

# Kinsale Community School

## Wellbeing Policy



***'All Together in Learning'***



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## Introduction

Kinsale Community School is situated in the catchment of the town of Kinsale, Co. Cork overlooking the Bandon River as it flows into Kinsale Harbour. The school was formed in 1996 as an amalgamation of Our Lady of the Rosary Secondary School and Kinsale Vocational School. It is the only post primary school in Kinsale and is run under the joint patronage of the Cork ETB and the Mercy Order.

## Mission Statement

Kinsale Community School is committed to:

- Enabling all students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential.
- Fostering the development of personal responsibility.
- Engendering a culture of co-operation and mutual respect among students, staff, management, parents and the wider community.
- Facilitating the professional development of staff.

Kinsale Community School has three guiding principles that students have a right to:

- The right to be happy
- The right to learn
- The right to be different

## Rationale for the Policy

*The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)* highlights the necessity for a new area of learning at junior cycle; Wellbeing. The necessity for the introduction of Wellbeing into post primary education has been long overdue. In July 2018 the DES published (Revised Oct 2019). The KCS Wellbeing policy is being introduced to ensure the school is responding adequately to the changing and diverse needs of each of our pupils. There are already evident similarities between our own mission statement and the definition of 'Student Wellbeing' as outlined in the NCCA guidelines.

*'Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.'* (NCCA, 2017)



Education and Wellbeing are inextricably linked. ESRI research has found that *'children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social and school wellbeing had higher levels of academic achievement subsequently (at ages 11, 14, and 16)'* (Smyth, E. 2015). Within our Wellbeing programme at KCS our vision is to enable students to build life skills and

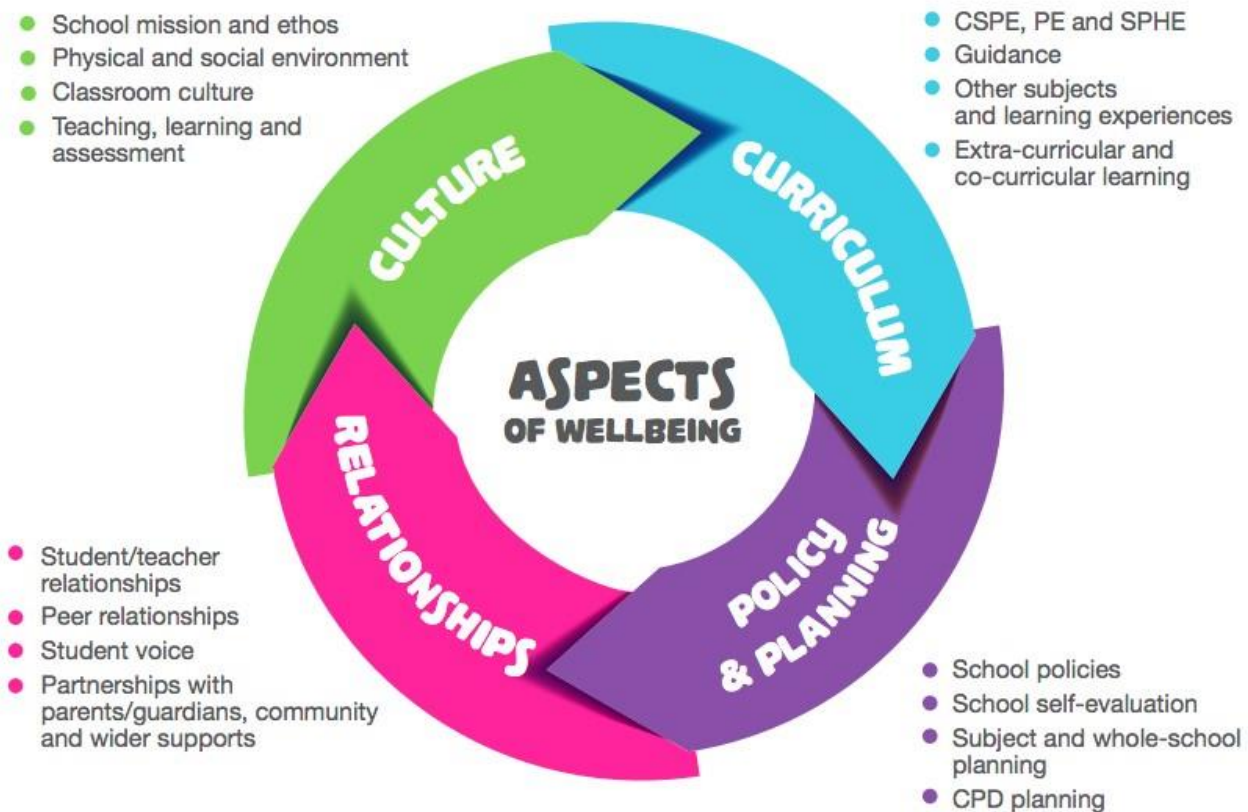
develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community.

