

# Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

## Verification Report

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| <b>School name:</b>                   | St Brigid's Catholic Primary School                      |
| <b>School address and postcode:</b>   | Waterpark Drive, Stockbridge Village, Liverpool, L28 7RQ |
| <b>School telephone:</b>              | 0151 477 8150  |
| <b>School website:</b>                | www.stbrigidsprimary.co.uk                               |
| <b>Head teacher:</b>                  | Mrs Rachael Tyler  |
| <b>Head teacher's email:</b>          | rachael.tyler@knowsley.gov.uk                            |
| <b>WAS coordinator:</b>               | Victoria McKay   |
| <b>WAS coordinator's email:</b>       | victoria.mckay@stbrigidsprimary.co.uk                    |
| <b>Award verifier:</b>                | Dr Helen Mills   |
| <b>Award adviser (if applicable):</b> | Dr Helen Mills   |
| <b>Date of verification:</b>          | 20/01/21   |

### Commentary on the evidence provided:

The award evidence collated by Victoria McKay (Wellbeing Lead and Award Coordinator) was clear and concise and the presentation was delivered in an excellent way during the virtual verification, with Rachael Tyler (Head Teacher) leading the presentation and Victoria McKay contributing throughout. All staff, governors, pupils and parents spoke with great passion, pride and openness during the interviews. A real sense of belonging, strong relationships and a committed team approach was evident, demonstrating the school's 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:

Leadership is a key factor in understanding the success of the school in promoting emotional wellbeing as core to the whole school community, and this has enabled the Wellbeing Lead to flourish in her role. The financial investment, commitment, skills, style and approach of the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Change Team, staff, governors and the whole school community has created a seamless and consistent welcoming, caring, supportive, happy, safe, and aspirational culture and innovative ways of working.

A strong Christian and wellbeing vision are central to the success of the the school, and has for a number of years created a sense of shared responsibility, ownership and belonging. This was once again refreshed during the Wellbeing Award for Schools process demonstrating continued progress and commitment to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the whole school community. The result offers a powerful template for how emotional wellbeing of staff, pupils and families supports whole school progress.

An open door policy, listening to the needs of others and breaking down barriers are very much part of how the school has achieved a shared sense of family where children, families and staff are confident to ask for support and to support each other. The school has continued to develop outstanding 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, which are central to the success of the school. During lockdown, the school promoted numerous pupil, family and staff wellbeing activities and kept in regular contact with everyone and these have had a positive impact on peoples mental health and wellbeing. These approaches ensure that all children, including vulnerable children and their families are supported swiftly and effectively. This includes the parent mentor who seeks additional financial and welfare support, signposting to outside agencies, numerous opportunities for parents to get together (Covid has paused some of these) and attend workshops and educational courses, the use of CPOMs, Early Help, excellent safeguarding and SEND identification, provision and monitoring, personal provision plans, the Head Teacher who meets and greets parents on the school yard, teachers available on the yard, school wellbeing section on website, Twitter, newsletters, seasaw, texts, phone calls, school based universal and targeted interventions, signposting and referrals made to outside agencies. Most importantly the whole school staff working alongside parents in a none-judgemental way.

Parent praise and gratitude for staff in school is exceptional. 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, educated, signposted and empowered to make postitive changes to their lives to improve their mental health and wellbeing. Parents commented, "It's a lovely school, really impressed, especially in lockdown with the wellbeing check in with pupils, wellbeing is at the heart of everything they do, they couldn't have done any more. Seesaw, telephone check in to check we're OK and video messages are well organised, you know what to expect. Support is always available; go to them if any problems and they're dealt with timely, open door policy, they listen to you and share information, can't fault them. We get texts to look after ourselves and links to think about wellbeing; it's nice. Lovely touches, 'be kind to yourself', it makes you feel good. My children love school, they're both happy and doing well; it's nice to see. School have always been focused on staff, parents and children's wellbeing; it's the ethos of the school. Teachers know the pupils really well. School referred my child to the ASD pathway, it's really amazing how much school supported us all, really understanding, it made a massive difference, the amount of resources they've shared with us, the regular contact on school apps, asking how we and the children are and tailoring things for my child took the stress away. Daily messages reminding us to do something nice with the children, it really made a difference, kept us feeling part of the school, fell more connected. School is fantastic at reassuring you your doing well, tone of voice used is chatty and engaging, it stopped the worrying. The action for happiness is really good and I'm now using it with staff in work. The ethos of really caring how people are doing. Sense of community in school, really want everyone to be doing well as a rounded person, not just learning".

