussion around energy and calories and how these would influence performance in outdoor activities.

Building on the forest school programme, all Year 9 pupils also have the option to study an outdoor education course called Agored. This is the equivalent of a GCSE and involves activities such as gorge walking, mountain biking, kayaking canoeing and climbing. School 9 notes the course provides physical activity and education options for pupils who may not enjoy more traditional PE sports and team games. However, since this programme was introduced at School 9, it has grown in popularity among pupils because of the breadth of opportunities it affords, including learning outside.

4. Giving students opportunities to lead

Listening to and responding to staff and student opinions and views is a fundamental part of School 9's wellbeing programme. Building on this, pupils can become sports ambassadors. In these roles, they have a say about lesson content, lesson activity and extracurricular activities and can gather opinions and suggestions on what to include from their fellow students. Student sports ambassadors then offer different sports clubs at lunchtimes. This teaches valuable leadership skills and pupils also earn a leadership qualification.

5. Impact: It's a happier school

"It's a happier school."

Based on staff and student surveys, as well as anecdotal feedback, students and staff at School 9 enjoy coming to school and believe it is *"a positive place to come into every day"*.

"Students seem happier and the data we're getting back from them supports that, and just speaking to colleagues, colleagues stay at this school, it's not somewhere where they're constantly looking to move on, looking to progress their careers. We're quite fortunate that there are lots of opportunities within school to further develop your career."

6. Sustainability: spreading the word about Well Schools

One of the challenges for School 9 as part of the Well Schools network is that most other member schools are based in England. While there are still opportunities to collaborate and learn, School 9 follows a different national curriculum and has access to different funding streams. School 9 notes that while health and wellbeing is now a core part of the Welsh national curriculum, there are no other Well Schools in the local authority health and wellbeing group.

School 9's wellbeing approach is well established and the school undertakes ample self-evaluation to maintain quality of provision and address any updates or remedy areas requiring adjustment. For example, every student from Year 7 to Year 13 completes the School Health Research Network survey every two years. This provides valuable data about how School 9 compares with other schools.

School 9 also has plans to introduce the Well Schools network to other schools in its local authority:

"None of those schools at the moment are Well Schools, but [...] I have introduced the fact that we are a Well School [and] they've asked me to present in the next meeting of what that is, what it looks like, so yeah there might be some more applications for Well Schools coming quite soon."

Chapter 13: School 10

“If we don’t have health and wellbeing, if we don’t have good mental health, if we don’t have good physical health, everything else is such a greater challenge.”

1. School background and context

School 10 is a 2-18 years of age campus and includes nursery, primary and secondary provision. Originally two primaries and a secondary existing on separate sites they now share a single site. The school is in the southwest of Scotland and has around 700 pupils on roll. The primary site has 47.4% of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM) and 41.4% of pupils on the secondary school roll receiving FSM significantly above the national average of 18.6% for secondary schools in Scotland. The school is in an area of high deprivation and has an above average number of pupils who have additionally supported needs. The percentage of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) is lower (4.3% primary and 2.2% secondary) than the national average of 8.6%.

The school was established in 2018 and is yet to receive an official school inspection. The current Head Teacher (HT) started in 2020 and has involved the school in anti-bullying initiatives and health and wellbeing initiatives for pupils and staff. The school has been involved in the “Well Schools” community since 2020 and has reported many benefits. Before becoming a Well School and the appointment of the current Head Teacher *“the school had the highest exclusion rates in the Local Authority, the poorest attendance, the lowest attainment”*. Since appointment there has been a reduction in the number of exclusions and the improvement trajectory in terms of attainment is also visible.

2. Whole school culture

Why Well Schools?

Many students and the local community are affected by social problems common across areas of social deprivation. The staff at the school believe that it is important to adopt a whole school culture that supports the health and wellbeing of students and staff and seeks to extend its reach by offering support to parents and the wider community. One of the

“It’s about prioritising and supporting and trying to improve what we do every day to support the health and wellbeing of our youngsters, our staff, our parents, our community.”

problems that the young people at school 10 encounter is managing healthy relationships. With many pupils facing social challenges away from school such as substance abuse, domestic abuse, poverty and high levels of police involvement, there has been a significant impact on pupils’ ability to form healthy relationships. These difficulties are encountered within schools and link with the wider social and community context outside of the school arena. The school, therefore, looks to make health and wellbeing a part of the whole school culture, practiced daily, with the view that this culture becomes embedded in the wellbeing of this generation and future generations, infiltrating into the wider community. This aligns well with the Well School philosophy, encompassing a ‘Well Culture’ where home engagement and wider pastoral support beyond the school domain is an integral part of a positive school environment and successful teaching and learning.

