

# Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

## Verification Report

<b>School name:</b>	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
<b>School address and postcode:</b>	Edenfield Crescent, Huyton, L36 6DS
<b>School telephone:</b>	0151 477 8990
<b>School website:</b>	<a href="http://stjosephshuyton.co.uk/">http://stjosephshuyton.co.uk/</a>
<b>Head teacher:</b>	Charlie Newstead
<b>Head teacher's email:</b>	
<b>WAS coordinator:</b>	P Mcilroy and C Cawley
<b>WAS coordinator's email:</b>	
<b>Award verifier:</b>	Dr Helen Mills
<b>Award adviser (if applicable):</b>	Dr Helen Mills
<b>Date of verification:</b>	19/05/21

### Commentary on the evidence provided:

The award evidence collated by Carolyn Cawley (Wellbeing Award Coordinator and Learning Mentor) was excellent, with Pauline Mcilroy (Wellbeing Award Lead and Deputy Headteacher) leading the presentation. Staff, governor, pupil and parent interviews were conducted with pride, passion, confidence and openness. A real sense of belonging and a committed team approach was evident. This provided detailed information and allowed the adviser to better understand the context and background to the schools developments and achievements.

### Strengths identified during verification:

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is such a welcoming, positive, calm, safe, secure and engaging school, where everyone is cared for, valued, listened to, nurtured, encouraged and celebrated.

The new wellbeing vision 'together we are stronger', developed in consultation with the whole school community, alongside the logo developed by the pupils, reflects the positive, caring and kind culture and ethos of the school, is central to the success of the school, and has created a sense of belonging 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.

An open door policy, stakeholder voice, listening to the needs of others, auditing of pupils mental health and wellbeing, monitoring and evaluation of targeted interventions to meet the needs of all pupils and effective communication with the whole school community, are very much part of how the school has achieved a shared sense of family 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.

Children's wellbeing is a priority and staff work hard to ensure each and every child is well cared for, supported, encouraged and celebrated, which has provided a safe haven for children to learn. Children feel extremely safe, happy and cared for 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, how much they enjoy praising their peers, 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 positivity, aspirations, achievements, coupled with a sense of calm and nurturing relationships, with children demonstrating exemplary behaviour and manners, kindness, confidence, pride, engagement and enjoyment in learning. Pupil voice is strong and there are many opportunities for children to be leaders including school council members who are wellbeing buddies, play leaders, prefects and anti-bullying ambassadors.

Pupils commented, "We get class points, smileys and rewards like extra breaks, fun lessons and trips; it makes you feel proud. If I see someone sad, I help them and talk to them, tell them your class and I love you and it makes them happy. Miss Cawley takes us out for friendship and anxiety group and we get a book to remind us what to or not to do, like just walk away. We keep on going, try again and persevere, the wall with inspirational quotes and the school motto 'I can't do it yet' help us. Our school is special; we are kind, helpful and independent. If I were sad, I'd go and tell a teacher. Teachers make you feel safe and welcome, put relaxing music on and heads down to relax. We go for a run before maths; physical stuff helps your mental health. Teachers are really kind, I trust everyone. We've loads of friends with the whole class. It's a nice calm place to be. The library is a place to sit and relax and read. Teachers don't shout at you. When you've achieved something, everyone claps for you. School council come up with ideas to change the school like benches outside, hopscotch and more recycling bins. I'm so happy and secure. It's an amazing, fabulous, safe, calm school".

Significant investment in the facilities, environment, wide range of activities, staffing, training, with formal and informal support systems, CPOM's, implementation of the outstanding mental health and wellbeing policy, graduated response to mental health and wellbeing including a range of evidence based interventions, SEND provision, updated cross curricular PSHE, and R.E. was apparent during the school verification. The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of outstanding 'mental health and wellbeing' practice. Many of these have a major impact on the whole school community. For example, 1-1 and small group pastoral interventions including friendship, anxiety, wellbeing support, mindfulness and relaxation groups, class room calm baskets, rewards, celebration assemblies, sports events and competitions, worry boxes, Forest School, the promotion of the 5 ways to wellbeing, whole school events including yellow day for young minds,

world mental health day and mental health awareness weeks, Y6 residential, transition, the development of an outstanding wellbeing tab on the school website, the wellbeing vision and policy and signposting to support and information.

The excellent and passionate wellbeing team have taken on board staff suggestions to improve staff wellbeing and professional learning, and the most recent stakeholder evaluations demonstrate the positive impact this is having on the highly skilled and dedicated staff who feel that the strategies in place support their emotional wellbeing, enabling them to provide the most effective support to the children, parents and each other. Training has included emotional first aid, ELSA, SUMO, Hays Education and in house training. Prior to the award, there was an open door to HT/SLT, workload had been reduced, PPA, early finishes, social events, flexible working, referrals to counselling and inset days for preparation and report writing. Recent developments include the implementation of the staff wellbeing policy, wellbeing champions and buddies, SLT delivering staff wellbeing meetings, staff appraisal, wellbeing agenda item at staff meetings, staff suggestion box, budget, wellbeing team send appreciation gifts to staff, working hours made clear, wellbeing baskets, positive and supportive wellbeing board in the staffroom, positive quotes and signposting to support. Staff commented how supportive and approachable all staff are and how everyone looks out for each other.

