

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	St Columba's Catholic Primary School
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Award verifier:	Dr Helen Mills
Award adviser (if applicable):	Dr Helen Mills
Date of verification:	10/03/21

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The award evidence collated by Margi Evans (Headteacher and Wellbeing Award Coordinator) was outstanding and the presentation was delivered in an excellent way during the virtual verification, with Margi Evans leading the presentation and Mrs Lewis (Deputy Headteacher) conducting the virtual tour. All staff, pupils, parents and the governor spoke with great passion, pride and openness during the interviews. A real sense of belonging, trusting relationships and a committed team approach was evident, demonstrating the schools ability to work effectively as a team. This provided detailed information and allowed the adviser to better understand the context and background to the schools outstanding developments and achievements.

Strengths identified during verification:

St Columba's Catholic Primary School is such a welcoming, positive, kind and calm school, where everyone is cared for, valued, listened to, respected, trusted, nurtured, encouraged and celebrated. Outstanding leadership is a critical factor in understanding the success of the school in promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health as core to the whole school community. The financial investment, autonomy, skills, commitment and approach of the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team, Change Team, Staff, Governors, and the whole school community has created innovative

ways of working and a seamless and consistent, welcoming, happy, none judgemental, caring, supportive, safe, nurturing, engaging, creative and aspirational culture.

An excellent vision (tapping in to talent, breaking down barriers, daring to dream), wellbeing strategy and embedded catholic mission statement (Holding hands with Jesus as we love, grow & learn together - Inspire, motivate, achieve, unite, nurture, thrive, believe, pray, love), developed in consultation with the whole school community and are reflected in the schools positive culture and ethos, are central to the success of the school, and have created a sense of belonging, autonomy, trust and shared responsibility, referred to during the visit as 'family'. The result offers a powerful template for how emotional wellbeing of pupils, families and staff supports whole school progress.

Significant investment in people, staffing and their views, the environment, wide range of activities and interventions, robust monitoring, information sharing, with formal and informal support systems and excellent arrangements with external specialist services were apparent during the school verification and in the detailed evidence provided. For example, termly emotional literacy monitoring is fed back to the SENCO and included in pupil progress meetings, SEND planning and support plans, transition, EHCPs, use of CPOMs, safeguarding, referrals to early help, CAMHS, multi agency family work, butterflies counselling service, nugen care, neuro developmental pathway and educational psychologists, with recommendations implemented. Furthermore, stakeholder questionnaire results were outstanding and an additional post lockdown pupil wellbeing questionnaire demonstrated that children felt proud, happy and are resilient.

Children feel extremely safe and happy in school, have many friends, and articulated well how the school supports them with their emotional wellbeing and mental health and how they are confident to express their feelings, to ask for support and actively help each other. Pupils commented on the enjoyment and satisfaction they get from learning inside the classroom and outdoors, how they try their best, can identify and talk openly about their feelings, are proud of their celebrated achievements and roles, and described numerous tools that they can use, activities they can do and trusted adults they can work with to promote their wellbeing. This has enabled the day-to-day and longer-term emotional wellbeing and mental health activities to flourish and was evident throughout the verification with the promotion of wellbeing, positivity, aspirations, creativity, achievements, coupled with a sense of calm and nurturing relationships, with children demonstrating exemplary behaviour, kindness, confidence, pride and resilience.

Pupils commented, "School is amazing, kind and caring. School is outstanding and incredible; it's the best school. In PSHE we learn about wellbeing and did a book called positivity and do things to help us never give up and learn life skills and how to use money. We have democratic days and learn how to debate and choose activities like the relaxing day doing yoga, breathing wall, emotions, fitness, health and wellbeing. I like the teachers and the work is interesting and we help each other. We do fun activities after work and it's more enjoyable. There are lots of people to talk to if we're worried. I feel very, very, safe in school, I'm happy all the time. I enjoy reach for the stars – reaching your challenge and afterschool clubs. If work is really hard, we ask for help, we keep trying, it's OK to make mistakes, we learn from them and we have the Marvel mistake wall, it's made me confident. We get star of the week and dojo awards for working hard, being trustworthy and kind. Being kind makes you feel great and the other person feels happy. If anyone's hurt or upset the teachers notice and take real care of you".

