

Wellbeing Plan for Dominican College Wicklow - 2017-2018

Mission Statement

Dominican College Wicklow is a Voluntary Catholic Girls' Secondary school under the trusteeship of Le Cheile. Our mission statement is reflective of the Dominican motto 'veritas' which means truth. Truth is the inspiration of our work and together we share our search for the truth about God, ourselves, and the world around us. Dominican education is very much centred on the education of the whole person – emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual and personal in a caring and committed environment. A strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential through an enriching and comprehensive education. Our school promotes an atmosphere of trust and friendliness. Students are encouraged to develop responsibility, initiative, personal growth and leadership so that they can take their place in society as mature and committed citizens.

Definition of Well-being

The central focus of a well-being programme both at junior and senior cycle is to enable the student to get to know better the most important person in their lives – themselves. Such a programme provides students with a unique opportunity to build on and develop a skill set which will enable them to make informed decisions about themselves and others – their mental health, personal lives and social/emotional development.

The Aims of Well-being:

Student well-being is at the heart of the vision of the new Junior Cycle programme. Eight principals underpin this new programme and one of them is well-being. Central to well-being are the six basic indicators: Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware.

Therefore, the aims of the well-being programme are centred around the six basic indicators. It is hoped through guided self-reflection and group work that students will develop a **positive sense of themselves and their physical, social emotional, and spiritual health and well-being.**

- Students will be given opportunities to look at their relationship with the self and how they can develop the essential qualities needed for life's journey.
- Students will be encouraged to draw on their own inner strengths in order to build the skills of resilience.
- Plenty of opportunities will be given for mindful reflection in order to develop a greater sense of self-awareness.
- The aim is to create a much greater awareness around the literacy of emotional intelligence.

How Wellbeing links with the School Ethos

The well-being programme will provide the students with skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information available to them today so that they can make positive and responsible choices about themselves and about the way in which they live their lives – living a purposeful life rather than an accidental one. The Education Act of 1998 requires all schools to promote moral, social, spiritual and personal development for all students and also to provide health education for them. All of this happens within the context of the Dominican ethos of the school which seeks to promote a positive partnership between students, teachers, parents and all members of the wider school community. The Dominican motto ‘veritas’ meaning truth is the solid foundation upon which all of this is structured and this is the inspiration upon which our teaching and learning is based.

Departmental Requirement for Wellbeing – Junior Cycle

As part of the new Junior Cycle programme, three hundred hours at junior level need to be timetable over a three-year period from 2017 on. This will eventually go to 400 hours. All schools must make the curricular provision for this. Planning for well-being involves consideration of the aspects of **culture, relationships, policy and planning and the curriculum** which are the **four areas of action** recommended in the ***Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (and Suicide Prevention (2013))*** and the ***Schools for Health in Ireland: Framework for Developing a Health Promoting School***. Wellbeing and the curriculum include the following:

- CSPE, PE and SPHE.
- Guidance
- Other subjects and learning experiences
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular learning.

Whole School Approach to Wellbeing – Junior Cycle

In order to plan a junior cycle programme, the starting point must be

‘the shared vision and values of the school alongside consideration of the principles and statements of learning set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) (Junior Cert – Wellbeing Guidelines)

A Junior cycle programme that builds the foundations for wellbeing:

- Introduces students to the key skills of how to manage themselves and how to say well.
- Is broad and balanced
- Provides choice
- Has meaning and relevance
- Is enjoyable and engaging
- Provides opportunities to experience challenge and success

- Equips students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to develop as learners and build positive relationships.

Whole School Approach to Wellbeing – Junior and Senior

As part of the whole school approach to well-being and in order to promote personal and social development, policies are in place for the following:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Assessment
- Attendance
- ICT Acceptable use policy
- Critical Incident
- Code of Behaviour
- Data Access
- Data Protection
- Homework
- Mobile Device
- Child Protection
- Additional Educational Needs
- Subject Choice
- Use of iPad
- RSE
- SPHE

The above policies are constantly updated and reviewed at least every 2 years by staff and senior management and then they are ratified by board of management. Parents and the student council are also consulted in conjunction with the redrafting of some of the policies.