KCS will endeavour to facilitate the holistic development of each of our students using the six indicators of Wellbeing as the focal point of our actions: Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient and Respected and Aware.

### The Structure of the Wellbeing Policy:

The foundation of this policy is based on the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, the Wellbeing indicators, and the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* – the aim of which is to support schools in planning and developing a consistent Wellbeing programme. Within this policy we hope to enhance and develop our understanding, practice and curricula for Wellbeing already existing in school. Through the focus on four aspects of Wellbeing in our school – School Culture, Relationships, Policy and Planning, and Curriculum we aim to establish a Wellbeing policy which encompasses the whole school community.

### The Four Aspects of Wellbeing in Schools



*(Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA, 2017; Figure 6, page 26)*

Planning for Wellbeing involves consideration of these aspects: culture, relationships, policy and planning and the curriculum. This section focuses on the first three of these and looks at ways in which

a whole school community can contribute to building the kind of culture, relationships and policies that support student Wellbeing. These four aspects coincide with the four areas of action recommended in *the Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)* and with *Schools for Health in Ireland: Framework for Developing a Health Promoting School*. The question of Wellbeing and the curriculum is the subject of detailed discussion in Section 4.

Indicators of Wellbeing



(Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA, 2017; page 44)

## Wellbeing and the Curriculum at Kinsale Community School

The curricular aspect of our Wellbeing Policy has been discussed at length and devised with the student at the centre of learning in mind. A core group was established between members of management, the curricular and the wellbeing teams. The areas of PE, SPHE, CSPE, Pastoral Care, and Religious Education have been identified as areas in which our Wellbeing Programme will be embedded heavily, although Wellbeing will be embedded across all subject areas.

At KCS we believe that a Junior Cycle programme that builds the foundations for Wellbeing:

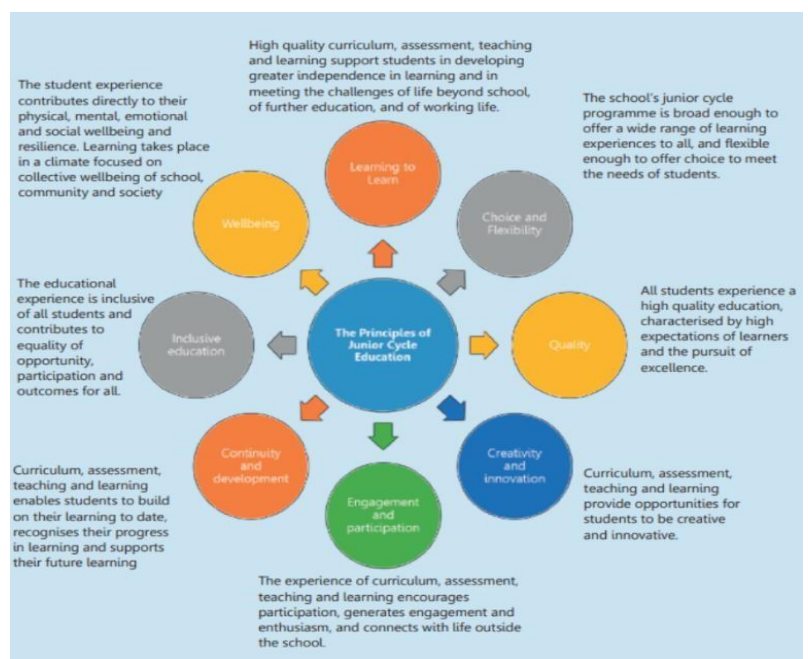
- Is broad and balanced
- Provides choice
- Has meaning and relevance
- Is enjoyable and engaging
- Provides opportunities to experience challenge and success
- Equips students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to develop as learners and build positive relationships

Wellbeing at KCS will extend across the three Junior Cycle years from First to Third Year. Although there is a strong framework already in place with regard to Wellbeing, we hope to raise further awareness of its necessity by highlighting the importance of Wellbeing on the timetable.