Children feel 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 and outside the classroom, how they make decisions to improve the school, can identify and talk openly about their feelings, are proud of their celebrated achievements and described numerous tools that they can use, activities they can do and trusted adults they can work with to promote their wellbeing. Caring, kind, approachable, supportive, listened to, understanding, trusting relationships, connected, belong, family, happy and enjoyment were key descriptions given in the interviews, and these are core to the positive, nurturing, empowering and aspirational culture of the school. This has enabled the day to day and longer term emotional wellbeing and mental health activities to flourish and was evident during the verification with the promotion of positivity, aspirations, emotion check ins, RE, PSHE, circle time, anti-bullying, restorative conversations, daily mile, mindful monsters, calm library and quiet spaces, sensory room for children with SEMH and SEN, play therapy, nature groups, trauma informed school, Education Psychology support, school council, achievements and a sense of calm, with children displaying exemplary behaviour, engagement and enjoyment in learning.

Children commented, “When we come in, we have our pegs and put in on excited, happy, sad or worried, and Mrs Pickett takes you out and talks to you, a boy in my class was sad, when he came back he was excited and happy. My favourite thing to do is work, if you get stuck teachers explain and help you. We get in a circle and talk about our feelings, Mr Fleming gives advice, I like it, it’s fun and we help friends. Playground buddies play and talk to you. I can talk to my teacher, friends and Mr Fleming. Drawing and talking is calming and peaceful, it helped me, breathing helps if you’re angry, it calms you down. Miss posted wellbeing activities for us to do. The daily mile gets you ready to do your work and the day ahead. I wanted to come to school because it’s fun. I like my friends, teachers, dinner ladies, maths and reading. I got a star and merit award for being kind. We vote for our school council and they make changes. I love school”.

Significant investment in people, highly trained staff, the facilities, equipment, environment, wide range of activities including residentials and Children’s University, with formal and informal support and monitoring systems, was apparent during the school verification, and in action plans, agendas, policies and provision of interventions. The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of excellent 'wellbeing' practice. Many of these have a major impact on the whole school community. For example, highly skilled and dedicated staff identify those in need and provide a range of extensive and highly effective whole school and targeted social, emotional, wellbeing and mental health activities and interventions. Class teachers and support staff deliver engaging, meaningful and positive lessons and the whole school staff role model kindness, care and empathy.

Whole school staff wellbeing has been prioritised for a number of years and changes to reduce staff stress and to make workload more manageable have been implemented alongside ways to improve wellbeing, evidenced by the long standing staff team and high attendance rates. For example, an embedded culture of positivity and recognition, staff suggestions are acted upon, solution focused approaches, wellbeing focus in staff meetings and in performance management, staff wellbeing policy and vision, PPA at home, subject lead time, promotion of work and family life balance including not taking work home and families coming first, flexible working, wellbeing baskets and staff check ins during lockdown. Whole school staff training has included mental health and PSHE training, emotional first aid, nurtured heart, restorative practice, play therapy, anxiety in children and safeguarding ACE's. This has created a positive and caring culture where staff talk openly about feelings and emotions. The highly skilled and dedicated staff feel that the strategies and training in place alongside the support from all the staff contribute to their emotional wellbeing, enabling them to provide the most effective support to the children. Staff commented how supportive and approachable all staff are and how everyone looks out for each other, and importantly there is a

genuine focus on positivity, happiness and being kind to yourself, with regular reminders from the Head Teacher. The whole staff at school feel valued, connected, supported, have a sense of purpose, are passionate about making a positive difference to the lives of the children and families at their school, enjoy their jobs and are proud to work at the school.