Our students are **supported** in a variety of ways and their emotional, social, personal and spiritual development is fostered in many ways. These include the following:

- **Wellbeing Team.** A wellbeing team was set up this year (9 members of staff) in response to a whole school needs analysis which identified the need to further imbed well-being in the school curriculum. Staff members include teachers who are teaching well-being, SPHE and other members of staff who have had CPD training or who have expressed an interest in the teaching of the subject. The team met on 9th October to discuss the possibility of putting a whole school plan together and to look at short term, medium term and long-term objectives. Minutes were emailed to the principal and it was a very productive meeting. The team will meet in the new year to further discuss some of the short and medium-term objectives.
- A **Care Team** is in existence and this meets every second week. Members include the senior management team- principal and deputy principal, school counsellor, learning support and members of the middle management team- year heads. Issues

are raised at the meetings and counselling and support (managing myself and staying well) structures are put in place for students who have come up for mention. Students at risk are identified and strategies are put in place to support these individual students. Strategies are reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

- **Year Head Structure** – Year heads meet every other week to discuss various issues including strategies to lead and manage year groups. They work as a team together with senior management and focus on the task of overseeing the welfare of the various year groups so that learning at every level is supported. The role of the year head is pivotal in the school community (as identified in the whole school needs analysis and POR review) and **five core dimensions** have emerged as being central to the role -Spirit and Ethos, Learning and Teaching, Wellbeing, Behavioural and operational.
- **Class Tutors**
Members of staff act as class tutors to individual class groups and this is largely a pastoral role which supports the work of the year head. It is hugely valuable and a great help to have tutors who liaise on a daily basis with the class groups. **This contact time takes place for 10 minutes before the start of the school day- 8.50 until 9am when registration is being taken by the year heads. While this time does not constitute part of the Junior Cert allocation for well-being, it's effectiveness is widely recognised by all members of the school community, staff, students and parents.**
- **Active Student Leadership Teams** – Student leadership is very much part of well-being and students are encouraged to take part in the various structures which already exist in the school to lead and promote student development. Examples include:
 - **Head Girl and Deputy Head Girl,**
 - **Student Council,**
 - **Class Prefects**
 - **It Prefects**
 - **Library Prefects**
 - **International mentors**
 - **Student Mentors,**
 - **Peer Mediators**
 - **Ember Leaders.**

The **student council** consists of 18 delegates and the members meet on a regular basis to discuss and debate important issues that affect the student body. The student council gives the students a coherent voice to affect positive change within our school. The student council meets with the Board of Management once a year to give an update on all of the various activities it is involved in.

The **Ember Leadership Programme** is a faith leadership training programme for students at Senior Level in the school. Students are trained to become faith leaders and the programme is coordinated by the Archdiocese of Dublin Educational Secretariat. Under the supervision of the Principal and Deputy Principal, the students work together to implement, enhance

and promote the school's ethos. An example of the work done by the Ember Leaders was the creation of a **beautiful new prayer room**. The room provides students with a quiet place for reflection and mindfulness which help students emotional and spiritual well-being. We are at present looking at the role of the ember leaders in the context of whole school well-being.

