

Research Project on Schools' Provision for Pupils'/Students' Wellbeing
RECORD FOR SCHOOL

SCHOOL DETAILS		
Name of school: Coláiste Cholmáin	Roll number: 64610N	Name of principal: Jimmy Finn
Postal address of school: Claremorris, Co. Mayo		
Email address: office@stcolmans.ie	Website: www.stcolmans.ie	Phone: 094 937 1442
Name of chairperson of board of management: Fr. John O' Boyle	Email address:	

Our working definition of wellbeing is:

*The presence of **a culture, ethos, practice and environment** which foster students' development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. It includes **quality teaching and learning** for the development of all elements related to healthy living whether academic, physical, social or emotional with **particular focus on self-efficacy, resilience and coping.***

This definition recognises that well-being in schools is determined by the environment, and the inter-personal relationships within that environment; by teaching and learning; and by personal fulfilment. This project sets out to test this definition during the research project through our engagement with schools.

We wish to be able to answer four key questions through this collaborative research project:

1. How do schools build a sense of community in the school?
2. How do schools provide for students' safety?
3. What opportunities do schools provide for students to build their self-esteem?
4. What opportunities do schools provide for students to contribute and to build their self-efficacy?

We have developed a framework to help us explore these questions in the participating schools:

FRAMEWORK FOR REFLECTING ON A SCHOOL'S PROVISION FOR STUDENT/STUDENT WELLBEING	
DIMENSIONS	ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PROVISION
THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School leadership School culture Classroom climate Student support
THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the curriculum Co-curricular and extra-curricular programme Learning experiences
PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Student voice Partnership with parents Community links

A. KEY DRIVERS OF WELLBEING IN THIS SCHOOL

- The voluntary involvement of staff in extra-curricular activities and many other interactions with students outside of the classroom is key to developing the relationships that support students' wellbeing.
- Staff morale and outlook is positive and caring.
- The language and tone of interactions is respectful and consistent.
- Student-teacher relationships and interactions outside the classroom support a respectful and positive learning environment.
- Local knowledge, year head and tutor support structures provide for a school where all students are well known and cared for.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Teachers support students through personal and academic monitoring and pay attention to social and personal issues.

B. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

1.1 School leadership

- The school develops and implements policies to that support a child-centred vision and ethos. Education is focused on caring for and accommodating the whole student.
- The high quality of interpersonal relationships is key to reinforcing the positive learning atmosphere in the school. Staff and SMT promote fun activities (Xmas Santa, etc.) in tandem with the serious business of learning.
- SMT and staff interest in their students' wellbeing supports the belief that students' happiness is key to enabling learning.
- The language and tone used in all interactions with students was very affirming.
- SMT recognise that students' safety is a key priority for parents. To this end a high level of supervision is provided in outdoor recreation areas and CCTV is used to monitor activities in some corridors and other indoor areas.
- A very calm atmosphere was evident in the school building, on corridors and in the open areas. Students moved quickly to lessons at the end of recreation times.
- The canteen provides healthy eating options and is a central part of the student's experience of the school. Students are required to take responsibility for their assigned areas and a rota is established for general cleaning. A ticket system, which is also used for rewards, enables students who have financial difficulties to access the canteen.
- The school prioritises the development of policies relevant to student wellbeing and a systematic approach has been adopted with comprehensive procedures for including staff, parents and students in drafting and reviewing policies. The school recognises the importance of involving the partners and most are very interested.
- The extent of the work required to keep all policies up to date and to ensure that procedures for consultation are followed consumes a lot of time and staff felt that in some, instances, reflective inputs were compromised at the expense of ensuring throughput.
- Actions to reduce and eliminate bullying are high on the school's agenda and a "zero-tolerance" approach has been adopted and one of the school's posts is assigned to the role of Anti-bullying coordinator.
Many activities and initiatives have been established: anti-bullying week is an annual event; the policy has been revised in accordance with Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2013 and published on the school web site; an anti-bullying charter is published in school journals; regular surveys are used to develop awareness and to give students opportunities to talk about bullying; the school is investigating the use of an online tool for recording bullying incidents. Relevant CPD has been provided for staff, including inputs relevant to mental health (Aware), assessment for learning (AfL) and child protection
- The school is inclusive and has a strong emphasis on providing equity across all areas of students' lives. The prominence of a rainbow flag outside the school bears testimony to this ideal.