*“Junior cycle places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives“.* (Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015, page 6)

### The Principles of Junior Cycle Education

Wellbeing is one of the eight principles underpinning the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA):



1. Engagement and Participation
2. Learning to Learn
3. Choice and flexibility
4. Quality
5. Wellbeing
6. Inclusive Education
7. Creativity and Innovation
8. Continuity and Development

## 24 Statements of Learning

*“The learning at the core of junior cycle is described in twenty-four statements of learning. .... They are central to planning for, the students’ experience of, and the evaluation of the school’s junior cycle programme”* (Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015, page 12)

The purposes of the Statements of Learning are:

- To ensure a rich educational experience for students.
- Learning that has both breadth and depth and is varied.
- To enable development of the key skills.
- To give access to a varied curriculum of knowledge

The following Statements of Learning (SOL) are particularly applicable to Wellbeing:

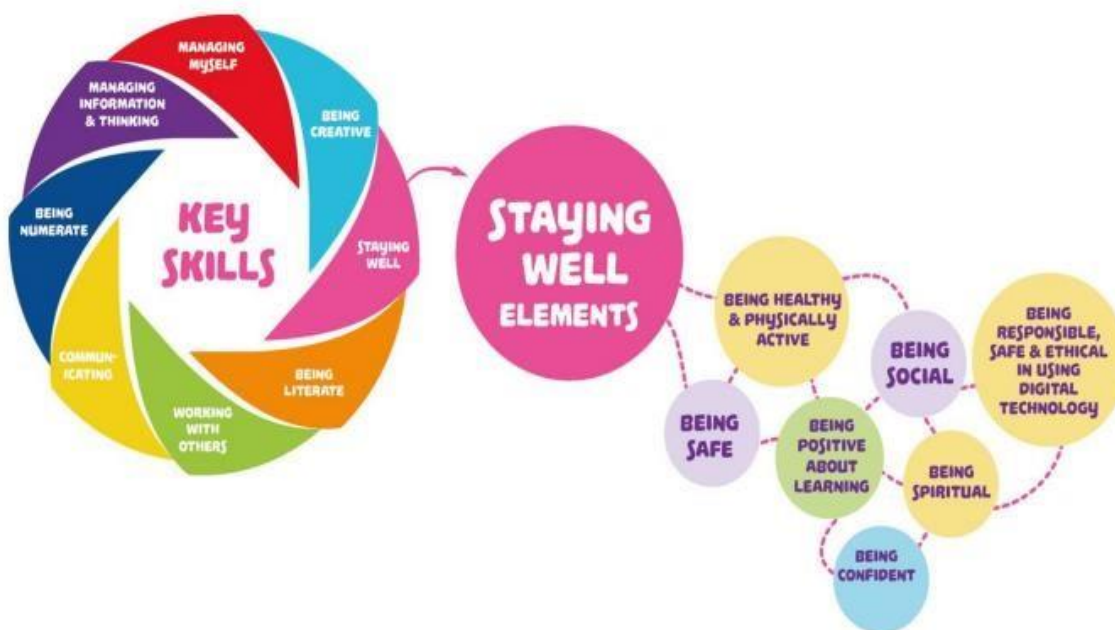
<b>SOL 5</b>	The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making.
<b>SOL 7</b>	The student values what it means to be an active citizen with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.
<b>SOL 10</b>	The student has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably.
<b>SOL 11</b>	The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his Wellbeing and that of others.
<b>SOL 12</b>	The student is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active.
<b>SOL 13</b>	The student understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices.

## Key Skills of Junior Cycle

Learners need a wide range of skills to help them face the many challenges presented to them in today's world. They develop specific skills in their subjects and other courses. But there is also a more general set of skills that are needed to support learners in their personal, social and work lives. These are referred to these as the key skills of junior cycle. As learners develop each of the key skills in an integrated way they will also become better learners. The six key skills of junior cycle are Managing Myself, Staying Well, Communicating, Being Creative, Working with Others, and Managing Information and Thinking. Working with digital technology also forms part of each of the skills.

*"Key skills will be embedded in the learning outcomes of every junior cycle subject and short course"*

(Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015, page15)



As stated in the latest *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023)*

*'The promotion of wellbeing for all is central to the Department's mission to enable individuals to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.'*

As schools play a vital role in the promotion of Wellbeing, we hope to highlight the increasing importance of the area by providing a wide range of approaches and activities which support our students academically, physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is our hope in KCS that through our curriculum students will develop the skills and sense of connectedness their own self, their peers, their teachers, their school and their wider community.