The head teacher recognises the value of Well Schools generally and emphasises the gains and benefits it holds for the students at school 10 are momentous, especially after the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on its young people. The head teacher feels that students *“capacity for coping with adversity is diminished in some respects when you have to deal with a whole load of other things, whether that’s just simply poverty itself or the associated social challenges”*. Integrating the “Well School” framework into the school ethos and whole school culture has been beneficial to support the physical health, wellbeing and mental health of students and staff across the school after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Bespoke staff wellbeing

School 10 believes that prioritising and supporting staff wellbeing is crucial when embedding Well Schools into school ethos and culture.

“We do an awful lot of work in terms of supporting staff wellbeing and we’re constantly asking our staff how we can do that better, particularly given the context that we’re in.”

One of the ways this is achieved is by ‘monitoring’ staff wellbeing and continuously consulting with staff on how the school can support them better. This wellbeing measurement gives staff a ‘voice’, allowing them to have a say in the culture and ethos of the school. School staff access Education Scotland’s wellbeing resources as a continuous source of wellbeing support. In addition, the school offers one-to-one coaching and if a staff member needs to access occupational health, there is a wellbeing element to this service. This connects with

Well Schools 'Well Led' pillar and the principle that a well led school is where *"Staff and head teacher wellbeing is actively supported and championed"*.

The Head Teacher recognises a link between staff wellbeing and staff attendance and the wider impact staff attendance has on pupil wellbeing and attainment. Maximising attendance is a priority for the school and a current focus within the local authority. The context of the school, the social difficulties experienced by the school community and the fact that like many other schools, school 10 is still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has meant that the school has had to look closely at the link between staff wellbeing and maximising attendance.

"Maximising attendance is an area that, you know, we're all trying our best to ensure. That we have the best possible attendance of our staff, it's something which is identified as a new challenge within our Authority, and again coming back to our context, there are more staff members who end up being absent in this kind of context"

School 10 employ an external Wellbeing coordinator who speaks with staff about their wellbeing, consider how they felt in certain situations that are contextually relevant to the school and supports reflection about their experiences and their reactions to experiences. The school then works with the wellbeing coordinator and the local authority, who analyse this data and identify any patterns. Measures are then put into place to resolve issues that may impact on staff health and wellbeing and alleviate workplace stress. For example, the school holds staff development days *"where we'll perhaps look at some of the themes like stress, for example, what does stress mean, how are, what are some of the things that we can do to manage our stress levels, and help our staff get an understanding"*. This is all with a view to promote a culture of wellbeing, maximise staff attendance and foster a school environment that offers consistency.

4. Pupil wellbeing

School 10 is a 2-18 school so the approach that the school takes towards pupil wellbeing is a long-term one. It looks at targeting wellbeing needs on an individual level and supporting the learner in understanding themselves and who they are as individuals.

"We're actually a 2-18 school so the approach that we take is long term and one of the biggest areas of focus for us is around learner wellbeing through understanding themselves and their emotions."

One of the challenges that school 10 has faced is younger pupils *"not being able to regulate their emotions and understand their emotions"*. Accordingly, the school emphasises teaching pupils in the early years and primary cohorts about emotional understanding: what are the physical feelings, what triggers these, how are they linked to behaviour and how to regulate and communicate emotional responses appropriately. This involves giving *"youngsters the language of their emotions so that they can articulate that in situations where they may be feeling stressed"*.

The school also recognises the link between physical health and wellbeing, supporting pupils to get active by getting them outside to take part in the “daily mile” running activity. The school has changed the timetable of the school day for the primary cohort so that children have two “movement breaks” per day that encourage to get pupils active. This aligns with the Well Schools ‘well prepared’ philosophy, that posits “*Every child has positive physical and mental health as a foundation for life*” with physical activity and time spent outdoors being fundamental in achieving this.

We are “*seeing the benefits of, just getting the youngsters breaking that cycle of sitting and not moving*”.

As pupils progress through school 10 there is a focus on supporting pupils in developing identity and accepting others. School 10 identified that this was an area of “*poor mental health for some of our learners*” who were struggling to find their place and how they fit in within the school and community. PSE lessons were selected as an appropriate home to develop and share learning regarding LGBTQ and identity.