- A comprehensive range of awards recognises all students for academic and non-academic achievements.

1.2 School culture

- Very good relationships were evident between students and teachers and the atmosphere was warm and welcoming.
- Teachers place a lot of importance on their interactions with students outside of the classroom as a basis for building relationships that carry over into the learning environment.
- The school size and position in the community facilitate personal knowledge of all students by SMT and teachers. All students are known by face, by name, by personality and sometimes also through historical and local connections with family.
- Year heads have discretion in dealing with individual situations where personal circumstances and family relationships have a bearing on student's behaviour and interactions in school. This allows flexibility and the sensitive handling of sometimes delicate situations.
- The code of behaviour sets high expectations for student behaviour with respect being a key value. Students are expected to take responsibility for themselves increasingly as they develop through the school.
- The entrance assessment is used to provide performance tracking guidelines for year heads to ensure that students are achieving to the best of their ability.
- Students' effort, participation and achievements, both sporting and other, are celebrated and recognised in many fora including the school's Facebook page, local newspapers and the school news screen in entrance foyer.

1.3 Classroom climate

- The school's code of positive behaviour has a focus on promoting the connection between behaviour, attendance and attainment.
- Attendance is a key area for attention with this year's trend showing improvement.
- A zero-tolerance policy has been implemented for non-attendance with strict enforcement particularly in the area of exiting the school without permission. As a result of this tightly operated system students' perceptions of what is acceptable have changed.
- Letters with attendance details are sent home to parents four times each year and additional pre-emptive communications are issued if the number of absences are approaching the reportable level. Medals and TUSLA certificates are distributed at the awards day ceremony to recognise positive attendance.
- The student voice was evident at classroom level. Students were comfortable asking for help in the classroom and contributing their own ideas. Some teachers have a deliberate policy of encouraging students to ask questions as a way of developing confidence and demonstrating their knowledge.
- Opportunities for discussion and collaboration in classroom were observed in several lessons.
- TY students were encouraged to discuss and analyse feelings in a structured and supportive environment as part of a Personal Development module.
- The positive atmosphere in many lessons was affirming and promoted participation by students.

1.4 Student Support

- Several initiatives are implemented in the school to help students deal with potential barriers to learning.
- The TY and 1st year buddy system gives students who are new to the school opportunities to talk about issues that may affect their learning.
- Teachers and SMT places a lot of emphasis on the importance of observation of students both inside and outside the classroom. In this way, the interactions and progress of the more vulnerable students can be monitored in a sensitive way. Local knowledge is also highly prized in this context.
- There is a tiered student support system with the tutor being the first point of reference for the Year head.
- Voluntary tutors have a key role in supporting students. SMT endeavour to assign tutors to classes which they are also timetabled to teach. Tutors organise end-of-year outings with their classes to

promote relationship building and have a focus on getting to know their students. In addition, a tutor programme is delivered through two timetabled periods each term.

- Tutors are a vital element in supporting the transition to post-primary school for first-year students. Communications are vital in the student support system Staff are regularly informed by e-mail of issues to look out for with specific information being shared sensitively.

2.1 Access to the curriculum

- LCA students are fully integrated into the life of the school and participate in school sports and other extra-curricular activities.
- The optional TY provides an opportunity for students to develop holistically, to enhance social skills and to mature prior to entering the Leaving certificate programme.
- TY Students are well prepared for participation in community outreach programmes, such as engagement with local nursing homes, and are thoroughly debriefed on completion. This structured approach supports the students and encourages them to reflect on their experiences and to learn from them.
- A broad choice of subjects is offered to all students starting with a taster programme for first-year students. Teachers commented on the advantages that the full-year taster programme can have for those students who do not continue with a subject for Junior Certificate but take it up again in senior cycle.
- The personal (one-to-one) counselling aspect of guidance provision has been reduced in recent years and the student support team feel that this is having a real impact on students. See Appendix A for more details.
- Incoming students' needs are identified early on to facilitate planning and strategic use of resources. E-mail is used extensively to ensure required information is shared.

2.2 Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Programme

- The school promotes student wellbeing and healthy lifestyles particularly through the provision of sport. The healthy eating options in the canteen complement this focus.
- Students' participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which are supported by teachers on a voluntary basis promotes the development of relationships that support learning in the classroom.
- A range of activities in addition to sports is available.
- The school is conscious of the need to support students who need "quiet" space.

