MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL KILBEGGAN WELLBEING POLICY

Whole-School Approach to Student and Staff Wellbeing

1. Introduction

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is committed to promoting and protecting the wellbeing of every member of our school community. We recognise that wellbeing is central to effective learning, positive relationships, inclusion, participation and personal development.

Our approach is informed by the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and is based on a whole-school understanding of wellbeing. Wellbeing is not viewed as the responsibility of one person, one subject or one programme. It is supported through the culture of the school, the quality of relationships, teaching and learning, school policies and planning, and our partnerships with students, parents/guardians, staff and the wider community.

Our school ethos places value on holistic education and on creating a caring, supportive and positive environment in which students can learn, develop and participate. This policy sets out how wellbeing is promoted and supported in the everyday life of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan.

2. Rationale

The policy is also informed by the school's School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Wellbeing Promotion Review (2024-2026), which involved gathering and analysing feedback from students, staff and parents/guardians. The review identified relationships as an area for continued development and highlighted opportunities to strengthen respectful interactions, student voice and participation in teaching and learning. The findings inform the school's ongoing wellbeing planning and School Improvement Plan.

The wellbeing of our students and staff is an important foundation for a positive school experience. Students are more likely to engage with learning and with school life when they experience positive relationships, a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate and appropriate support when difficulties arise.

At Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan, we recognise that our students come from different diverse backgrounds, have different strengths, needs, interests and as a result experiences. Our approach therefore seeks to provide a range of opportunities and supports rather than relying on a single model of wellbeing.

We promote wellbeing through:

- Positive and respectful relationships between students and staff
- Student voice, participation and leadership
- A welcoming, inclusive and diverse school community
- Opportunities for friendship, connection, activity and achievement
- Support for physical, emotional, social and academic wellbeing
- Appropriate pastoral, guidance, learning and additional-needs supports
- A safe and supportive school environment
- Partnership with parents/guardians and the wider community
- Ongoing reflection and development of our wellbeing practices.

This policy provides a framework for these practices and supports the continued development of a whole-school culture in which wellbeing is part of everyday school life.

3. What Do We Mean by Wellbeing?

Wellbeing refers to an individual student's experience of being healthy, safe, connected, supported and able to participate meaningfully in school and community life. Wellbeing is far broader than caring simply for one's mental health difficulties and includes a range of interconnected dimensions.

- ***Physical wellbeing***: being physically active, feeling safe, healthy and supported to make healthy choices.
- ***Emotional and mental wellbeing***: developing self-awareness, resilience, coping skills and the ability to seek help when needed.
- ***Social wellbeing:*** developing positive relationships, friendships, communication skills and a sense of connection.
- ***Academic wellbeing:*** experiencing appropriate challenge, support, progress and confidence in learning.
- ***Inclusion and belonging:*** feeling welcomed, respected and able to participate fully in school life.
- ***Personal development:*** developing confidence, independence, responsibility, leadership and decision-making skills.
- ***Spiritual wellbeing:*** having opportunities for reflection, exploration, meaning, values and personal development within the ethos of the school.

These dimensions are interconnected. Our approach therefore considers the whole student and recognises that wellbeing can change over time and in response to individual circumstances and experiences.

4. Our Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan adopts a whole school approach to wellbeing in line with the four areas identified in the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice:

- Culture and Environment
- Curriculum: Teaching and Learning
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships

These areas are interconnected and are reflected throughout school life. Responsibility for wellbeing is shared by the Board of Management, school leadership, teachers and SNA's, support staff, students, parents/guardians and the wider school community.

5. Culture and Environment

5.1 School Culture, Ethos and Values

The culture of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is underpinned by respect, kindness, inclusivity, responsibility, and positive relationships. We aim to create an environment where students are encouraged to develop confidence, independence and a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.

Our Code of Behaviour supports a caring, supportive and positive environment and promotes respectful relationships between students, staff, parents/guardians and the wider school community.

5.2 Student Voice and Participation

Student voice is an essential part of this approach. The Student Council and Wellbeing Committee provide opportunities for students to contribute ideas, identify issues that matter to them and participate in the development of wellbeing initiatives and the wider school environment.

Students are active members of the school community. Their views and experiences are important in shaping school life and the development of wellbeing.

