

# Heywood Community School

## Wellbeing Policy



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## **1. Introduction and school ethos**

Heywood Community School is dedicated to fostering the holistic development of each individual within a respectful, inclusive, and caring environment. Guided by Christian values and open to all faiths and beliefs, the school promotes personal, emotional, and spiritual growth alongside academic excellence. Our ethos encourages dignity, justice, and social responsibility, while supporting a collaborative community of students, staff, and families. Through a broad range of educational, cultural, and extracurricular opportunities, we aim to cultivate a positive school culture that prioritises wellbeing and belonging for all members of our community.

## **2. Rationale**

The Wellbeing Plan at Heywood Community School is developed in response to the growing recognition of wellbeing as a key component of student success and lifelong development. In line with the Department of Education's Wellbeing Framework for Post-Primary Schools, this plan integrates wellbeing across four key areas: Curriculum, Culture, Relationships, and Policy and Planning. It aims to ensure that all students experience school as a place where they feel respected, connected, aware, resilient, active, and responsible—the six indicators of wellbeing.

This plan builds on our existing ethos by providing a structured approach to wellbeing that supports students in navigating challenges, building positive relationships, and engaging meaningfully in their education and wider community.

## **3. Definition of Wellbeing**

According to the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice from the Department of Education, wellbeing is defined as:

“Wellbeing is present when a person realises their abilities, takes care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and has a sense of purpose and connection, and feels safe and valued.”

This definition is grounded in international research and reflects a holistic view of wellbeing that includes physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. It also underpins the six indicators of wellbeing used in Irish post-primary schools: Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Aware, and Respected