The school also takes its pupils to an extended five-day retreat “*where they get an opportunity to look at and consider their place and values within their life, and really reflect on what it is they want to achieve in life*”. This off-site experience encourages team building and comradery between peers embodying the “well equipped” philosophy that “*every child has the human skills and social capital to thrive in the modern world*”.

The Head Teacher at school 10 ensures that their staff are equipped in supporting pupils’ mental health and wellbeing. The staff and leadership team receive regular training and attend CPD programmes for mental health and wellbeing support. An example is the recent ‘value based’ training for staff. Staff also attend residential trips that encourage team building and supports staff wellbeing.

How the school supports pupil wellbeing across a 2-18 age range:

- **Emotional understanding:** understanding emotions, emotional regulation and emotional literacy.
- **The link between physical health and wellbeing:** promotes getting active, has adapted the school timetable to incorporate two movement breaks throughout the day.
- **The link between outdoor play and wellbeing:** pupils spending more time outside.
- **Focus on identity development and accepting others:** work with pupils on identity development e.g., LGBTQ.
- **Off-site experiences:** 5-day wellbeing retreat for pupils.
- **Staff training:** ensuring staff are equipped to support pupil mental health and wellbeing e.g., value-based training.
- **Off-site experiences for staff:** residential trips that support wellbeing.

Outdoors learning

School 10 have a strong focus on outdoor learning. Staff are comfortable taking learning outdoors and there is a planned timetable boasting various outdoor activities

“Staff are really comfortable going out and taking learning outdoors.”

across the 2-18 campus, throughout the year. This aligns with the Well School philosophy, particularly the ‘well led’ and ‘well equipped’ pillars. The physical activity element of outdoor learning promotes positive physical health with school 10 providing *“high quality sport enrichment”*. School 10 also offers extracurricular opportunities and qualifications that align with the ‘well equipped pillar’ of the Well Schools philosophy, ensuring *“Every child has the human skills and social capital to thrive in the modern world”*.

The early years and primary sites have two different outdoor learning spaces. One is a learning centre space where pupils can access the curriculum, it has WIFI so the full curriculum can be accessed. In the summer months the full curriculum is taught outside and in the winter months there is a focus on the space being used for physical education.

The second outdoor learning space encourages a creative, more holistic learning with a pottery shed and gardens (which are maintained by the pupils). The school is looking to employ a teacher who will specifically teach outdoor learning throughout the week. The school has in place a planned curricular that uses outdoor learning and has found that it *“supports some of our learners who in particular find it difficult to be in the classrooms all day”*.

The school has used its ‘Pupil Equity Funding’ to employ an external agency to come into school and encourage pupils to get active at lunch and break times. They encourage the pupils to get involved in team sports and provide equipment for individual exercise. School 10 reports this encourages positive behaviour amongst pupils and has had a positive effect in reducing issues like bullying and other anti-social behaviour. Keeping the pupils active at lunch time and break times has also proven to reduce restless behaviour during classroom times.

Outdoor learning for the secondary and post 16 campus is also expansive. School 10 has a broad curriculum with courses such as mechanics and gardening available. This presents a natural landscape for taking many of these courses outdoors. The school also provides pupils the opportunities to develop outdoor skillsets e.g., offering cycling courses and taking pupils on biking trips. These skills are ones that pupils at school 10 do not access away from the school environment. The school have recognised that many pupils at school 10 have missed a range of outdoor exercise and experiences as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school is eager to promote these activities.

School 10 is keen to network with other schools embracing the Well School approach with regards to outdoor learning. School 10 has visited two schools that already benefit from a teacher specialising in outdoor learning. They have picked up ideas and practices that can be implemented in School 10.

5. Impact: Well School framework and network

“The way that the concept of Well Schools looks at the whole school, so it looks at young leadership, it looks at the way that you're supporting your staff to be as healthy as they can be and to prioritise wellbeing, it looks at how you can support and prioritise young people to understand and improve their own wellbeing and really just places health and wellbeing at the centre of everything that we do, which... I believe as a Head Teacher, is kind of fundamental to everything that we do, particularly in this day and age”.