2.3 Learning experiences

- Lessons are planned to accommodate the main learning styles and include teacher instruction and student-led activities
- Routines in the classroom are seen as important anchor points for students and provide them with a sense of security as they move between teachers, subjects and as they progress through the school.
- SMT and teachers are aware of the need for further development of differentiation in the classroom and CPD is being planned.
- There was active engagement of students in many of the lessons observed.
- Pair and group work was used to support learning in a number of lessons. Best practice was seen where the activity was structured around a strategy such as think-pair-share.
- Teachers including members of care team are particularly conscious of the need to keep students engaged with school. In several instances where students were seen to be disengaging from mainstream school life, staff have investigated and facilitated those students' involvement in activities outside of school with a particular focus on identifying areas where the students will experience success.
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills are promoted.
- Teaching is focused on equipping students with a skill set that can be adapted and used in different situations. For example, language students were shown how they could use all of the knowledge and skills that they have acquired to respond to any question they may be asked in an oral exam setting.
- Strategic approaches problem solving were being taught with a clear emphasis on building on initial success.

- Students were encouraged to review their own work and ask questions
- SMT introduced AFL initiatives introduced several years ago and are now attempting to raise awareness again through CPD and sharing practice.
- There is an emphasis on correction, collecting and monitoring of homework and some very good monitoring of students' efforts in class enabling students to be affirmed and experience success there and then.

3.1 Communication

- The school journal is key to the management of information exchange between parents and school. The monitoring of students' journals is a responsibility that is part of two posts, one for senior cycle students and the other for junior cycle. This regular and structured process keeps the progress of the individual student to the fore and allows issues to be responded to in a timely manner.
- Year head communicate regularly with parents.
- Options evening are organised for parents.
- Regular parents-teacher meetings are held and reports are sent home three times each year.
- Parents also make the SMT aware of relevant local issues.
- The parents' association is involved in policy development.
- An annual parental survey (WSE-MLL style) is being established. The focus will be on a different group of parents each year.
- Clear information about the school's provision for student wellbeing is communicated to parents.
- Letters are sent to parents with information about the RSE programme.

3.2 Partnership with parents

- There is an open-door policy.
- Parents are encouraged to meet with the SEN coordinator, principal or deputy principal prior to enrolment or early on in the school year.
- Student leadership is encouraged and fostered through many different initiatives: the prefect system encourages senior students to act as role models; mini football leagues are organized for junior classes by older students; the buddy system supports the transition of 1st year students into the school.
- TY students have the opportunity to attend courses to become assistant trainers in the local GAA club. Most importantly, these students are given additional guidelines and instruction by the school relevant to their personal health and safety and the appropriate level of involvement and responsibility in the context of working with more senior coaches and younger club members. The Green schools committee also provided leadership roles for students and the school has recently received its third green flag.

3.3 Community links

- The local community supports the school and students' learning experiences in many ways.
- Work experience is provided in the local community.
- A physical fitness initiative which runs in the school gym at lunchtime is facilitated by past pupils under the supervision of the school. This gives students who are not involved in competitive sports the opportunity to experience personal success and evaluate their own progress in a related area.
- TY Students are well prepared for participation in community outreach programmes, such as engagement with local nursing homes, and are thoroughly debriefed on completion. This structured approach supports the students and encourages them to reflect on their experiences and to learn from them.
- The school has a strong desire to promote a social conscience among its students and is involved in a number of local organisations and fundraising events.
- The school has links with external agencies and actively pursues support from relevant agencies
- A lot of inputs are delivered by external agencies for CPD, talks etc.

C. QUESTIONS THE SCHOOL MIGHT CONSIDER

- What kinds of extra- and co-curricular opportunities could be provided for students who are not involved in sports?

D. QUESTIONS THE INSPECTORATE MIGHT CONSIDER

PROMPTS	NOTES
Is there anyone we should have spoken to but we didn't?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BOM• Ancillary staff• Parents
General observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPHE: Teachers felt that parts of the SPHE programme were out-of-date and lacked relevance.• Guidance: The reduction in ex-quota hours for Guidance and Counselling has placed a great strain on the school and has impacted the school's provision for students' wellbeing	