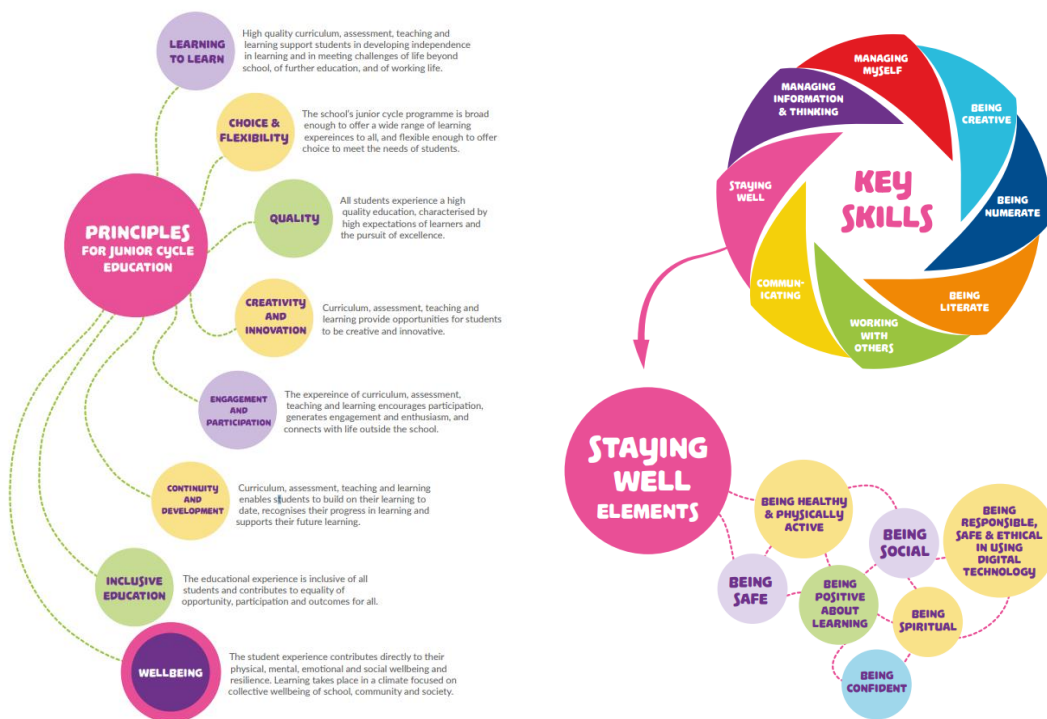
# 4. Junior Cycle Wellbeing

## Curriculum Integration

Junior Cycle Wellbeing is a key element of the Junior Cycle curriculum, supporting students in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for their overall wellbeing. At Heywood Community School, wellbeing is delivered through a combination of curricular subjects—such as SPHE, PE, and CSPE—and whole-school initiatives that promote student voice, inclusion, and resilience. This provision is closely aligned with the Statements of Learning, particularly those that ensure students are aware of the importance of their wellbeing, can reflect on their learning, and are equipped to manage their lives in a healthy and responsible way. Through this integrated approach, we aim to support students in becoming confident, connected, and active participants in their school and wider community.

Junior Cycle Wellbeing at Heywood Community School is closely aligned with the development of the Key Skills outlined in the Junior Cycle Framework. Through wellbeing-related subjects and whole-school initiatives, students are supported in becoming more self-aware, managing themselves effectively, and building positive relationships. The Wellbeing Programme contributes directly to key skills such as Managing Myself, Staying Well, Communicating, Working with Others, and Being Creative. These skills are essential for students’ personal growth and lifelong learning, and they underpin our commitment to fostering confident, resilient, and socially responsible young people.

## Key Skills



## Further reference

- <https://www.jct.ie/wellbeing/wellbeing>
- <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing>

## 5. School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Process

We commit to embedding a Wellbeing Promotion Process using the SSE framework:

- Identify Focus – Select wellbeing as an SSE theme.
- Gather Evidence – Surveys, focus groups, attendance data.
- Analyse & Judge – Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Plan for Action – Incorporate into School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Implement & Monitor – Track progress using indicators.
- Review & Share – Annual reporting to stakeholders.
- 

Our approach follows the **Support for All, Some, and Few** model:

- **All** – Universal wellbeing initiatives (SPHE, Health & Happiness Week).
- **Some** – Targeted supports (peer mentoring, small group interventions).
- **Few** – Individualised plans with SEN team and external agencies.

## 6. Policy Development and Staff Support

At Heywood Community School, policies are developed and reviewed collaboratively with students, parents, and staff to ensure they reflect the needs and values of our school community. All policy documents are made accessible and shared with both students and parents. Wellbeing is recognised as a key element of whole-school and subject planning, and appropriate time is allocated to support its integration. Staff are encouraged to pursue continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of wellbeing and are supported in doing so. Resources and insights gained through CPD are shared among colleagues to promote a consistent and informed approach to wellbeing across the school.

### A) Directly Wellbeing-Related Policies

These policies explicitly support students' emotional, social, mental, and physical wellbeing:

- [Bí Cineálta Policy](#)
- [SSE](#)
- [Whole School Guidance Plan](#)
- [Chaplaincy Policy](#)
- [SPHE](#)
- [SEN Policy](#)
- [Substance Misuse Policy](#)
- [Child Protection Statement](#)
- [Code of Behaviour](#)
- [Attendance Policy](#)
- [Student Voice](#)
- [Physical Education](#)
- [Inclusivity Policy](#)
- [Dignity in the Workplace Policy](#)

## **B) Indirectly Wellbeing-Related Policies**

These contribute to wellbeing by ensuring a safe, respectful, and well-managed school environment:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- [Out of School Activities Policy](#)
- [TY Admissions Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)

## **7. Planning For Wellbeing**

Wellbeing in the Heywood Community School is more than a subject or curricular areas. It involves a whole-school approach and is the responsibility of all stakeholders, staff, students and parents

### **A) Staff**

At Heywood Community School, staff play a vital role in supporting students' wellbeing. Teachers are often best placed to notice subtle changes in a student's mood or behaviour that may signal emotional, social, or mental health concerns. As a staff, we are committed to nurturing the wellbeing of all students in a caring and responsive environment.