## Whole School Wellbeing

Whole school wellbeing is evident in the following areas.

### 1. School Policies

School policies are developed with staff, parents/guardians, students and the Board of Management. The following school policies are related to Wellbeing and are reviewed regularly:

- Admissions
- Anti-Bullying
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Data Protection
- Homework
- Health & Safety
- Internet/Devices Acceptable Usage Policy
- RSE
- SEN
- SPHE
- RE

### 2. How our Pastoral Care ethos supports Wellbeing

Kinsale Community School has two full time Guidance Counsellors who work with students from all year groups. Senior students benefit from regular group and individual meetings with Guidance Counsellors.

A Pastoral Care Team that includes senior management meets to discuss student welfare on a weekly basis. We have a full time Chaplain who promotes faith-based activities, organises the student *Meitheal Team*, and provides support for individual students when the need arises.

Retreats are offered for all students in 6<sup>th</sup> Year. Students get the opportunity to participate in a day of mindful reflection which focuses them on the spiritual aspect of their lives.

All students in Religion classes learn about different ways to meditate, reflect and pray and get opportunities to practice this throughout the year, enhancing their spiritual growth and supporting their Wellbeing.

As a Secondary School with a Christian ethos, the whole school community are involved in several liturgies throughout the year such as our Opening Mass, the Christmas Carol Service, and the Graduation Mass for Leaving Certs. There is a sense of togetherness and support at these times of reflection. We mark the liturgical calendar and the seasons of Advent and Lent are times of spiritual reflection. November is the month to remember the souls of those who have passed, and students and staff are given the opportunity to remember and pray for those they have lost, in a caring supporting environment.

We have a beautiful Prayer Room in our school. It is a place of calm and quiet, warmly decorated and comfortable. It is available to all students to use during break and lunch. Classes are brought there to

meditate and pray. There are books of reflection, mindfulness, prayers and support in the sacred space for students to pick up and read as they feel the need. There are beautiful stained glass panels and quiet music as well as visual resources used there to aid quiet reflection and prayer.

### 3. Wellbeing Team

A Wellbeing Team, led by the Whole School Wellbeing Coordinator, was set up this year involving members of staff who are teaching SPHE and Wellbeing related courses, and/or have an interest in promoting Wellbeing in the school community. A second group of teachers and Guidance Counsellors also met to plan a series of care classes and develop shared resources for teaching first years. It is intended to build on this each year as the Wellbeing course evolves.

### 4. The SEN Team

This team works closely with students and their parents/guardians and aims to remove barriers for students with additional/learning needs to ensure a positive school experience, and achievement of potential. The new ASD unit is a bright and comfortable space that provides a base for students with special educational needs.

### 5. The Student Support Team (SST)

This team is comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and a member of the SEN and Inclusion Team. The SST works collaboratively to support students with significant social, emotional and circumstantial difficulties. Members of the Pastoral Care Team feed into the SST as necessary. The SST often works with external agencies such as Tusla, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health) in supporting students.

### 6. Year Head Structure

The role of the Year Head is essential in the school community. This was identified in the whole school needs analysis and the Post of Responsibility review. Year Heads meet every week with Principal and Deputy Principal. This team works with others e.g. SEN, SST etc., to focus on the task of overseeing the welfare of the various year groups so that all students are supported at every level. Each Year Head is supported by two Deputy Year Heads, who have defined duties with regard to the care and support of students.

### 7. Class Tutors

Members of teaching staff act as Class Tutors. The Tutor is a consistent point of contact for the student for day to day management (e.g. signing journal) but is also there in a pastoral role supporting individual students. This is done in collaboration with the Year Head.

### 8. Student Voice

Student involvement and leadership is an essential part of Wellbeing in our school community. Student involvement is encouraged in many areas e.g. Head Boy, Head Girl, The Student Council & Prefects. The Student Council meets on a regular basis and considers issues that affect the student population. It allows students a voice to bring any concerns that may arise to the wider school community. Democratic and inclusive principles are to the fore at KCS in ensuring the student voice is articulated clearly and in a just manner. The organisation of the students in terms of student voice is overseen by two experienced members of the teaching staff.

## 9. Awards Night

This is a yearly awards night where students are nominated by staff and rewarded for achievement in sport, music, academic achievement, community involvement, civic virtue, and other leadership roles. Effort and involvement are recognised and acknowledged during the Prize Giving. These awards build on positive self-esteem and student Wellbeing, and highlight the importance of getting involved in school and community life.