- **The Teaching of Wellbeing** – a well-being programme is currently being facilitated in 1st year, 4th year and 5th year. Details of the course content can be found further on in this plan. All first-years, experience 11 weeks of well-being and 4th years also rotate on an 11-week programme.
- **Peer mediation** is a **conflict literacy programme** taught to all 4th years. The goal is to give students the skills to mediate disputes and conflicts and to provide them with problem-solving techniques. It has been a highly successful programme because it empowers students and motivates them to behave more responsibly. The programme is hugely self-reflective as students are asked to identify their own conflict management style. In order to become fully certified as a student mediator, students must have 10 hours of contact time completed where they will engage in active role play and class/group discussion.
- **Positive Affirmation awards** – a non-academic award given every month to students from different year groups who have made a positive contribution to school life. This has been part of school life for the last ten years and the recipient is often a student who has not come up for mention prior to receiving the award. It ties in very much with the ethos of the school – education of the whole person where positive effort/behaviour is recognised and rewarded.
- **May Prize Giving** – yearly prize day where students are rewarded for achievement in academics, state exams, sport, music and leadership roles. Effort and achievement are recognised and acknowledged during the Prize Giving. Prizes are also awarded for merit (subject) and student of the class. These awards acknowledge effort and improvement and build on positive self-esteem and student well-being.
- **6th year wellbeing day** – one day per academic year when 6th years have invited guest speakers in to promote the various aspects of wellbeing. They have a rest from academics and they also take part in yoga sessions throughout the day. Our 6th years always look forward to this day and it is one that is always remembered by them.
- **Retreats for all of the year groups** – Students participate in a day of mindful reflection which focuses them on the spiritual aspect of their lives.
- **Bonding day for First Years** – normally held on the 1st day of the school year – various group activities which encourage students to mix with one another in an attempt to break down any barriers they may have when they come into secondary school.
- **Class trips with the year groups** – group activities which encourage students to mix and take part in various activities.
- **Weekly Assemblies** – Each year group has a weekly assembly. The entire year group assemble in Fatima Hall where they meet with the year head, tutors, class prefects

and the principal and deputy (if available). Any current or pending issues are addressed and it is an opportunity for members of the student leadership team to address the students – regarding fund raising etc or any other matters of school business. It is also an opportunity for the Positive Affirmation award to be given out and the assembly concludes with the Prayer – very much in keeping with the Dominican Ethos of promoting the spiritual dimension of education.

- **Sports Day** – normally held once a year in May where students are encouraged to take part in various competitive sporting activities -individual and group. Physical activity is very much encouraged in well-being and is a definite way to destress in what is sometimes a very stressful environment driven by the pressure of the points system.
- **Extra-Curricular – 4th year musical, Liturgical Choir, School Choir, Orchestra, and other Sporting Activities – Hockey, Basket-ball, Gaelic, Horse riding, Cross Country running, Swimming and Young Scientist, Green schools, Harry Potter club, Debating, Year book committee** The school is well served in this area and many students get involved in after-school activities which help them grow in self-confidence and very much enhance their sense of well-being. Staff who are involved in these activities do so on a voluntary basis very much in keeping with the Dominican ethos and the vast majority of students involved in these activities do so because they are very committed scientists, musicians and athletes.

Timetabling of Wellbeing

At the present time well-being is offered to all first-year classes, all 4th years and one group of fifth years. At first year level the course rotates against a module on **careers and a module on online safety**. All first-year students have the opportunity to take part in all three modules.

- 1st years – all first years are on a 40 minute – 11-week rotating module. This means that each student will experience wellbeing as part of the curriculum. Topics being covered included – the transition from primary to secondary school, friendships and new friendship groups, gratitude and recognising difference. Each class starts with a five-minute pause for quiet time – mediation and students are asked to stay in the present moment and be grateful for the ‘now’. Music is played in the background and students focus on their breathing and ‘safe space’.
- 4th years – have an 80-minute rotating module over 11 weeks and topics covered include relationship with self, emotions, the past, present and future. The book – *Ways to Wellbeing* by John Doran is being used and students keep a reflective journal also where they record their thoughts and feelings as they reflect on their journey. Mindful colouring is very much part of this course and students find this very therapeutic and relaxing.
- 5th years – have a 40-minute slot per week of well-being. The students in this class come from a mix of 3 base classes and this period is timetabled against LCVP and Economics on a Monday afternoon. It is hoped for next year that all 5th year students will have a chance to participate in wellbeing and not just the students who

do not do LCVP or Economics. It was agreed that in order for a programme to be effective, it must be offered to all students in 5th year while recognising that this is a new initiative and that it needs to be expanded.

Currently there is only one teacher teaching this course – Mary Gaffney. Other staff members are currently engaging in CPD and it is hoped that going forward, other staff who have expressed an interest in teaching/leading the programme will be accommodated.

Resources used for Wellbeing

John Doran's book – *Ways to Well-being* published by Super Generation is the book used in 4th and 5th year. Students also keep a small folder of their work including worksheets and samples of mindful drawings/colouring.