School 10 purports adopting the Well School approach as an overarching framework for ensuring wellbeing across the whole school. After the COVID-19 pandemic, it was identified that pupil and staff physical health and wellbeing was a priority for the school. The school used the Well School approach and its three pillars as a framework to manage this priority and achieve their goal. This enables the Head Teacher to reflect on how their school approaches wellbeing and they adopt the Well school framework as a monitoring, self-evaluation tool that ensures standards around whole school wellbeing are upheld:

“We are a Well School and we know we're a Well School because of x y and z and looking at the three pillars, and here's our evidence. So, for me, it's that potential of a kind of almost the self-value the self-evaluation framework.”

The circumstances around how the school was formed (two schools merged to create the school) has meant that many staff with different teaching methods, experience and practices have been brought together. Staff are seeking to establish continuity with their colleagues, developing their school ethos and teaching style that reflects a learning environment where nurture and wellbeing is at the forefront. The Head Teacher reports the merge has presented challenges (many staff have found the transition to a 2-18 school difficult), with many staff struggling to adopt new practices and valuing wellbeing equally to achievement. Having the overarching Well Schools framework has provided a guide and reference point for staff and pupils that has supported cohesion and consistency across the school regarding positive wellbeing and physical health. The Head Teacher has recognised that *“as time goes on more and more of those staff are adapting this, building in those approaches (which) become more and more well embedded”.*

Cultural transferability

As school 10 is a Scottish school a consideration the head teacher at the school put forward is how the format and language of an approach designed and is predominately used in English schools transfers across to Scottish schooling.

The language used in Well Schools is not the language used in Scottish schools. Although, the approaches the school uses to support whole school physical health and wellbeing sit within the Well Schools framework, the Head Teacher recognises that the differences between Scottish and English schools and the terminology used, the approaches are *“not couched exactly in those terms”*. The HT of school 10 points out that there are a lot of different initiatives that Education Scotland have brought into Scottish schools that do not exist in England. As a result, the school has to utilise these approaches as well as the Well Schools approach which has led the school into using Well Schools as a framework that absorbs and incorporates the other approaches. This approach has worked better for school 10 as it better coordinates these other initiatives and ensures the basic principles of whole school health and wellbeing are being met.

“I think the great potential in the Well Schools framework is that it brings all (initiatives) together potentially under one approach and one umbrella... and if we could or if Youth Sport Trust could articulate that through what already exists in Scotland, I think that would open up a huge number of schools in Scotland that would have their interest pricked.”

“It immediately makes you think; okay, so that’s for England that’s not for us”.

The Head Teacher at school 10 indicated that for Well Schools to fulfil full potential in Scottish school the framework will need to be adapted to better support the Scottish school system and incorporate the language used in Scottish schooling. For example, the term ‘key stages’ is an English term not used in Scottish schooling. The head Teacher acknowledges that when they read Well School material that references terms such as “key stages”, they find it a distraction to translate such terms when Scottish equivalents are easy to adopt.

As the Well Schools approach is currently concentrated in English schools, school 10 has not yet connected to the wider Well School community. However, the Head Teacher has engaged with Well Schools community forums and picked up tips and advice. Staff at school 10 also use the platform to read and pick up ideas on how to support physical health and wellbeing across the school.

“In a very high paced environment, people are looking to immediately make connections with things, you need to immediately be able to grab onto, okay so that fits my context here. I think it’s about making the road in for people really easy.”

6. Sustainability

The Future of Well Schools for School 10:

- To continue holding physical health and wellbeing at the centre of the school ethos with the view that it becomes embedded into the everyday life of pupils and infiltrates into the wider community.
- To continue to support and monitor staff wellbeing. The school has recognised that positive staff wellbeing reinforces whole school wellbeing and has also helped to reduce staff absence.
- To continue supporting pupil wellbeing by targeting wellbeing needs on an individual level and supporting the learner in understanding themselves and who they are as individuals.
- To develop the use of outdoor learning with the potential employment of a full-time outdoor educator and to expand the activities and resources available to pupils in the outdoor areas.
- To continue to use the Well Schools framework as a way of monitoring wellbeing across the whole school and ensuring consistent approaches are being used amongst staff and that the concept of wellbeing is held and practiced with high value across the whole school.

Suggested changes and modifications to the Well Schools approach:

- To align the Well Schools philosophy and approaches to sit better in Scottish schooling. Adapting terminology and how the organisation sits better with Scottish initiatives and wider school systems.

These school profiles have been developed within an evaluation study involving a team from the University of Manchester. A full evaluation report is available to access:

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