All teachers have received wellbeing training through the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT).

A dedicated Wellbeing Co-ordinator and team works collaboratively with staff and senior management to lead and harmonise whole-school wellbeing planning.

Our Pastoral Care Leadership Team meets regularly to develop and implement support structures for student wellbeing. This team includes Senior Management, the SEN Co-Ordinator, Year Heads, Chaplain, and Guidance Counsellors.

Teacher feedback and suggestions regarding the Wellbeing Programme are welcomed and discussed at staff meetings.

Parent-teacher meetings and school reports provide opportunities for teachers to share insights into students' wellbeing with parents.

The SEN Department and Ryan Centre are committed to supporting students with special educational needs through early identification, tailored tuition, and ongoing collaboration with parents and staff. The department ensures that diverse learning needs are met with appropriate support.

Staff Wellbeing

Access to Employee Assistance Service.

CPD on stress management and resilience.

Staff wellbeing events during Health & Happiness Week.

A team of teachers and SNA's have been trained to deliver the Nurture Programme led by the Chaplain.

## **B) Parents**

We recognise that the home is the foundation of a child's wellbeing. Strong partnerships with parents and guardians are essential to the success of our Wellbeing Programme.

Parents are introduced to the school's Wellbeing Programme during the First Year Enrolment Evening and are encouraged to support its implementation.

Information about the Wellbeing Programme is shared at various parent information evenings throughout the school year.

The Parents' Council provides a forum for parents to contribute to the development of the Wellbeing Programme.

Parent surveys are conducted to identify areas of concern and guide the ongoing development of wellbeing initiatives.

Parents have opportunities to meet with the Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Tutors, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor and teachers at parent-teacher meetings to discuss any wellbeing-related concerns.

Parents are encouraged to contact the school directly at any time to discuss their child's well-being.

## **C) Students**

Student voice is central to the development and success of our Wellbeing Programme. By actively listening to students, both in the classroom and across the school, we empower them to shape their learning experience and contribute to a positive school environment.

The Student Council plays an active role in wellbeing, with class representatives bringing forward concerns and ideas to inform school initiatives.

Students meet regularly with Tutors and Year Heads, both individually and in groups, to discuss wellbeing and academic progress.

SPHE and CSPE units of learning are designed in consultation with students to ensure relevance and engagement.