- The Student Council provides a formal structure for student representation, communication and participation.
- The Wellbeing Committee provides opportunities for students to contribute to wellbeing planning and initiatives.
- Students are consulted, where appropriate, in the development and review of school policies and practices.
- Student voice informs teaching and learning through School Self Evaluation (SSE) surveys, which provide students with opportunities to share their experiences and contribute to improvements in teaching, learning and the overall educational experience at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan.
- Student leadership and participation are encouraged through activities, events, mentoring, charity initiatives and school projects.
- The school uses student-friendly communication, including the student-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy, student-friendly Child Protection Policy, to help students understand their rights, responsibilities and sources of support.

5.3 Inclusion, Belonging and Diversity

Inclusion is understood as participation in the life of the whole school, while recognising and responding to individual needs. Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is committed to being a welcoming and inclusive school community. As a School of Sanctuary, we promote equality of opportunity, respect and inclusion, ensuring that every student feels welcomed, valued and supported, with a strong sense of belonging within our school community, regardless of their background or circumstances.

We recognise the importance of creating an environment in which every student can participate in school life and develop a sense of belonging. The school supports students through our AEN(Additional Educational Needs) and EAL (English as an Additional Language) provision, our Asgard autism class, and the wider work of the school community.

The school participates in AsIAm's Autism Friendly Schools Programme, supporting the development of a more welcoming and accessible environment for students with autism while promoting their participation in academic and social life.

Our TY mentor programme Cairdeas agus Cinéaltas provides opportunities for TY students and students in Asgard to meet, develop friendships, share interests, support one another and build positive relationships.

5.4 Positive Relationships, Kindness and Respect

Positive relationships are central to wellbeing. The school promotes kindness, empathy, respect and responsible behaviour through everyday interactions, classroom practice, pastoral structures and whole-school activities.

- The Bí Cineálta Policy provides a framework for preventing and addressing bullying and promoting positive relationships.
- Kindness Cafés and other wellbeing activities provide opportunities for students to connect and promote kindness.
- Peer mentoring, including 6th Year mentors supporting 1st Year students, helps students develop connections and a sense of belonging.
- Students are encouraged to treat others with dignity and respect and to contribute positively to the school environment.

- The school's SSE Wellbeing Promotion Review (2024-2026) identified respectful relationships and interactions as an area for continued development. Mercy Kilbeggan is committed to reinforcing a consistent whole-school approach to positive behaviour, respectful communication and kindness. Staff are encouraged to model calm and respectful interactions and to reinforce expectations for appropriate behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. These efforts are supported by the Code of Behaviour, the Bí Cineálta Policy, SPHE provision and whole school wellbeing initiatives.

5.5 Physical Environment and Healthy School Environment

A safe, orderly and welcoming physical environment contributes to wellbeing. The school provides appropriate supervision before school, during the school day, at break and lunch, during activities and on school trips in accordance with the Supervision Policy.

The school also promotes healthy choices. The school canteen, operated by Centra, provides healthy lunch options and a range of dinners at discounted prices for students. In line with the Code of Behaviour, students are not permitted to carry or consume carbonated/fizzy drinks or energy drinks on the school campus.

The school seeks to maintain an environment that supports safety, cleanliness, respectful use of shared spaces and positive participation in school life.

5.6 Clubs, Activities and Opportunities for Participation

Students are encouraged to participate in activities that support connection, confidence, enjoyment, teamwork and personal development. Opportunities include:

- Lunchtime school clubs
- Extra-curricular activities after school
- Sports Days and sporting activities
- School shows and musicals
- Year group bonding trips and activities
- Senior cycle bonding activities and trips
- Walks and outdoor activities
- Charity initiatives
- Workshops and guest speakers
- Leadership and mentoring opportunities

6. Curriculum - Teaching & Learning

6.1 Wellbeing Through the Curriculum

Wellbeing is supported through both dedicated curricular provision and everyday teaching and learning. Relevant areas include Junior Cycle Wellbeing, SPHE, RSE, PE, Religious Education, Pastoral Care and Guidance.

The school also recognises that every classroom contributes to wellbeing. Teaching and learning should promote respectful interaction, appropriate collaboration, inclusion, participation and opportunities for students to develop confidence and responsibility.