The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of outstanding 'wellbeing' practice, which have a major impact on the whole school community. For example, the PSHE curriculum has been updated and includes a health and wellbeing theme, wellbeing activities linked to curricular subjects including super heros wonder book and parent and child rainbow reading area, wellbeing kindness

elf, numerous positive wellbeing displays including pictures of the children, we are the rainbow children, pass on a smile, wellbeing friendship, fishermans net prayers, wellbeing tree with thank you gifts for children and staff, SEAL assemblies that are then reinforced in class, circle time, 1-1 and small group interventions including talking about feelings, relaxation techniques, sensory work, mindfulness, targeted breakfast club with 80 children attending per day, during lockdown wellbeing activities were posted online and included celebration zoom assemblies, post lockdown a Covid wellbeing recovery programme was delivered, promotion of anti-bullying, internet safety, national wellbeing week including where to get help, Y6 transition, Be Awesome - go Big, growth mindset, worry jars, R.E., collective worship, worship warriors, prayer areas and garden, parish links, school and class council, class dojo points, star of hope award, star of the week, positive behaviour rewards, sport, music, extra curricular activities, digital leaders, buddy system, playtime resources, performing at the Liverpool Peace Proms and charity work including making a star of hope for residents at a local nursing home, neighbours and the local community.

The school has worked innovatively to develop outstanding stakeholder voice, parental engagement, effective communication, community links and partnerships, which has led to trusting relationships, and a desire to be a part of the school community, referred to during the verification as 'family', which are central to the success of the school. These approaches ensure that all children, including vulnerable children and their families are supported swiftly and effectively. This includes a dedicated parent mentor, an open door policy, daily meet and greets at the school gate, numerous opportunities for parents to get together (Covid has paused some of these) and attend drop ins, book club, workshops, courses, and activity sessions with their children, school dojo app, school website including a wellbeing section, blogs, newsletters, school based interventions, signposting and referrals made to outside agencies, and most importantly the whole school staff removing barriers and working alongside parents in a none judgemental and empowering way, listening to and implementing parent suggestions. The excellent communication methods, parental involvement and positive feedback demonstrate a sense of connection and belonging to the school community, where pupils, families and staff are confident to ask for or seek support, and staff are confident in identifying those who require support and signposting and/or providing support. The award evidence and interviews demonstrated how extensive, innovative and open this feature is, with staff going above and beyond what is expected to ensure that the whole school community is supported.

Parent praise and gratitude for staff in school is exceptional. For example, parents commented, "School has always been absolutely wonderful. My child has anxiety, the school has done loads of wellbeing work with him and he always talks to the mentor about concerns, we had so much contact with school with lockdown zooms and he skipped in to school. During reception transition school asked [child] what she was looking forward to, they give lots of positives and she is now so confident, talents are celebrated – you can be yourself and they've let her sing. Being kind, everyone's friendly. School do cooking with children, they send food and we do it together, she loves it. School has been amazing, I know I can ring, they referred my daughter to Butterflies and they rang and asked how I felt and asked if she was OK, there's no pressure of stress and it's reassuring. Miss Lewis and all the staff go the extra mile for the children, there's so many fun wellbeing activities and mental health messages everyday, seeing how much extra effort they put in. There was so much support in lockdown, emails, zoom, P.E. and class dojo. My child is happy and safe in school. EHCP in place, assessment for autism, I've had a lot of help, we have a team around the family. My child being in school during this lockdown has really helped me; he's come out of his shell. I have a close relationship with staff, they check in on him and he knows they are there for him; they're really amazing with him. We have a parent app, wellbeing parent workshops and coffee mornings, I did a phonics course, children sat with us, and it was amazing and definitely helped us. One of my children is gifted and talented and school set additional work and they also tap in to others talents, my other child told me 'I have a different talent, I can sing, dance and draw, we're all different'".

Staff wellbeing and professional learning have been prioritised, along with financial investment, and this is valued greatly by the highly skilled and dedicated staff that feel the strategies in place support their emotional wellbeing, enabling them to provide the most effective support to the children, parents and each other. All staff have been involved with the wellbeing award for schools. Extensive training in mental health and wellbeing has included emotional first aid and emotion coaching, which have been cascaded and evaluated, one inset day for staff wellbeing and one for free time to catch up, HAYS wellbeing self help, bully busters, CPOMs, safeguarding, online safety, Liverpool CAMHS ROAR mental health training, teaching and promoting mental health, children's counselling and therapy, mental health and young people, separation and bereavement, autism, dyslexia, behaviour, SEN, Covid 19 psychological first aid, whole staff wellbeing award, grooming, community resilience, secondary trauma, MITA, LSA and Early Years.

The school has committed to reducing staff stress, workload and improving wellbeing by writing a comprehensive staff wellbeing strategy and policy, marking and feedback policy, whole school staff appraisal policy that includes wellbeing and personal goals, providing a dedicated wellbeing budget, an open door policy, wellbeing is an agenda item at meetings, staff meetings on self care including tips and appreciation gifts, wellbeing 'you days', staff social events, a positive staff room, and most importantly listening to the needs and suggestions of staff and having an understanding of family and work life. Staff commented how supportive and approachable all staff are and how everyone looks out for each other. Staff feel valued, connected, supported, enjoy their jobs and are proud to be a part of the St Columba's Catholic Primary School family.

