

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	Newfield School
School address and postcode:	Old Bank Lane, Blackburn, BB1 2PW
School telephone:	01254 588 600
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Head teacher:	Rik Robinson
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WAS coordinator:	Jennifer Riley
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Award verifier:	Helen Mills
Award adviser (if applicable):	
Date of verification:	5/06/2020

Commentary on the evidence provided:

Jennifer Riley (Award Coordinator) presented the evidence in an excellent way during the virtual verification to demonstrate outstanding practice. Jennifer Riley, Rik Robinson (Head Teacher) staff, governors, partners, parents and the student spoke with great passion, pride and honesty during the interviews. 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:

Outstanding leadership is a key factor in understanding the success of the school in promoting and supporting emotional and physical wellbeing, mental health, mutual respect, resilience and independence as core to the whole school community. The financial investment, skills, commitment, and approach of the senior leadership team, wellbeing warriors, staff and the whole school community has created innovative ways of working and a seamless and consistent welcoming, positive, aspirational, none judgemental, caring, supportive, empathetic, safe, happy, and respectful culture.

Vision, values and ethos are central to the success of the school, which are shared by everyone, and has created a sense of shared responsibility and belonging, referred to during the visit as the 'Newfield family'. During the award process, this was once again refreshed; with a comprehensive outcome based school development plan for 2019-2022, demonstrating a commitment to a whole

school focus on wellbeing and mental health for staff, parents and learners, including further developing outdoor space, parental involvement, collaborative working with health providers, student voice, leadership and management, professional development for all staff and the governor role. This alongside an outstanding emotional health and wellbeing policy demonstrates 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, students, families and staff supports whole school progress.

An open door policy, voice, listening to the needs of others, effective communication, effective partnership working and breaking down barriers are very much part of how the school has achieved a shared sense of belonging where pupils, students, families and staff are confident to ask for 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. For example, school develops highly personalised curriculums for young people built on the foundations of strong relationships across the whole school community. The numerous opportunities that promote wellbeing has led to learners, families and staff developing the skills needed to monitor their own feelings, confident to ask for support and to use techniques to manage their own wellbeing. There are numerous experienced, knowledgeable and passionate teams available to swiftly support those children who need it and staff, including wellbeing warriors, who communicate wellbeing messages and promote activities, resilience and offer support to the whole school.

Kind, caring, welcoming, safe, helpful, listened to, happy, friends, settled, supportive team, hugs, proud, loving, family, positive, comforting, working together, committed, and enjoyment were key descriptions given in the interviews, and these are core to the positive and nurturing culture of the school. This has enabled the day-to-day and longer-term emotional wellbeing and mental health activities to flourish and was evident throughout the initial visit and virtual tour with the promotion of wellbeing, feelings and emotions, positivity, aspirations, academic and personal goal achievements, coupled with a real sense of calm and nurturing relationships as one walked around, with young people displaying exemplary behaviour, engagement, confidence, and enjoyment in learning. The student interviewed was able to articulate numerous strategies that he can do to help him manage his feelings and emotions and expressed how happy and safe he feels in school, and was able to list numerous trusted adults who he could speak to if he had a problem, was upset, worried or sad, commenting that the support he receives is really good. Older students are supportive buddies to younger children and the student commented how he helps them, really enjoys it and it makes him feel good. The student also commented that he is part of the school council and advocates right respecting schools, visits other schools, advocates UNICEF, and that his voice is heard and that suggested changes have been made to make school even better and this makes him feel proud. The student commented that bullying is rare in school and if it does occur, it is always sorted out. The student stated, "I really enjoy school and all the activities and school is absolutely brilliant".

Significant investment in the carefully designed SEND and Autism new build facilities and equipment, including a welcoming hygiene suite, Individual working areas, classrooms with a quiet room, individual work stations, shared on suite bathrooms and outdoor spaces, sensory integration room to self regulate, outdoor eating area and spaces including the willow tunnel leading through to sensory garden and sensory story area, raised beds to plant and grow, gym, swing, active equipment, a welcoming and positive environment, wide range of activities, staffing, integrated services, with formal and informal support systems, was apparent during the tour of the school, and in provision of interventions.

The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of excellent 'wellbeing' practice. For example, displays celebrating children's achievements and rewards, the 5 ways to wellbeing, school wellbeing warriors and mental health support, community faith tree, inspirational butterflies, celebration assemblies, class charters, school council, rights respecting school steering group, charity work, Duke of Edinburgh Award, promotion of positive behaviours with staff modelling positive behaviour, communication friendly, student buddies, an active school council, hydrotherapy pool, library, paradise pyramid break out area from lessons, extensive amount of physical equipment to support children's physical wellbeing, wheelchair dancing, sensory integration, pastoral groups, school counsellor, pet therapy, time to talk, person centred approaches, a comprehensive outreach programme including mainstream partner schools and colleges, inclusion quality mark and extensive community links. A highly personalised curriculum that meets the needs of the children, PSHCE/circle time, lunch time and extra curricular events, a commitment to developing children's life skills including students cooking food for staff and children, all of which are fundamental in developing children's communication and rights, emotions, self and social awareness and relationship skills. Based in the school medical room is the nursing team, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists, and this is where the school hosts occupational therapy, seating clinics, health consultants and paediatricians, which reduces barriers to accessing services. Many of these have a major impact on the whole school community.