Students also participate in group work – discussion – and work on some mindful Jigsaws of Mandalas created by Patricia Fitzgerald of Healing Creations.

Students in 1st year work from work sheets and keep a small folder of their work and drawings. Sections from the Edco and Mentor new editions of the SPHE books – wellbeing sections are used as a resource.

youtube clips are another excellent resource and also the use of Powerpoints/DVDs

Evaluation

Students also evaluate the module at its conclusion. This is a written evaluation which asks them three questions: what worked? What did not work and what can we do better? These evaluations have been reported on as part of the school plan last year – 2016/2017.

Course Content for Wellbeing

Plans and schemes of work are available for inspection and there are also samples of student work in the well-being folder and on display around the school and in Saint Catherine's Classroom. Plans going forward will look at the possibility of: inviting in outside speakers who will present on various topics relating to well-being, ISPCC workshops, and study skills in 2nd year.

1st Year Rotating 11-week module:

Topics to include the following:

1. Well-being and student lifestyle
2. Getting to know one another and friendship tips
3. Looking forward – hopes, dreams and fears
4. Wall of gratitude
5. Appreciating difference
6. Mindful Drawing – practical class
7. Writing a letter to an incoming 6th class student
8. How to achieve balance in your life

9. My mental health
10. Feelings – what are they and recognising them
11. Dealing with tough times

4th Year – Rotating 11-week module

- Elements from the five core areas to be covered in both 4th and 5th year include:

Relationship with:

1. **Life,**
2. **Emotions,**
3. **Mindset, Meaning and Purpose,**
4. **Relationship with past, present and future and**
5. **Relationship with personality, talent and performance.**

Topics in 4th year to be covered include the following:

1. Knowing me, knowing you
2. The Tree of Greatness
3. Stress
4. The concept of mindfulness
5. An attitude of gratitude
6. Counting our blessings
7. Finding the happiness factor.
8. Living life with a purpose
9. What I value the most.
10. Emotions
11. Emotion management

5th Year non-rotating 33 weeks

The course builds on topics already covered in 4th year. Students will look at their relationship with emotions and their relationship with past, present and future. They will also look at their relationship with personality, talent and performance

Topics to include the following:

- Emotions
- Dealing with the emotion of Anger
- Dealing with the emotion of Fear
- Dealing with Depression
- Emotional intelligence
- Beliefs
- Understanding and changing limiting beliefs
- Valuing ourselves
- Group activity of making the Mandala jigsaws
- Concept of flow

- Letting Go
- The Gift
- The Bucket list
- Barriers to Relationships
- Learning from the successful lives of others
- Personality
- On the right track
- Pressure Solution Strategies
- Benefits of failure
- Relationship to Sleep, diet and exercise
- The Power of Listening
- Friendship
- Liking ourselves
- Your mission statement

Summary of Approach and Methodology

Our Approach:

Dominican College Wicklow aims to create a positive environment which fully supports all aspects of well-being. Respectful and supportive relationships within the school community are encouraged and very necessary if a whole school approach is to be in any way successful. We believe that positive relationships will foster a solid foundation for the personal and social development of all of our students.

The introduction of the teaching of well-being gives the school the opportunity to strive towards an environment where:

- All members of the school community are respected and valued
- Self-esteem is encouraged
- Respectful, fair and tolerant relationships are encouraged
- Support systems are in place for students who are experiencing difficulties
- Open and transparent lines of communication among all members of the school community.
- Effort is rewarded and recognised
- The unique individual is valued
- Conflict is resolved in a positive and constructive way
- All creativity is encouraged
- Initiative is recognised and encouraged
- Social values, moral and civic values are promoted

Methodology

The teacher of well-being takes on a facilitative roll in the classroom. Each topic is introduced and teacher led but student centred. Class atmosphere must be one of respect and the privacy of each individual student needs to be honoured and marked by sensitivity

and care. Students take on responsibility for their own learning in a supportive and positive atmosphere. Everything covered from 1st year to 4th and 5th years is totally age appropriate to the development of the student.

