

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	Leighfield Primary School
School address and postcode:	Newtown Road, Uppingham, Oakham, LE15 9TS
School telephone:	01572 823489
School website:	Leighfieldschool.co.uk
Head teacher:	Mrs Sarah Eaton
Head teacher's email:	seaton@dsatleighfield.org
WAS coordinator:	Mrs S Wallace
WAS coordinator's email:	angela.moore@optimus-education.com
Award verifier:	Mrs A Moore
Award adviser (if applicable):	N/A
Date of verification:	27 February 2023

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The presentation delivered by the Head (Sarah) and the Award Coordinator (Steph) was comprehensive, focused and clearly demonstrated how the school's vision and its emphasis on the importance of staff, pupil and parent emotional wellbeing and mental health has positively impacted the school's best practice. The school prides itself on its 'holistic approach' to the wellbeing of pupils and staff which was confirmed to me later in the morning during my meetings with parents, pupils, staff and a representative from the Advisory Board. It was made clear to me throughout my visit that Leighfield is a school which clearly puts the emotional wellbeing of its stakeholders at the very heart of all it does. It was particularly evident to me during my meeting with a large cohort of pupils that the school also places huge emphasis on the importance of pupil voice! Access to support for staff, parents and pupils has also been improved because of suggestions made in the stakeholder evaluations and through conversations with the school body generally. The school has clearly focused on implementing the 'we asked, you said, we did' model as it was made obvious to me during my conversations with staff, parents and pupils that they feel valued and listened to. The work of the school's ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) is particularly worthy of note as she has formed strong bonds with the parent body as well as with their children and has become as a result an extremely valuable link between home and school. Added to this, parents are supported and encouraged to contact school should they need support. The importance of wellbeing is explicit and underpins all aspects of school life. The school is clearly focused on ensuring that emotional

wellbeing and mental health play a central role in ensuring that pupils and staff feel valued, happy and safe and, as a result, all stakeholders are aware that the school is committed to their wellbeing. The folder of evidence provided was easily accessible, with each piece linked to its relevant Objective and KPI and Sarah and Steph were on hand throughout to answer any queries which I raised. However, it was my tour of the school, my conversations with stakeholders and the general warm and welcoming atmosphere of the school which really impressed me and confirmed that Leighfield is most definitely a school which places the wellbeing of all stakeholders at the heart of its best practice. The school is clearly focused on making sure that emotional wellbeing and mental health play a central role in ensuring that children feel valued, happy and safe. All stakeholders are aware that the school is committed to their wellbeing. From the moment I walked into the school building, I was made to feel welcome by all and there was a definite sense of the school having a real family atmosphere.

Strengths identified during verification:

One of the main and most important strengths identified during my visit was the passion and commitment to wellbeing which the school leadership team, Sarah (Headteacher) and Steph (EYFS Teacher, SENDCO and Deputy Headteacher) demonstrate. There is also an extremely strong Pastoral and SEND team in the school to support students both emotionally and academically. The results from the stakeholder questionnaires are extremely positive and relationships across the school between staff, children and parents are strong and effective. Every classroom is furnished with its own 'calm corner' which children can visit should they feel the need to have some quiet time and the school follows the Zones of Regulation model to help them to articulate and increase their emotional vocabulary in order to help them explain how they are feeling. The school has very strong links with its parent body and ensures that they are kept fully up-to-date with developments – particularly with the school's continuing excellent work relating to wellbeing and mental health. There are fabulous displays in every corridor, room and classroom around the whole school which demonstrate the emphasis that the school, its staff and pupils place on the importance of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. The school not only focuses on the importance of mental health but is also committed to ensuring that children have every opportunity to showcase their talents by offering such extracurricular activities as 'Spotlight on Dance', music and performing arts events and a range of sports clubs as they recognise the impact of these activities on the children's general wellbeing. I was also particularly impressed with a visit to 'The Retreat' which is housed in a mobile classroom on the playground. This room has proved to be an extremely valuable wellbeing resource which children are encouraged to visit should they feel lonely or anxious during lunchtime play. There is also a forest school in the grounds and an all-weather MUGA court is in the process of being installed which the children are very excited about. There is a wellbeing link on the school website which is kept up-to-date and which parents are encouraged to visit. Wellbeing is a key focus of the school's development plan and there is a real sense that wellbeing is embedded across the whole school. Staff are extremely well-supported and the head begins each staff meeting with the words 'how are you?' I was particularly impressed with the positive Personal Development feedback given by staff during a recent Peer Review, which included comments such as:

- 'I see staff supporting and caring for both children and each other. The school has a lovely warmth.'
- 'Leaders have created a positive culture across the school. There is a real sense of care.'
- 'Leaders are held in high regard by parents, teachers and children. Leighfield is a happy, tight knit school with a family feel to it.'