Staff commented, "We're one big happy family. Children are happy. We always come together and pick each other up. I'm proud of making a difference to the staff, pupils, families and community. I'm proud of our staff, united together as a team. Wellbeing is at the forefront, we have open discussions to improve workload and staff morale and confidence has increased. We all feel as one and do a fab job. It's OK to make mistakes. We work together so tightly and support each other. Brilliant support with wellbeing, I feel valued, wellbeing questionnaire feedback is acted upon, we have wellbeing meetings, receive gifts, have a wellbeing tree, it's gorgeous. I've been working from home for the last 12 months and I've not felt isolated, support has been immense, my wellbeing was paramount to Margi. School is so welcoming; it's fabulous. Teaching assistant training has empowered them, they promote resilience, successful learners and it's increased both the TA's and pupil's confidence. MITA training has made me feel more valued and confident, we can scaffold pupil's work and can take them out for interventions".

Staff also commented, "We pick up on early intervention, we understand our children, and staff work really hard for the children, the SENCO and parent mentor work really well together, and they put interventions in place and support staff. We provide outstanding personal development and social and emotional wellbeing is at the forefront, school is peaceful and welcoming and we celebrate children's achievements massively, we understand that if children are happy, they can then learn. Children dream and achieve. We have a fantastic team and stick together and have love for the children. Great learners work has engrained resilience and an attitude to work hard, it's had a massive effect. We provide mental health and wellbeing support and training for parents via the parent hub for example trauma, attachment and bereavement. Parents are fully engaged with school, we have parent groups, coffee mornings, parent and child activities including reading and book club and family literacy group. We take on parent TA volunteers, once they trust you and build their confidence they want to do more, we nurture and help them achieve. In lockdown I did home visits and telephoned, provided financial and mental health support and tapped in to funding for furniture, food and clothing. Teachers, TA's rang children in a morning to get them ready for zoom, we're at the gate in a morning and we're always there for them. Staff are our most important asset,

they can't support the children if they're wellbeing isn't OK. We always go above and beyond for pupils, staff and families. Children are at the heart of everything we do".

The Governor commented, "Staff listen to one another, have emotional intelligence and the resilience of the school community is phenomenal. We have a strong governing body that includes pastoral care of leadership. The Headteacher has a none threatening astute management style, is incredibly empathetic and understands the culture of the community. The school is an ambassador for mental health and wellbeing, the way we care for one another, it's always been our direction of travel and its put into practice, it's a place where people grow and flourish".

The school has drawn together the threads that connect all the different work done and aspirations, and is able to demonstrate positive change in children, parents and staff. The school understands the importance of developing trusting relationships with the whole school community, valuing each other, working as a collective team, promoting positivity, building resilience, promoting, supporting and improving the whole schools mental health and wellbeing, ensuring that children feel safe, secure, happy and confident, which in turn impacts positively on their resilience and educational attainment.

Impact:

Investment in staff wellbeing and training has resulted in a reduction in staff stress, workload and an increase in staff managing their own wellbeing and improved resilience, which has further strengthened staff's sense of belonging, pride, motivation and job satisfaction.

Staff training in mental health and wellbeing has resulted in increased awareness and understanding of mental health. Staff are confident to talk about their own mental health and are confident that they have the skills and tools to support their own and their pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health. Staff feel that school listens to their views and needs. Staff are confident in recognising the factors that affect their children and families mental health and know how to refer for support to ensure that children and their families receive support quickly, preventing escalation of mental health issues.

Whole school promotion and initiatives has increased awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing, resulting in open conversations, using shared language, and everyone recognising when they are not mentally well, and are able to ask for support or to support themselves and others confidently to improve their wellbeing by using a range of techniques, contributing to improved resilience.

Outstanding leadership, effective stakeholder voice and consultation mechanisms, clear communication and the wellbeing vision and strategy has led to a shared responsibility and ownership that promotes and empowers everyone to take responsibility of their own and others wellbeing and mental health.

An embedded happy, caring, positive school culture and ethos, investment in highly trained, committed and nurturing staff, a creative and varied curriculum and extra curricular activities and targeted interventions has resulted in all pupils, including those with additional wellbeing and mental health needs, being provided with a safe space and for interventions to be delivered, enabling their needs to be met. This has promoted confidence in children's ability to talk openly about their feelings, to manage their own mental health, and to support each other, demonstrating developments in their social and emotional skills, confidence and resilience, enabling young people to thrive and excel in their learning.

Areas for development:

Promote the free education support partnership counselling.

Post Covid review the change team.

Consider ways to recruit whole school wellbeing champions, for example deliver the Anna Freud peer-mentoring programme.

Consult with each class and consider introducing wellbeing check in's and worry boxes.

Having become more aware of the multiple examples of outstanding practice, continue to share the experiences and approaches with other schools, your local authority and mental health forums.

Verifier recommendation:

St Columba's Catholic Primary School has achieved the Wellbeing Award for Schools. This award covers the following 3 years. I look forward to the work the school will undertake over this time.

Head teacher comments:

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