

# Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

## Verification Report

<b>School name:</b>	St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant School
<b>School address and postcode:</b>	Pilch Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside, L14 0JG
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<b>School website:</b>	www.stmargaretmarysinfant.com
<b>Head teacher:</b>	Mrs Louise Byrne
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<b>WAS coordinator:</b>	Mrs Louise Byrne
<b>WAS coordinator's email:</b>	louise.byrne@knowsley.gov.uk
<b>Award verifier:</b>	Dr Helen Mills
<b>Award adviser (if applicable):</b>	Dr Helen Mills
<b>Date of verification:</b>	2/12/20

### Commentary on the evidence provided:

The award evidence collected and presented by Louise Bryne (Headteacher and Award Coordinator), Lisa Maddocks (Deputy Head Teacher) and Jackie Harris (Learning Mentor) was excellent, clear and concise. All staff, pupils, parents and the governor spoke with great passion, pride, openness and honesty during the interviews. A real sense of belonging and a strong 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:

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, skills, commitment, and approach of the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team and Staff has created innovative ways of working and a seamless and consistent, welcoming, happy, caring, supportive, safe, nurturing, none judgemental, kind, engaging, creative and aspirational culture.

A strong Christian mission and values that reflect wellbeing, are central to the success of the school, are shared by everyone, and has created a sense of belonging, shared responsibility and empowerment, referred to during the visit as 'our big happy family'. Throughout the award process, the school has demonstrated continued progress to support and improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the whole school community. The result offers a powerful template for how emotional wellbeing of pupils, families and staff supports whole school progress.

An open door policy, morning greetings on the playground, identifying and listening to the needs of others, breaking down barriers, seeking out and providing additional financial and welfare support 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 and proactive 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.

Caring, kind, helpful, supportive, friendly, family, fun, happy, safe, inclusive, respect, love, devoted staff, resilience, proud, confident and enjoyment were key descriptions given in the interviews, and these are core to the embedded happy, nurturing, positive and empowering school culture and ethos. Children feel safe and happy in school and are confident and proud of their achievements. They also articulated well how the school supports them with their emotional wellbeing and mental health and how they can ask for support and how they are kind and help each other. Pupils are at the heart of their school and commented on the enjoyment and satisfaction they get from learning and described numerous activities they do to promote their wellbeing and resilience. For example children commented, "Teachers and staff are really nice, I like to see them and they help you. I feel safe and happy in school, I don't get that worried, if I did I'd tell the teachers. I have loads of friends in school, it's important to be kind. I like everything in school, learning, choosing time, drawing, breathing. We get smiley's and build them up. I got the mission statement award and was really excited and proud. If you complete the star chart, you get a star badge and feel happy. We remember every day is a fresh start. We had a wellbeing logo competition and the winner was a rainbow. We learnt how to massage people and I enjoyed it, I do it at home, when mum has a headache I massage her". This has enabled the day-to-day and longer-term emotional wellbeing and mental health activities to flourish and was evident throughout the visit with the promotion of feelings, emotions, positivity, emotion check ins, rules, celebration of achievements and rewards, kind mind super heroes, fundraising activities, 5 ways to wellbeing including the pupil designed logo, mindfulness, breathing, peer massage, RE, SEAL, anti-bullying, restorative conversations, emotion coaching, calm and prayer spaces, outdoor play pods, Windmill and sensory room for children with SEMH and SEN, school council who lead fund raising activities, magic breakfast for every child, excellent transition and induction activities and events, community wellbeing events, and outstanding targeted interventions, coupled with a sense of calm and nurturing relationships as one walked around, with children demonstrating exemplary behaviour and manners, respect, confidence, kindness, engagement and enjoyment in learning.

Significant investment in the indoor and outdoor facilities, environment, wide range of activities, resources, experienced staffing, outstanding community links and partnership working, extensive training for the whole school staff, with formal and informal support systems and extensive provision and monitoring of interventions was apparent during the verification. The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of outstanding 'wellbeing' practice, that 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, love and empathy. Furthermore, the Learning Mentor designs and delivers borough wide mental health, wellbeing and anti-bullying conferences.

The proactive approach to parental engagement, safeguarding and most importantly the whole school staff working alongside parents in a none-judgemental way should be commended. This includes breaking down barriers, seeking additional financial and welfare support, achievement for all project, open door, family mental health and wellbeing activities, informal parent and staff meetings, the use of CPOMs, pupil progress meetings, school based interventions including the empowering power of parenting programme, proactive Early Help, parental groups, free wrap around care for those who need it, excellent working relationships with outside agencies and signposting, and effective communication between staff and parents including meet and greet on the playground, the school website, newsletters and parent app. These approaches ensure that vulnerable children and their families are supported swiftly and effectively. Parents commented, "It's one big family, you are included in everything. I've had really good support with personal and school issues; it was such a relief for me. Staff look out for signs in children, they give love, cuddles and care, they are so well looked after, you never see unhappy children and it reassures you. I'm actively involved in the school, and do a lot of fundraising. Mrs Harris is brilliant, we had a meeting, my son had sessions with her and it resolved the issues. I love the parent sessions; it's nice to have tea and toast, interaction and time to talk. It's nice to have parent and child sessions, like the massage, my children still do it at home. I have a really good relationship with all teachers; it's a lovely little family. They do lovely wellbeing activities for everyone. School advice on SEND is excellent".