Assessment:

Well-being will not be formally examined by the SEC. However, well-being incorporates class/group discussions, reflection and self-assessment. Students are asked to write a reflection at the end of a lesson – What did I take from this or list three things I am grateful for and reflect on them. Class discussion is very much encouraged and students in 1st year are absolutely excellent at this. Students work in groups or individually on the various topics.

In conclusion -**Students evaluate at the end of the module** -What worked? What didn't work and what can we do better? Also, student engagement in class – feedback and class discussion around various topics.

Also – the senior students keep a reflective journal and in previous evaluations they have said that they find this very effective as a tool for self-reflection.

Samples of some of the work completed by students is available in the well-being/mindfulness folder.

Individual teacher's planning – schemes of work.

Schemes of work are available in the folder for well-being. These may be changed or adapted as other teachers come on board. All schemes are emailed to Principal and Deputy.

Literacy and Numeracy:

Students will be introduced to new words and concepts throughout the course. These will be highlighted and explained in order to put the session/lesson into context.

Group/class discussion is encouraged and this will help to build a greater confidence with regard to oral skills.

Students are asked to calculate – Wheel of balance etc – in some of the sessions and we will encourage numeracy wherever possible in the form of problem solving – scenarios etc.

Diversity

The teaching of well-being encourages students to examine the relationship they have with themselves, while fully recognising that not everyone holds the same belief. Diversity recognises that everyone has different opinions and beliefs and that the whole school community is all-inclusive. There is a Diversity Committee in the school which consists of students, teachers and parents. They have been engaged in an ongoing project to obtain the yellow flag over the past two years. The school also hosts an intercultural day once a year when students celebrate their culture in a display of music, dance, traditions and culinary delights.

Staff Development

Staff are encouraged to undertake CPD for well-being. Courses are available and funding for these is available from the school body. Each teacher can apply through the principal. Some of these courses are held over the holiday period or at weekends.

Short Term Objectives for Wellbeing Programme

- Develop resources and modify class plans if necessary as this is the first year in which the programme is being taught/facilitated.
- Evaluate each taught module – student evaluation sheets – compile and put in Well-being folder
- Imbed the programme as an essential part of the curriculum at junior and senior level – particularly in the classes in which it is being taught/led.
- Possibly introduce a ‘pause’ time maybe on a Monday and Friday when everyone stops class at 3 minutes to the bell at 11am for mindful reflection. This could be done on the intercom and both students and staff would benefit hugely from this quiet time in their otherwise very busy day.
- The creation of a **well-being wall** in the school where student work can be displayed.
- The creation of a **staff well-being plan** in consultation with senior management and the staff advisory group.

Medium Term Objectives for Wellbeing programme

- Extend the programme to the 2nd and 3rd years. Currently it is being rolled out as an 11-week rotating module for 1st years only. Second and third years would hugely benefit from such a programme. The principal has given the undertaking that this will happen over the next year – and as part of the curricular provision for wellbeing – New Junior cycle reform.

Long Term Objectives for Wellbeing programme

- Roll out the programme to all year groups over the next three years.
- Have more staff on board who will be committed to the programme and who will engage in CPD.
- Devise a whole school plan for Wellbeing in conjunction with the requirements as set out by the Department. – This is now in place – January 2018 – author Mary Gaffney – Teacher of Well-being in the current Academic year – 2017-2018.

Conclusion:

In this plan I have attempted to bring together all aspects the Well-being/mindfulness programme as it exists in our school at the present time. I have looked at the aims of the programme and how it links into the Dominican ethos of the school. I have also attempted to focus and document the already existing structures which are many that support student well-being, in our school.

The roll out of this very important programme will take place over several years in line with the departmental curricular provision. I have looked at course content, time tabling, resources, approaches, methodologies and methods of assessment.

In conclusion, the central focus of the programme is to enable the student to get to know better the most important person in their lives – themselves. This is led and facilitated in a caring, safe and respectful environment which is totally ethos driven and in which the teaching and learning is structured in the context of the education of the whole person in spirit, mind and body.

Author: Mary Gaffney – Teacher of Mindfulness/wellbeing.

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