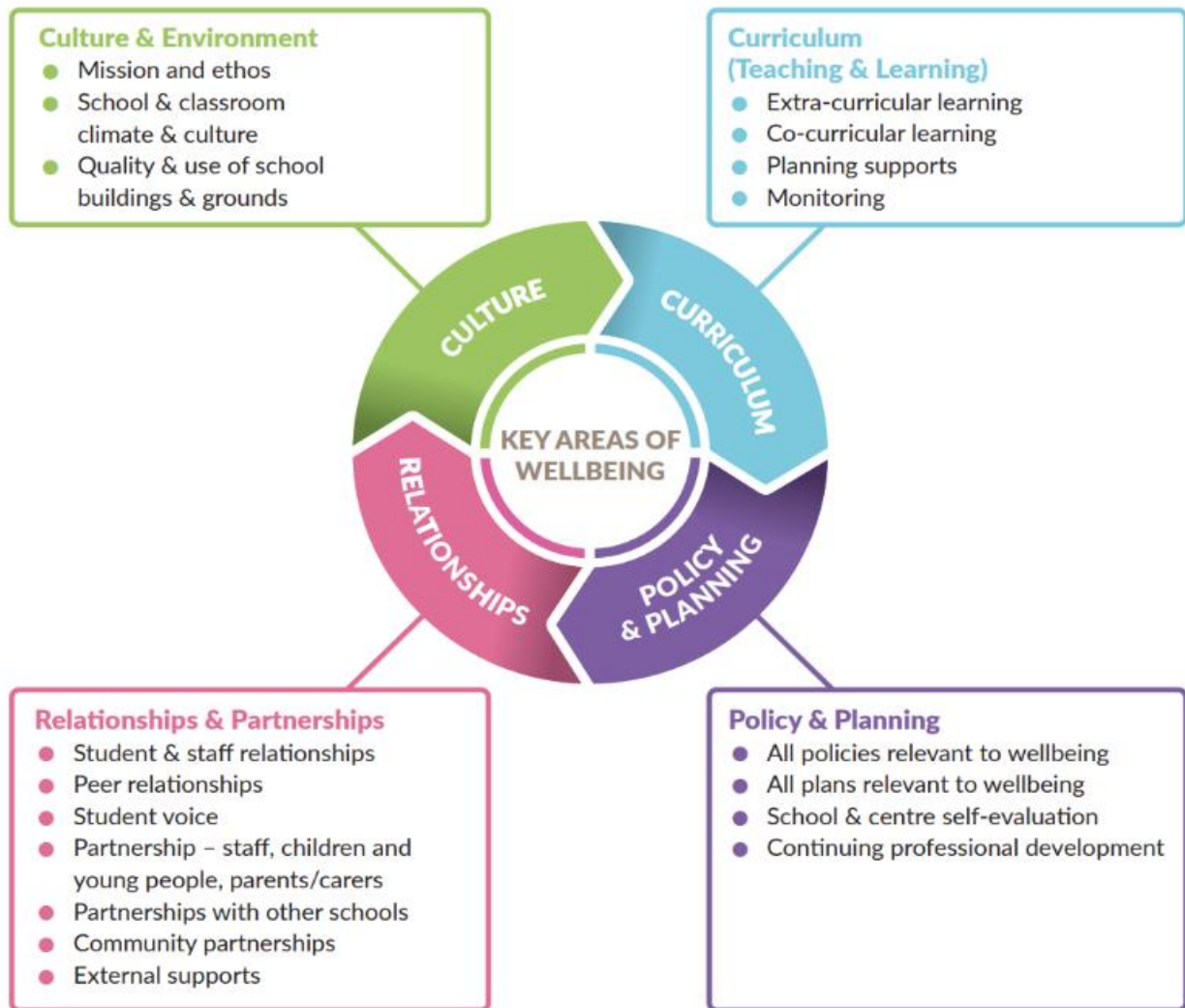
Student surveys are conducted to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the school's wellbeing provision.

Guidance and Chaplain support is available to students through referral by the Principal and Deputy Principals, ensuring timely and appropriate intervention.

Our Meitheal Students support and guide first years through their transition from Primary to Secondary.

## 8. Key areas of wellbeing

Figure 3: Whole School Approach: Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion



# Significant Strengths of Wellbeing Promotion

## A) Key aspect 1 – Culture and Environment

This refers to the overall atmosphere, ethos, and physical environment of the school. It includes how safe, inclusive, and supportive the school feels for students and staff.

- **School Ethos:** Promote a positive school ethos that values wellbeing.
- **School building:** Maintain clean, safe, and welcoming facilities. Ensure accessibility and inclusivity in the physical environment. Create spaces for quiet reflection and social interaction.
- Encourage respectful behaviour and restorative discipline.
- Provide movement breaks and physical activity opportunities.
- **Anti-bullying campaigns – Bí Cineálta** Promotes kindness and respect, creating a safe and supportive school atmosphere.
- **Student councils** Gives students a voice in shaping school culture and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Wellbeing committees** Coordinates activities and policies that prioritize mental health and positive relationships.
- **Lunch time clubs** Provides social opportunities and inclusion for students with diverse interests.
- **Awards Night** Recognizes achievements, boosting confidence and sense of belonging.
- **LGBT Awareness Week** Promotes acceptance and diversity, ensuring an inclusive environment for all.
- **Cultural celebration events** Encourages respect for different traditions and builds community spirit.
- **Reading rooms** Offers quiet spaces for relaxation and literacy development.
- **Calm and green spaces (gardens, oratory)** Creates peaceful areas for reflection and stress relief.
- **Sensory-friendly classrooms** Supports students with additional needs by reducing sensory overload.
- **Health and Happiness Week** Focuses on physical and mental wellbeing through themed activities.
- **Nurture Room** Provides a safe space for emotional regulation and support.
- **Amber Flag team** Promotes mental health awareness and student-led wellbeing projects.
- **Wellbeing noticeboards and displays around the school** Shares positive messages and wellbeing tips to reinforce a caring culture.
- **Display of students' achievements and activities** Builds pride and motivation by celebrating success publicly.
- **Themed subject weeks** Adds variety and excitement to learning, encouraging engagement. Celebrates learning and creativity, fostering pride and engagement in different subjects.
- **Whole school Fun Day** Strengthens relationships and reduces stress through shared enjoyment.
- **Meitheal Team** Peer support system that fosters leadership and empathy among students.
- **Head girl and boy, deputy head girl and boy and prefects** Student leadership roles that model positive behaviour and wellbeing values.
- **Collaboration with local organisations (Jigsaw, Shona Project, SVP)** Brings expert support and resources into the school community.