The Bí Cineálta Policy supports collaborative and respectful teaching, group work, connection, belonging, empathy, inclusion and self-worth through curricular and extracurricular experiences.

6.2 Positive Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Teaching and learning should provide students with appropriate challenges, encouragement and support. Students should receive constructive feedback that helps them understand their progress, identify areas for development and recognise difficulties where additional support may be required.

The school's SSE review identified opportunities to strengthen student participation in learning and to develop the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL), learning intentions and success criteria. Student feedback gathered in May 2026 highlighted the value of collaborative activities, pair work, discussion, practical learning, self-assessment and opportunities to check understanding.

The school encourages teaching approaches that support active participation, student voice and confidence in learning. Clear learning intentions and success criteria help students understand expectations, while differentiated learning outcomes and appropriate scaffolding can support students with different learning needs and abilities. Opportunities to share effective practice and collaborate across subject departments can further support teaching and learning.

The Assessment Policy supports constructive feedback, reflection and the identification of learning needs.

6.3 Student Engagement

Students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning and in school life. Opportunities for collaboration, leadership, participation, discussion, practical learning and extracurricular involvement can support confidence, motivation and connection.

6.4 Supporting Different Needs

The school recognises that wellbeing and learning needs vary between students. Support may involve teachers, Year Heads, Pastoral Staff, Guidance, AEN/EAL provision, Asgard, school leadership, mentoring and external professionals where appropriate.

Students are supported to access appropriate assistance while maintaining dignity, privacy and respect for individual circumstances. Privacy and confidentiality will be respected in accordance with school policies and procedures. Where information gives rise to a child protection or welfare concern, information will be shared and managed in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment.

6.5 Learning Beyond the Classroom

Trips, activities, workshops, talks, sporting opportunities, performances, charity initiatives and other experiences contribute to wellbeing by providing opportunities for students to develop relationships, confidence, independence, teamwork and a sense of belonging. The value of such experiences is recognised and accommodated wherever possible.

6.6 Supporting Students to Seek Help

Students are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult when they have a concern or need support. Depending on the nature of the concern, students may approach a teacher, Year Head, Pastoral Staff member, Guidance Counsellor, AEN/EAL staff member, Wellbeing Coordinator, Deputy Principal or Principal.

The school's open door approach supports communication and encourages students to seek help at an early stage. One-to-one support and counselling are provided in accordance with the One-to-One Counselling & Teaching Policy and relevant safeguarding procedures.

Where a child protection or welfare concern arises, including where a student makes a disclosure, the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment and the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 will apply. Staff should follow the school's established safeguarding procedures and report concerns through the appropriate channels. Wellbeing support structures should not be used as a substitute for the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures.

7. Policy and Planning

7.1 Planning for Wellbeing

Wellbeing is considered in school planning, policy development and the organisation of school life. New initiatives and changes to practice should consider their potential impact on student and staff wellbeing, inclusion, safety and participation.

7.2 Whole School Responsibility

Wellbeing is a shared responsibility. School leadership, teachers, support staff, students, parents/guardians and the Board of Management each have a role in maintaining and developing a positive school environment.

7.3 Related School Policies

Wellbeing does not operate as a standalone initiative. It is supported by a network of school policies and procedures, including:

- Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Supervision Policy
- One-to-One Counselling & Teaching Policy
- Digital Citizenship Policy
- Staff Laptop/Device Usage Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Assessment Policy
- External Persons Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying in the Workplace Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- relevant Health and Safety and SEN/inclusion policies and procedures

These policies work together to support safety, inclusion, positive relationships, learning, communication, safeguarding and wellbeing.

7.4 Consultation and Participation

Consultation is an important part of policy development and review. Where appropriate, the school seeks the views of students, staff, parents/guardians, the Board of Management and relevant members of the wider school community.

The development and review of the Bí Cineálta Policy demonstrates the school's commitment to consultation through engagement with the Student Council, Wellbeing Committee, year groups, parents, staff, the Board of Management and the wider community.

7.5 Monitoring and Continuous Development

The school will continue to reflect on the effectiveness of wellbeing practices and identify areas for development.

Findings from the SSE Wellbeing Promotion Review, feedback from students, staff and parents/guardians, and relevant school information may inform future planning and improvement.