Staff commented, “ We are friends and family. I’m proud of the care that we provide for the children and staff. The children know about mental health and feel supported. The children look after each other. We’re a family and all care about each other. We love being together, planning nights out. That little feel good factor makes you think you’re thought of; it’s a nice surprise for all staff, dinner ladies and cleaners. In lockdown we looked after each other and I still felt part of the team at home, we did zoom meetings, it was lovely to see everyone, whole school assemblies everyone sang happy birthday and staff buy you cards and presents. Everyone is so kind and generous; we’re a family. Staff WhatsApp group is nice to share our lives, good things and tough times, we really look out for each other. I put myself forward to be a wellbeing buddy, look for resolutions, people come and chat to me and I’m supporting a new starter. We have a good work life balance; marking and feedback was reduced, TA’s and teachers mark together, maths lessons feedback is given straight away and we’re doing it in other subjects. We really look after the children, using CPOM’s and being kept up to date. Support and training has focused on child and staff wellbeing. Training has helped us to cope with children after lockdown. Teachers are confident to teach and talk about PSHE and wellbeing. A child who expresses anger shows his red card and uses his thermometer to help him calm down and all the children understand. We focus on the need to talk about emotions and ways to deal with it. Children are happy, feel safe and valued, they can talk to anybody. Supportiveness of team approach is modelled to the children and they support each other, they are self aware and aware of each other’s emotions and reasons. School has supported me immensely with anxiety, and counselling and texts from school have helped, mental health is not a stigma and I talk to the children about it and it helps them to cope. Children know other children and adults have problems and we share skills and support”.

The proactive approach and numerous opportunities for parental engagement, effective communication, breaking down barriers, promotion of mental health and wellbeing, reducing stigma, the development of trusting relationships between staff, parents and pupils, and excellent working relationships with outside agencies, should be commended. These approaches ensure that all children, including vulnerable children and their families are supported swiftly and effectively. This includes the highly effective learning mentor and SENCo, the open door policy for parents, numerous opportunities for parents to get together including drop in sessions, coffee mornings and celebration assemblies, signposting to courses, advice, information and signposting via the outstanding wellbeing tab on the school website, letters, parent notice board, zoom, referrals made

to outside agencies, and most importantly the whole school staff working alongside parents in a none judgemental way. During lockdown, support for parents and pupils were exceptional and included regular telephone contact and support, welfare home visits alongside safeguarding and wellbeing meetings.

Parents commented, “Schools always had a lovely reputation. Children are welcomed, supported and respect each other. My boy was shy and they buddied him up, it’s a lovely atmosphere. In the school assembly they all cheer for each other. Amazing in lockdown, the Headteacher and all the staff delivered school packs, we had weekly calls to check in on us all, you knew they were there for you. Staff are on the yard and gate if you need them. Children missed going to school, their teachers and peers. So supportive to everyone’s needs. After lockdown they had dance teachers in and filmed performances. Wellbeing of the children is taken very seriously. Children know the staff are there for them”.

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 valuing each other, working as a collective team, promoting positivity, building resilience, supporting and looking after the whole schools mental health and wellbeing, ensuring that children feel safe, secure, happy and connected, which in turn impacts positivity on their educational attainment.

#### Impact:

Staff training in mental health and wellbeing has resulted in increased awareness and understanding of mental health. Staff have opportunities to talk about their own mental health and are confident that they have the skills and tools to support their own, their colleagues and their pupils’ emotional 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.

Whole school community initiatives have increased awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing and reduced stigma, resulting in open conversations, 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.

An embedded happy, caring, respectful, kind, empathetic, positive, safe school culture and ethos that prioritises wellbeing, investment in highly trained, committed and nurturing staff, the highly effective wellbeing team, alongside the new PSHE curriculum, a creative and varied curriculum, 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 activities and 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, self-esteem, confidence, empathy, independence and resilience, enabling young people to thrive and excel in their learning.

#### Areas for development:

As already highlighted by the school, post lockdown, continue with the parent wellbeing coffee morning/drop in sessions, develop family sessions, implement and monitor the new PSHE curriculum, introduce circle time, introduce a termly wellbeing newsletter, continue with whole school staff mental health/wellbeing training and train staff in the free Place2Be online mental health champion training.

Provide dedicated time for the staff wellbeing buddies to provide support/signposting to staff and for the wellbeing team to meet. Continue to improve staff wellbeing using the effective communication strategies recently implemented.

Share on the outstanding school website, the wellbeing statement and vision, alongside the pupil logo.

Ensure all school policies incorporate the new vision statement as and when they are reviewed.

Embed the role of the pupil wellbeing champions and consider implementing the free Anna Freud peer mentor training.

Continue to link whole school initiatives, displays and activities to the 5 ways to wellbeing.

Consider introducing classroom feelings check ins.

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

#### **Verifier recommendation:**

St Joseph'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:**

Everybody at St Joseph's is delighted to have this confirmation of what a safe, calm, welcoming school we are. I am delighted to be leading such a caring school where all feel valued, nurtured and listened to.

Ms P McIlroy