## **B) Key aspect 2 – Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

This focuses on how wellbeing is embedded in teaching practices, subject content, and learning experiences.

- **SPHE or wellbeing curriculum covering mental health, resilience, relationships, online safety**  
Provides structured lessons that teach coping skills, emotional regulation, and safe digital habits.
- **English exploring empathy through literature**  
Encourages students to understand different perspectives and develop emotional intelligence through stories.
- **PE promoting teamwork and physical health**  
Builds collaboration skills and supports physical wellbeing through active participation.
- **Science covering nutrition and sleep**  
Educates students on healthy lifestyle choices that impact mental and physical health.
- **Study skills, time management, financial literacy, problem-solving and coping strategies**  
Equips students with practical life skills to reduce stress and prepare for future challenges.
- **Mindfulness exercises, journaling, gratitude activities built into classroom routines**  
Helps students manage stress and develop positive thinking habits during the school day.
- **Curriculum review**  
Ensures wellbeing content is embedded and updated across all subjects regularly.
- **Team teaching**  
Promotes collaboration among teachers and models positive relationships for students.
- **Cross-Curricular Integration**  
Links wellbeing themes across subjects to reinforce learning in different contexts.
- **Student Voice in Learning**  
Involves students in shaping lessons, making learning more engaging and relevant.
- **Active & Engaging Methodologies**  
Uses group work, projects, and interactive activities to keep students motivated and involved.
- **Assessment for Learning – formative feedback**  
Focuses on growth and improvement rather than high-stakes testing, reducing anxiety.
- **Teacher Professional Development**  
Provides training on wellbeing strategies and inclusive teaching practices.
- **Digital Wellbeing**  
Teaches safe, balanced use of technology and strategies to manage screen time effectively.
- Offer **extracurricular activities** that support physical and emotional development.
- **Celebrate diverse** forms of student success.
- **Wellbeing document in each subject plan.**

### **C) Key aspect 3 – Relationships and Partnerships**

This area focuses on the quality of relationships within the school and with external partners, including families and community services.