Where appropriate, wellbeing priorities will be linked to the School Improvement Plan, with actions, responsibilities and measures of success identified through the school's agreed planning processes. The school will seek to build on existing strengths, respond to emerging needs and evaluate the impact of initiatives to support continuous improvement.

8. Relationships and Partnerships

8.1 Student - Staff Relationships

Positive, respectful relationships between students and staff are central to school wellbeing. Staff are expected to model respectful communication, appropriate boundaries, fairness and care in their interactions with students. Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students and communicate with students in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and relevant school policies and procedures.

8.2 Peer Support and Mentoring

The school provides opportunities for students to support one another. Examples include the 6th Year mentoring programme for 1st Year students and the TY Mentor Programme, Cairdeas agus Cinéaltas, through which TY students build relationships with students in Asgard.

8.3 Parents and Guardians

The school values a strong partnership with parents and guardians. Communication and engagement opportunities include parent-teacher meetings, open nights, information evenings, the Parents Council meetings and other school communications.

Parents and guardians are also included in relevant consultation processes. Their views form an important part of understanding student experience and supporting wellbeing.

8.4 Staff Relationships and Collegality

Positive staff relationships contribute to a healthy school environment. Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively across departments and to support one another in the shared work of the school.

The active Staff Social Committee provides opportunities for staff connection and social engagement, including events and trips throughout the school year.

Our Digital Citizenship Policy recognises that staff reserve the right to switch off from school technology after 5pm. Emails may be answered on the next working day or as reasonably possible.

8.5 Wider Community and External Partnerships

The school values positive links with the wider community and appropriate external organisations. Guest speakers, external coaches and other visitors are managed in accordance with the External Persons Policy and relevant safeguarding and supervision requirements.

8.6 Inclusion and Community Partnerships

The school's School of Sanctuary work, AsIAm Autism Friendly Schools Programme and engagement with families and community partners support a culture of inclusion, welcome and participation.

9. Supporting Student Wellbeing

9.1 Student Support Structures

Students may access support through a range of structures, including:

- Principal and Deputy Principals
- Year Heads and Pastoral Staff
- Guidance Counsellors
- AEN/EAL staff and Asgard
- Class teachers
- Wellbeing Coordinator and Wellbeing Committee
- Student Council and peer mentoring structures
- Appropriate external professionals and agencies where required

9.2 Early Identification and Support

The school aims to identify concerns at an early stage through communication with students, parents/guardians and staff. Where a student appears to be experiencing difficulties, appropriate support and referral pathways will be enacted immediately.

9.3 Guidance and Counselling

Students may access guidance and counselling support through the school's established procedures. The One-to-One Counselling & Teaching Policy sets out relevant arrangements for one-to-one support, confidentiality and safeguarding.

9.4 AEN, Inclusion and Individual Support

The school recognises individual needs and provides appropriate support through the AEN/EAL department, Asgard and other school structures. Support is designed around the needs of the individual student and may involve collaboration with the student, their family and relevant professionals/outside agencies (CAMHS etc.).

9.5 Safeguarding

Student wellbeing is closely connected with child safeguarding. Where a concern relating to the safety or welfare of a student arises, the school's Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment and relevant procedures will apply.

10. Staff Wellbeing

The wellbeing of staff is an important part of a positive school community. Staff wellbeing is supported through positive professional relationships, communication, collaboration, appropriate support and opportunities for social connection.

- Open communication with school management.
- Collaborative working across departments.
- An active Staff Social Committee and regular opportunities for staff social engagement.

- Respect for reasonable work-life boundaries and the right to switch off from school technology after 5pm, in line with the Digital Citizenship Policy.
- Access to relevant school procedures and professional support where concerns arise.
- A commitment to a workplace characterised by dignity, respect and inclusion.
- Ample opportunity for Professional Development / CPD

The Anti-Bullying in the Workplace Policy supports a safe working environment and promotes dignity, respect, diversity, prevention and early intervention.

11. Wellbeing Week and Whole School Initiatives

The school may organise a dedicated Wellbeing Week or other whole-school wellbeing initiatives to complement the ongoing work described in this policy. All wellbeing activities involving students will be planned and delivered in accordance with relevant school policies and procedures, including the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Supervision Policy, External Persons Policy and relevant Health and Safety procedures.