Attention must be drawn to the value and priority given, along with significant financial investment, to whole school staff wellbeing and training. This has created a positive and caring culture where it is 'OK not to be OK', and this is valued greatly by staff. Staff feel that the strategies 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. The Head Teacher has addressed staff stress and workload through introducing changes to marking and feedback, a staff wellbeing target, one day PPA fortnightly that can be taken at home or in school, flexible working, providing a welcoming staff room that includes a wellbeing board, promotion of the 5 ways to wellbeing, a wellbeing basket, positive quotes and support in the toilets, safeguarding and welfare supervisory meetings, funding private counselling, providing extensive mental health and wellbeing training, activities and events for the whole school staff, you've been mugged, an open door policy and a reduction in monitoring of classes. 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. 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. Extensive training in mental health and wellbeing has enabled staff to take responsibility of their own mental health and wellbeing.

Staff commented, "Wellbeing is at the heart of what we do, everybody works together. I'm proud of the staff, everyone pulling together and supporting each other. I'm proud of the children's resilience, they come in and accept each other, and they're so kind to each other. SLT support us to stay strong so we can support the children and families the best we can. Everything is done together, like training, we're all treated equally. People take time to check in on each other. Information on CPOM's is acted upon and makes you feel you're in it as a team. We kept in touch in lockdown, if you felt down; people were there to prop you up. If needed to, you can come and share things with SLT, there's a culture of openness. There are reminders in school if you need support; it gives you

permission to be open and comfortable to talk and that you don't have to be OK, it's changed the culture, SLT are real people who understand and support flexible working. I feel valued. Having PPA for a whole day is really good; you can do it at home or in work. It's a whole school approach, the mental health and wellbeing training we've had, everyone uses the language, modelling it to the children who now have the mental health and wellbeing tools to help, for example a boys brother died and he's now able to talk about it and share with the class. You can see the positive impact from support and programmes parents have accessed. With the Achievement for All training, we're relating to each other and are more open to talk, it's increased my confidence. I'm now kind to myself and don't feel guilty doing things for myself. I recognise the 5 ways to wellbeing and it trickles down in to family. I'm proud of the relationships between staff, children and parents". Furthermore, the Governor commented, "It's a fabulous school, staff who are very happy because of the leadership. I have so much respect for the staff, they are devoted to the children and do everything they can to support them, because they know if the children aren't happy, they won't learn".

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 looking after the whole schools 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 wellbeing and mental health has increased whole school community awareness. This has resulted in people 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 and others wellbeing and mental health.

Staff training in mental health 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, their 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 happy, nurturing, positive school culture and ethos, investment in highly trained, passionate and nurturing staff, a creative and varied curriculum, informal and formal support, monitoring systems 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 and resilience, enabling young people to thrive and achieve.

#### Areas for development:

Prior to the Head Teacher going on maternity leave, hand over the Wellbeing Lead to a member of the SLT or Change Team, and post COVID hold regular change team meetings, perhaps in small working groups.

Repeat the parent and Y2 children's questionnaires, perhaps through circle time, and continue to repeat the PSHE/RSE parent questionnaires that focus on wellbeing.

As already highlighted by the school, post COVID lockdown, establish and promote the school wellbeing champions. For pupils, due to their young age, perhaps focus their role as super hero playground buddies and for parents, perhaps those who have completed the Power of Parenting Programme. An effective way to promote the wellbeing champions might be to have the school wellbeing logo made in to a badge and worn by the wellbeing champions.

Consider moving the wellbeing tab from the bottom of parent support to the home page, so that it is easily found and perhaps include pictures of staff and their roles alongside the pyramid of need.

Consider introducing a worry box to the prayer area and share in circle time or with a trusted adult.

Consider introducing staff wellbeing buddies, a suggestion box and agree dedicated times for the adult mental health first aiders to listen/signpost/respond to needs.

As suggested by staff, explore the possibility of introducing Forest School.

As already highlighted by the school, continue with the outstanding mental health and wellbeing training, roll out the new PSHE scheme of work and re-establish weekly circle times.

Having become more aware of the multiple examples of outstanding practice, continue to lead and share the experiences and approaches with other schools.

#### Verifier recommendation:

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant 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:

The Well Being of all is at the heart of what we do in school. Completing the 'Well Being Award' has helped us to recognise the good practice already in place. Through the award, we have been able to be reflective and improve provision to increase the well being of everyone in school. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in achieving this award, especially to our deputy head and learning. A special thanks to Helen, who supported and guided us so well.

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