- **Whole-school wellbeing policy**  
Provides a clear framework for promoting wellbeing across all aspects of school life.
- **Annual Wellbeing Targets**  
Sets measurable goals to track progress and maintain focus on wellbeing priorities.
- **Wellbeing Team**  
A dedicated group coordinating initiatives and ensuring consistency in implementation.
- **Year heads, tutors, guidance counsellors**  
Key roles that monitor student wellbeing and provide support when needed.
- **Clear referral pathways to counselling or external agencies, safeguarding and child protection policies**  
Ensures students can access timely help and that safety protocols are followed.
- **School self-evaluation process (SSE)**  
Reviews wellbeing practices regularly to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **All departments have a Wellbeing section in their subject plan**  
Embeds wellbeing into teaching and learning across all subjects.
- **Student Voice in Planning**  
Involves students in shaping policies and decisions to make them relevant and effective.
- **Staff Training & CPD**  
Equips teachers with skills to support wellbeing and integrate it into classroom practice. Child Protection review and training days. Reinforces safeguarding responsibilities and ensures compliance with legislation.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation of subject plans and school policies**  
Tracks the impact of wellbeing initiatives and ensures accountability.
- **Annual Review of Wellbeing Policy**  
Keeps the policy current and responsive to emerging needs.
- **Code of behaviour review**  
Aligns discipline policies with restorative and wellbeing-focused approaches.
- **Communication of Policies – on school website**
- Makes wellbeing policies accessible to students, parents, and staff for transparency.
- Foster respectful and supportive relationships among staff and students.
- Engage parents through meetings, surveys, and wellbeing events.
- Collaborate with external agencies (e.g. NEPS, HSE, local youth services).
- Support staff wellbeing through mentoring and access to services.
- Provide peer mentoring and buddy systems for students.
- Ensure smooth transitions between education settings.
- Formal partnerships with NEPS, HSE, Tusla, Gardaí for mental health and safety.

## **D) Key aspect 4 – Policy and Planning**

This involves how wellbeing is reflected in school policies, strategic planning, and evaluation processes.

- **Parent workshops on digital wellbeing, resilience, or exam stress**  
Helps parents support their child's mental health and learning at home.
- **Collaboration with local sports clubs, youth services, mental health organisations (e.g., Jigsaw, Headspace, local charities)**  
Brings external expertise and resources into the school community.
- **School liaison with counsellors, social workers, health services**  
Ensures students have access to professional support when needed.
- **Gardaí/police for safety education**  
Promotes awareness of personal safety, online safety, and legal responsibilities.
- **Tutor/mentor systems ensuring every student has a trusted adult connection**  
Builds strong relationships and provides a go-to person for support.
- **Student Council & Wellbeing Committees**  
Gives students an active role in shaping wellbeing initiatives and school culture.
- **Amber Flag & Peer Support Programs such as Meitheal**  
Encourages student-led mental health awareness and peer mentoring.
- **Student Voice Surveys & Focus Groups**  
Collects feedback to inform wellbeing planning and improvements.
- **Staff Involvement in Wellbeing Teams**  
Ensures teachers actively contribute to wellbeing strategies and events.
- **Whole School Fun Day**  
Strengthens community spirit and promotes positive relationships among all stakeholders.
- **Care Team**  
Coordinates support for students with additional needs or challenges.
- **Chaplain**  
Offers spiritual and emotional support for students and staff.
- **Guidance Counsellor**  
Provides career advice and personal counselling to support wellbeing.
- **Social Media Awareness**  
Promotes safe and positive online behaviour through campaigns and education.
- **External Guest Speakers**  
Delivers expert talks on mental health, resilience, and wellbeing topics.
- **Community Events**  
Builds connections between school, families, and local organisations.
- **Student-Led Campaigns**  
Empowers students to take ownership of wellbeing initiatives.
- **Parent Communication Platforms – Tyro**  
Keeps parents informed and engaged in wellbeing activities and updates.
- Develop and regularly review wellbeing-related policies (e.g. anti-bullying, child protection).
- Use the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to assess wellbeing provision.
- Include wellbeing goals in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Gather data on attendance, bullying, and student voice to inform planning.
- Ensure policies promote inclusion and celebrate diversity.
- Plan CPD for staff on wellbeing-related topics.

## **9. Current priorities for wellbeing promotion within the school**

The school's annual wellbeing targets are documented in a designated folder within the wellbeing drive. These targets are subject to regular review and reassessment to ensure they remain aligned with the evolving needs of the school community. [Wellbeing Targets](#)

### **10. Wellbeing Team**

The Wellbeing Team plays a central role in promoting a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment for all students and staff. The team brings together expertise from leadership, curriculum, guidance, and student support to ensure a holistic approach to wellbeing across the school.