Staff commented, “We are a family. Together we are stronger. Rachael and Vicky’s leadership makes us really special; the Head Teacher put our wellbeing at the forefront. We take time to say hello and check in, we cover for one another; it’s really appreciated by all staff. The Head Teacher asks what you need and gets it. Difficult issues are addressed. Everyone does look after each other, staff notice and support you and communicate to the Head Teacher. We visit staff at home. We strive for moral excellence and social respect and pride ourselves that every child can succeed if their wellbeing is good. Every class has a feelings check in, TA’s take children out and speak to them, any concerns are passed on, it’s a consistent approach and has a positive impact, the children know we’re here to talk. We provide stability. Weekly parent check in allowed us to build those relationships and they look forward to it, we give extra support and advice, gave sim cards, iPad’s and told them don’t worry, it’s solved, and now they ask us how we are. We work really hard to build successful relationships with parents. SENCO special needs support, identifying primary need and introducing play therapy has had biggest impact. We’ve improved outdoor provision for Year 1 and introduced free play to develop relationships and it’s having a positive effect. Reception behaviour issues were related to speech and language, so now we have a speech and language therapist. We pick up on all issues, really proud if it. Enrich Education deliver outdoor learning and we run children’s university and it’s raising aspirations. In lockdown we had family weekend activities. We teach children strategies and tools to cope in PSHE and circle time. Restorative practice resolves issues, develops communication, listening and empathy. The parent mentor is at the front desk and listens to and supports parents and staff, she delivers family learning sessions and coffee mornings. I’m proud of the great relationships with parents and children, they do trust us, how much we do and parents volunteer”.

The School Governor commented, “I see the strength of caring relationships between staff and children and between children too. Children are rewarded for taking part in activities such as the Children’s University, residential and nativities, their strengths are celebrated and it builds their confidence. School do a fantastic job in promoting children’s wellbeing. The school is well managed and effective. Community engagement is fantastic; school reaches out to involve them in school and it develops a sense of family and ownership. Parent support is excellent. Relationships between SLT and the wider staff team are brilliant. Fantastic at promoting staff wellbeing and this has enabled them to cope with challenges. It has a genuinely caring, committed and inclusive ethos. I’m very proud to be a Governor”.

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, families and staff. The school understands the importance of developing trusting relationships with the whole school community, promoting and improving everyone’s mental health and wellbeing, and how this supports children to feel happy and secure, enabling them to thrive and achieve.

#### **Impact:**

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

Whole school promotion, activities, programmes and training in mental health and wellbeing has increased whole school community awareness and understanding. This has resulted in people using

mental health vocabulary, having open conversations, recognising their feelings, confident in asking for support or supporting themselves and others, using a range of techniques, contributing to improved wellbeing and resilience. This has led to a shared responsibility and ownership that promotes and empowers everyone to take responsibility of their own wellbeing and 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, pupils' and families wellbeing and mental health. 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.

An embedded welcoming, caring, positive school culture and ethos that promotes wellbeing, investment in highly trained and passionate staff, the strength of trusting relationships, a creative curriculum and extra curricular activities, informal and formal support, monitoring systems and targeted interventions has resulted in all pupils, including those with additional mental health and wellbeing 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 and emotions and to manage their own mental health, demonstrating developments in their social and emotional skills and resilience, enabling young people to thrive and achieve.

#### Areas for development:

- Post COVID lockdown, hold regular change team meetings, perhaps in small working groups and disseminate future actions to change team members.
- As already highlighted by the school, post COVID lockdown, establish and promote pupil and parent wellbeing champions, train more staff wellbeing champions and inform the whole school community.
- As already highlighted by the school, complete further planned mental health and wellbeing training.
- Consider introducing staff wellbeing buddies, a staff wellbeing day and agree dedicated times for the staff mental health first aiders to listen/signpost/respond to needs/offload.
- Share the excellent stakeholder questionnaire findings with all stakeholders.
- 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. Brigid'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:

We are proud of the work we do and the relationships we have and will continue to prioritise the mental health and well-being of our pupils, families and staff.

Thank you for recognising the crucial work that we do and rest assured that we continue to be relentless in our pursuit of excellence in this field.

Mrs R Tyler

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