It was made clear to me during my time at the school that the Senior Leadership Team at Leighfield recognise the importance of focusing not only on the wellbeing of its pupils, but also on that of its staff. Sarah is an extremely caring and supportive head who goes the extra mile to ensure that her staff feel valued and supported, which is highly impressive and worthy of praise.

Other things which the school has in place and which are worthy of note (taken from the presentation):

- All of the parent, pupil and staff questionnaires have been extremely positive.
- Relationships across the school between staff, staff and children and staff and parents are strong and effective.
- The ELSA support in place for children and families.
- The strong PSHE curriculum which is in place.
- The enrichment opportunities in place to promote wellbeing and mental health.
- Its commitment to responding to pupil, parent and staff suggestions using the 'we asked, you said, we did' model
- A strong and effective CPD programme to develop and enhance staff understanding in order to better support the children.
- The vision clearly places the importance of wellbeing and mental health at its heart.
- Strong links to specialist support services.
- Achieving the Mental Health Lead Practitioner accreditation.
- The commitment from staff in supporting the Award process.
- Its pride for its pupils because of the levels of kindness, understanding and support they show to one another

Impact: Meetings with Stakeholders

A Member of the school's Advisory Board:

I met with Sophie, a recent member of the school's Advisory Board, who was absolutely glowing in her praise for what the school has done and continues to implement with regard to wellbeing. She told me that, as a parent, she '... couldn't speak more highly about what the school does.' She went on to confirm that the focus of the school on wellbeing is 'second to none, both strategically and operationally.' She mentioned how impressed she is with the fact that the school not only focuses on the wellbeing of its children, but on that of its staff and parents too. She told me that 'Sarah leads from the front' and is an inspirational head. She went on to tell me that an example of how the school ensures that all children feel valued and supported was evident during a recent music event where 'every single child – irrespective of ability level – took part and this is the same with sports events.' When asked about her role in the strategic implementation of the Award, Sophie told me that although she is relatively new to the role, she is kept up-to-date regularly with updates on the progress of the Award and, as a Board, 'we question and ensure its progression.' She confirmed that impact is monitored in formal and informal meetings throughout the year and that the Head updates them regularly in any event. She also confirmed that Advisory Board members have seen the results of the stakeholder questionnaires and receive regular reports on the progress of the Award. Added to this, she confirmed that wellbeing is at the core of the school's development plan. She told me that wellbeing at the school is not just a simple tick boxing exercise – it is at the heart of all that it does. She went on to tell me how impressed she has been since her daughter joined the school in 2020 with the focus the school places on wellbeing with events such as 'Hello Yellow'; 'Odd Socks Day' and the excellent support the children had through lockdown during the Covid19 pandemic. She confirmed that the wellbeing strategy is very well embedded in the school and is being constantly evaluated and the school development plan regularly updated to ensure it always remains at the heart of best practice. When asked about the support the Board affords to the SLT, she confirmed that this is seen as being very important and that, at a recent Board meeting, the head spoke about how much she valued the support she receives. When asked about governor training in relation to mental health and emotional wellbeing, she confessed that

she has been reminded to access the training available and realises that this is a priority which she will need to undertake asap! However, she was keen to let me know that wellbeing and mental health issues are always discussed at meetings in any event. She mentioned how the school's focus on physical as well as mental wellbeing in the provision of its sports, music and drama enrichment activities ensures that the children feel valued, included and more confident as a result of taking part in them. Her vision is for the school to continue to put wellbeing at the heart of things and she finished by saying that she feels that the children at Leighfield school are also well-educated on keeping themselves safe, being kind and supporting each other which is commendable.

Parents:

I met with a group of four parents in person with another one joining us online. All parents waxed lyrical about how wonderful the school is and how privileged they feel to be part of its community. They confirmed that they were kept well informed about the Wellbeing Award through emails, newsletters and socials. One parent opened by saying 'from a strategic point of view, the school is doing wonderful things and the strategy is well-embedded and doing well.' They also confirmed that they had all completed the questionnaires. They talked about how there is always a staff presence before school which they found to be 'absolutely invaluable'. They could not talk highly enough about the work the school's ELSA does to ensure that parents and children feel supported and valued. Another parent confirmed this, telling me how her son had great problems coming into school but, because of the support they received from staff, he is now in school every day. They went on to say how impressed they were with the fact that the staff know all of the children and 'what makes them tick'. They told me that the staff at Leighfield go the extra mile – they are always happy to talk and they are very kind and approachable and parents are 'never seen as an inconvenience'. They talked about how the community spirit is second to none at Leighfield and mentioned the many events, assemblies and plays that the school puts on. They feel that they are really listened to and how the school does its very best to implement any suggestions they make. They were particularly keen to tell me about the Retreat and how their children talk about the things they learn in PHSE to do with wellbeing. One parent told me how much her son appreciates having the Retreat available during lunchtimes as 'he now knows where to go if he feels in need of some quiet time.' She went on to tell me how the school has been 'absolutely amazing and that he is a different boy now' because of this. They finished by telling me how they love the way that staff treat every child the same or according to their needs and how they can often pre-empt problems because they know the children and their families so well. They were absolutely glowing about how much the school does to ensure the emotional wellbeing of their children and how well their children have responded to this as a result.

Staff:

I met with a lovely group of teachers who were very keen to let me know how much they love being at Leighfield school. One teacher in particular impressed me by saying 'I love this school, it's warm and fuzzy!'. They told me that they were regularly kept informed about the Award through meetings and emails and how 'the whole ethos of the school is focused on our wellbeing and the children's wellbeing.' They talked about the open door policy and how they have no hesitation in talking to each other and to Sarah and Steph about anything. They confirmed that wellbeing at the school has always been strong and incorporated and how they are a very 'close-knit team'. They told me that the staff at Leighfield are more like a family and they all feel well-supported and valued at the school. One young teacher told me that she suffers with anxiety and how well the school has supported her by offering counselling and simply just by caring. She told me how the SLT message them in the evening if they feel that something is wrong or that they may be in need of support – they all appreciate this as it makes them feel cared for and special. When asked about the link

between wellbeing and learning, they expressed how 'children can't learn if they aren't happy, safe, supported and loved'. They went on to say that 'we know our children and can pre-empt any problems. We know how to support them and they feel safe talking to us about any problems they may have.' They talked about how out of hours emails are banned and how welcome the introduction of the feedback journals was because they can now keep notes centrally during every lesson to identify where extra help or support is needed, without having to write in every child's book which makes the marking process so much easier as everything is now in one place. They finished by telling me that the school has 'such an open-door policy – we are trusted, we are listened to.' It was obvious from my meeting with staff that Leighfield is a school which sincerely cares for and values its staff.

Pupils:

The children I met were absolutely delightful and very eager to answer my questions. They were confident and excited to be asked about the wellbeing at the school and, when asked specifically about what they understand by mental health, were able to say that 'it's about how we feel inside and how we act on the outside because of this.' A commendable response from such young children! They told me about the worry boxes they have and the quiet corners in every classroom where they sit calmly on bean bags and read if they feel sad. When asked about what they would do if they arrived at school feeling upset or sad, they told me how they would 'talk to a trusted adult', their teachers or the ELSA – one boy telling me how 'the ELSA has all the time in the world for you!' They also told me about the posters they have in their classrooms with different colours which they use to show their feelings. They also told me how they could speak to the Wellbeing Champions that are in every class. When asked about how and when they have learnt about their feelings and emotions, they were quick to talk about the lessons they have in PHSE, Wellbeing week, 'Hello Yellow', 'Odd Socks day' and 'Good to be Different'. They talked about how they feel safe and loved at the school – one child telling me that the best thing is 'the teachers a million percent!' They talked about the Retreat and how they can use it during lunchtimes if they feel sad or need some 'downtime'. They told me they loved the library, the clubs – especially music and drama – and how they feel they can make decisions and are listened to. They knew what to do if they saw another child looking sad or lonely try and how they would try and cheer them up and include them in their games. They also knew to take them to a 'trusted adult' if they couldn't help them. The children I interviewed and those that I saw on my tour around the school bear testament to the excellent pastoral care and support that is on offer at Leighfield School and they are a credit to their parents and teachers.

Areas for development

Continue to do all of the wonderful things you are already doing in order to ensure that Leighfield Primary School remains a place where the wellbeing of the whole school community is central to its ethos and best practice.

Verifier recommendation:

I thoroughly enjoyed my day at this wonderful school and have no hesitation whatsoever in recommending that Leighfield Primary be granted the Wellbeing Award for Schools for a period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

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Wellbeing Award
for Schools

It has been a wonderful and worthwhile journey achieving this award. We feel very proud of the progress and achievements and I thought the assessment day was very fair, useful and friendly. Thank you for spending the day with us and for the useful next steps.

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