Such initiatives will be developed in consultation with relevant staff and students and may include:

- activities promoting physical activity and healthy choices;
- student-led wellbeing activities;
- kindness and connection initiatives;
- workshops and guest speakers;
- creative and recreational activities;
- activities promoting inclusion and belonging;
- opportunities for student leadership and participation; and
- activities supporting staff wellbeing and positive school culture.

The Wellbeing Committee may play an important role in planning and delivering student-focused activities, with appropriate staff support.

12. Communication and Promotion of Wellbeing

Effective communication helps students and families understand the supports, opportunities and expectations within the school.

- Wellbeing information is communicated through school notices, assemblies, classroom communication and relevant school activities.
- The student-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy is displayed throughout the school and on the website and used to support student understanding.
- Parents and guardians are informed through school communications, meetings, information evenings and other appropriate channels.
- Students are encouraged to ask questions, raise concerns and seek support.
- Wellbeing initiatives are promoted through the school's existing communication channels.

13. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Management	Provides oversight, approves the policy and supports the school's commitment to wellbeing.
Principal	Leads the implementation of the policy, promotes a positive school culture and ensures that relevant safeguarding, support and policy procedures are followed.
Deputy Principals	Support principal and staff, student wellbeing, pastoral systems, supervision and the implementation of relevant policies and procedures.
Year Heads and Pastoral Staff	Provide pastoral support, monitor student wellbeing, communicate with students and families and respond to concerns in line with school procedures.
Guidance Counsellors	Provide guidance and counselling support and appropriate referrals in accordance with school procedures.
Wellbeing Coordinator / Wellbeing Committee	Support the coordination and promotion of wellbeing initiatives and provide opportunities for student participation.
Student Council	Provides a formal channel for student voice, representation and participation.
All Staff	Promote positive relationships, model respectful behaviour, support student wellbeing and raise concerns through appropriate channels.
Students	Contribute positively to school life, treat others with respect, participate where possible and seek help when needed.
Parents/Guardians	Support student wellbeing, communicate with the school when concerns arise and participate in relevant school partnerships and consultation processes.

14. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through ongoing school practice, consultation, feedback and review.

The school may consider:

- Feedback from students, staff and parents/guardians
- Input from the Student Council and Wellbeing Committee
- Information arising through relevant pastoral and support structures
- Participation in wellbeing activities and initiatives
- Issues or trends identified through school policies and procedures
- Changes in Department of Education guidance or relevant legislation.

The policy will be reviewed every three years in accordance with the school's policy review cycle or sooner where significant changes in legislation, Department guidance, school circumstances or identified needs make this appropriate.

The school's SSE Wellbeing Promotion Review provides an additional source of evidence for evaluating wellbeing provision and identifying priorities for development. The school may use follow-up surveys, focus group feedback, consultation and review of agreed actions to consider progress in areas such as respectful relationships, student participation and teaching and learning. Findings will inform future wellbeing planning and policy review, as appropriate.

15. Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan policies, plans and documents, as relevant:

- Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Supervision Policy
- One-to-One Counselling & Teaching Policy
- Digital Citizenship Policy
- Staff Laptop/Device Usage Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Assessment Policy
- External Persons Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying in the Workplace Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- relevant Health and Safety policies and procedures
- relevant SEN/EAL and inclusion policies and procedures
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing, SPHE, RSE, PE, Religious Education, Pastoral Care and Guidance provision

The policy should also be read alongside relevant Department of Education guidance and procedures.

16. Approval, Implementation and Review

This policy was developed to provide a clear whole-school framework for promoting and supporting wellbeing at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan. It reflects the school's existing structures, practices and ethos and is intended to support their continued development.

The policy will be communicated to staff, students and parents/guardians as appropriate. Relevant aspects will be incorporated into school planning, communication and wellbeing activities.

The policy will be reviewed by the school in accordance with the agreed review cycle before being ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed: ***Theresa Dunne***	**Signed:** ***Garrett Farrell***
Theresa Dunne	**Garrett Farrell**
Chairperson of Board of Management	Principal/Secretary of Board of Management
Date: 29/10/2026	**Date: 29/10/2026**