Mary Harrington – Deputy Principal

Sharon Webster – Wellbeing Coordinator

Afra O'Malley – SPHE Coordinator

Nicoli Reddington – Guidance Counsellor

Livia Balkova – Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

### **11. Health and Happiness Week**

Each year, the H&H wellbeing week brings a vibrant mix of activities that promote health, mindfulness, and community spirit throughout the school. Students take part in meditation, fitness sessions, motivational workshops, and fun events like quizzes, social outings, and sports challenges. Staff are also actively involved, with dedicated wellbeing activities, social events, and opportunities to engage in the week's positive atmosphere. The week is further enriched by music, treats, and kindness initiatives, creating an uplifting and inclusive environment for everyone.

Link to pervious Health and Happiness events [Health and Happiness Weeks](#)

## 12. Student Support Structures and Care Team

At Heywood Community School, student wellbeing is at the heart of our ethos. We are committed to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and empowering environment where every student feels valued, heard, and cared for. Our student support structures are designed to promote positive mental health, personal development, and a strong sense of belonging.

### Key Support Structures Include:

Student Council & Student Voice Committee: These platforms ensure that students have an active role in shaping school life, policies, and wellbeing initiatives. They promote leadership, collaboration, and advocacy.

Meitheal Team: A peer-support group dedicated to helping 1st Year students transition smoothly into secondary school life. They offer guidance, friendship, and practical support.

Amber Flag TY Team: This Transition Year initiative promotes positive mental health through awareness campaigns, activities, and events aligned with the Pieta House Amber Flag programme.

Health and Happiness Week: An annual celebration of wellbeing featuring workshops, guest speakers, and activities focused on mental, emotional, and physical health.

Chaplaincy and Guidance Counselling: Our chaplain and guidance counsellor provide spiritual, emotional, and career-related support, ensuring students have access to professional care and advice.

Nurture Room: Emotional regulation and support.

Year Head and Tutor System: Each student is supported by a dedicated tutor and year head who monitor progress, wellbeing, and engagement, acting as key points of contact for both students and parents.

Morning Assemblies: Daily assemblies foster community spirit, share important messages, and reinforce positive values and expectations.

Sports and Physical Wellbeing: A wide variety of sports teams—including hurling, camogie, basketball, rugby, soccer, and football—encourage teamwork, resilience, and physical health.

Future Leaders TY Programme: This initiative empowers students to develop leadership skills through sport, wellbeing, and community engagement.

Code of Behaviour and Restorative Practice: Our behaviour policy is grounded in restorative principles, promoting accountability, empathy, and respectful relationships.

These supports are embedded in the ethos of Heywood Community School, Laois, and reflect our commitment to nurturing the whole student—academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

### 13. School Profile and Statistics


1hr classes	Subject	1 <sup>st</sup> yr	2 <sup>nd</sup> yr	3 <sup>rd</sup> yr	Subject	TY	5 <sup>th</sup> yr	6 <sup>th</sup> yr	
Wellbeing	SPHE	2	1	1	SPHE	1	1	1	
	CSPE	1	1		CSPE				
	PE	1	2	1	PE	2	1	1	
	KWLG			1	Tutorial	1			
	Digital Literacy	16 per yr			Religion	1	1	1	
Total hrs per week x weeks per year		4 x 33	4 x 33	3 x 33		5 x 33	3 x 33	3 x 33	
Digital Literacy		16							
Assembly each morning		16	16	16		16	16	16	
Total hrs per year		164	148	115		181	115	115	
Overall total				427	Overall total				411

<b>Number of students</b>	Junior Girls 182 Junior Boys 198  Senior Girls 188 Senior Boys 181  Total 749
<b>Teaching staff</b>	65
<b>SNA's</b>	12

This policy was approved by the **Board of Management of Heywood Community School** on: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026

Signed: 

Fr. Dan Carroll, Chairperson BOM

Signed: 

Mr. Eamon Jackman, Secretary BOM