## 10. Class trips

There are class trips for the 1<sup>st</sup> Years, 2<sup>nd</sup> Years and TY groups. The emphasis is on outdoor physical activities in outdoor education centres such as Ballyhass, Co. Cork and Cappanlea, Co.Kerry. TY trips involve many group activities which encourage students to mix and take part in various activities allowing new experiences and positive bonds to form for the group.

## 11. Leaving Cert Novelty Day

At this event, 6<sup>th</sup> Year students dress up, it is one of their final class times together and it allows for lots of fun and enjoyment for all. The annual 'Townies' versus 'Boggers' soccer matches are played. Refreshments and food are provided for students on their final school day.

## 12. Gaisce Awards

Students are encouraged and guided through the process of attaining the coveted President's Awards for continuing self-development by a designated member of the teaching staff. The awards are founded on the values of Empowerment, Inclusion and Equality, Respect and Excellence.

## 13. One Good Teacher Initiative

The One Good Teacher Initiative is designed to give students a personal contact point amongst the teaching staff. Research by *Jigsaw* has shown that if a young person has access to an adult that they can trust and who will listen to their concerns, then it has a very positive impact on their mental health. At KCS each teacher is allocated three 6<sup>th</sup> year students with whom they are connected for the year. Each student is made aware of their contact teacher, and that they can approach them with any issues that they might have. When issues arise, teachers can then link students with the appropriate members of the Pastoral Care Team and/or Management.

## 14 Amber Flag Award and Mental Health Month

The Amber Flag Award is an initiative developed by *Pieta House* to promote positive mental health and Wellbeing in schools and workplaces. At Kinsale Community School a student-centred Amber Flag Committee worked to achieve Amber Flag status during the 2018/19 academic year. In May 2019 KCS was awarded the Amber Flag, which now flies proudly outside the front of the school building as a symbol of our continued commitment to promoting positive mental health throughout our school community.

A further example of our commitment to positive mental health is our 'Positive Mental Health Month' held in October/November. During this month, whole school initiatives promoting positive mental health are delivered on issues such as stress reduction, nutrition, sleep hygiene, positive psychology, exercise, etc.

### 15 Safer Internet Day

This is an opportunity at Kinsale Community School to educate students from all years of the dangers and pitfalls of unregulated internet use for young people. The vast majority of students have personal internet devices which connects them to the adult world of information. Education about the healthy use of technology, and of how their data is used by others, is essential to the safer use of the internet by students.

### 16 Proclamation Day/Seachtain na Gaeilge/History Week

Annually, in the week leading up to St. Patrick's Day, the History and Irish Departments collaborate to promote Irish culture and heritage throughout the school community at KCS. Various cultural activities are promoted, such as conversation *as Gaeilge*, the wearing of green attire, Ceili dancing for students, history exhibitions and competitions etc. The week's events end with a Proclamation Day which celebrates the values and ideals of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence. These events are designed to promote a sense of cultural connectedness, pride and identity for our Irish students, and a sense of inclusiveness, welcome and equality for students from a different cultural background.

### 17 Extra-Curricular Activities

The extensive options include Trad group, annual musicals, Sporting Activities (Hurling, Camogie, Gaelic Football, Basketball, Soccer, Athletics, Rugby, Equestrian, Golf, Table Tennis), Green schools, Camera Club, Model United Nations, Debating, Music Club. The school offers many extra-curricular activities and students get involved in after-school or lunch time activities which help them grow in self-confidence and very much enhance their sense of well-being. Staff who are involved in each these activities do so on a voluntary basis.

## Sample Timetable for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle in Kinsale Community School (subject to change)

### Curricular Subjects in Kinsale Community School

The individual subject plans for PE, SPHE, CSPE, RE and Guidance will highlight how the Statements of Learning and Learning Outcomes are covered in these subjects. The table below outlines the provision of timetabled Wellbeing for the school year 2020/21

Subject	Periods per Week 1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Periods per Week 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Periods per Week 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year
PE	2	2	2
SPHE	1	1	1
CSPE	3	1	1
Religious Education	1	1	1
Digital Media Literacy	1	0	0
<b>Weekly Total</b>	8 periods (320 minutes)	5 periods (200 minutes)	5 periods (200 minutes)
<b>Annual Totals Total over hours over three years: 400</b>	178 hours p/a	111 hours p/a	111 hours p/a

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Signature of the Chairperson, Board of Management:

Sr Rita Twomey

Signature of the Secretary, Board of Management:

Seamus O'Leary