Staff wellbeing and training has been given priority and value, along with financial investment, and this is valued greatly by staff as they feel that the strategies in place that support their emotional wellbeing enables them to provide the most effective support to each other, the children and their families. The Head Teacher has an open door policy and has committed to reducing staff stress and managing workload through introducing flexible working, PPA in blocked time, line managers review meetings that includes time for self reflection on wellbeing, support staff drop in sessions with the HT, CPD including personal development and visits to other schools, calendar of deadlines in advance, planning pairs, and dedicated time to allow new initiatives to be introduced. The wellbeing coordinator and wellbeing warriors have worked hard to improve staff wellbeing through organising and introducing half termly wellbeing breakfasts, weekly fitness classes, wellbeing drop ins, staff choir classes and promoting the staff wellbeing warriors trained in mental health first aid, employee assistance scheme including a 24 hour helpline and including wellbeing in staff inductions. The staff room has a relaxing lounge and a wellbeing shout out board that promotes positive thank you messages, there is also a prayer/quiet meeting room for staff, separate eating area for quiet time and colourful banners created by the parent group. Office spaces are comfortable and help staff feel valued. There is a real sense of a team approach to supporting each other and staff are confident to talk openly and honestly about their mental health and wellbeing. Staff know how to manage their own wellbeing and use these strategies effectively. Staff celebrate as a team and socialise together.

The HT commented that he is "proud of the staffs positivity, dedication and commitment to the children". Staff commented, "The shout outs make you smile and feel appreciated. Yoga and mindfulness has helped me to relax. Meetings have decreased from two to one per week, which has helped us to manage workload, and the calendar with deadlines helps you to plan and reduces frustration and stress. HLTA's can plan now and this has reduced stress and improved my work life balance, especially with childcare, and I can ask questions at drop ins and CPD has improved. Dedicated time for appraisals with team staff has improved motivation. Alison sends information on how to improve our own wellbeing. The wellbeing warriors are really helpful and supportive and the social events allow talking openly. I'm proud to be part of the Newfield team. Line manager and teams check in on you and ask how you are, if we have problems, we work through them. When I was off work, my line manager visited me at home and there was no pressure, school were very

supportive of my wellbeing. Rik has improved CPD and our own needs are accepted. We work really well with parents, they tell us about home issues and we work with them, it's a whole team effort and the parent workshops on sleep, behaviour and crafts are great. Mental health awareness for students is our main focus, we provide communication child centred personalised curriculums and encourage choices therapy".

The holistic approach of the supportive wellbeing warrior's role is embedded in to the school culture with the team recognising signs of mental health issues in staff and students, and addressing them immediately. The wellbeing warriors commented, "The mental health first aid training has raised awareness of mental health and is at the forefront of how we work, mental health comes first, followed by education. We ensure everyone's voices are heard, and understand everyone is different; we show empathy and encourage strength to ask for support. We're encouraged to stop and reflect and it's a supportive environment. It's a lovely place to work. Staff are now confident to ask for support. It's a valuable role. During COVID 19, school has put the mental health of everyone first. We've been informed in advance, had our safety concerns addressed, been well looked after and that's been comforting. If we've had enough, it's OK. During the SLT check ins, we're encouraged to look after our families, this has reduced stress and anxieties". The passionate staff at school feel valued, listened to, connected, supported and enjoy their jobs immensely and are extremely proud to be part of the Newfield family.

Having achieved the Leading Parent Partnership Award, effective communication between staff and parents is a key strength of the school, and ensures that vulnerable children are supported swiftly and effectively; this includes a daily home school diary completed by parents and teachers, individual pupil profiles, parent forum, coffee mornings, workshops, groups, assemblies and class celebrations, parent blog and outstanding joint EH&C plan annual reviews with parents. Wellbeing support including COVID 19 support, activities, events, and celebrations are promoted extremely well to parents via the school website with 184 wellbeing blogs recorded, newsletters and emails. The support given to parents is exceptional, with staff going above and beyond, for example support with transition, home visits, completing referrals, hosting and attending medical appointments, which parents and children value.

All parents commented that their children are safe and happy in school. One parent commented, "We were well informed about the wellbeing award. Staff look after everyone and the children have a voice. I can chat to anyone, they listen to us and support us, we are part of the Newfield family and ethos. It's so important to have these connections and support". Another parent commented, "During COVID 19, staff are sending individual videos to each child, staff and the school nursing team know the children so well, and we have been given emergency numbers. School attend all medical and social care meetings, they make sure staff are trained and they liaise with other teams and make sure our voice is heard, school is our voice". The Governor commented, "everyone in school understands the children socially, emotionally and physically, so the children have the best time in school, it's an holistic approach. The school council communicate to governors and were involved in the HT recruitment. School go the extra mile, it's a circle of love". Another parent commented, "It's simple to access clinics at school and school staff attend and share information, it helps to manage everyone's stress". Another parent commented, "The school fought to keep the school nursing service in school, and the nurses go in to the classroom and this has a big impact. Without the nursing team, my child couldn't go to school, so now he gets all the extra social and emotional developments and connections he wouldn't get at home". A friend of the school commented, "[School] is a life saver, best place to be, it's a massive family. It's where the children and I want to be and are happy to go. You leave with your heart warmed". Another parent commented, "He's come along tremendously with all the interventions he's received and the training and support I've

received. He's now sociable and confident, he's trusted with responsibilities and he likes the independence. It's helped massively with my stress and I now feel heard". A further parent commented, "Staff at Newfield kept me going and got me through a difficult time. The teacher is a second mum and they [staff] all love the children".

Collaborative working is exceptional with the school working very closely with multi agencies to build the best team around the child ensuring outstanding care and support is provided. This has been achieved by establishing links with key services aimed at promoting the wellbeing of the children and their families and securing a school based nursing team, and running therapy, social care and medical clinics on the school site, which enables school staff and the nursing team to attend, which families find extremely helpful. Children who are not well enough to attend school are provided with visits and learning opportunities both within the home and at hospital. Senior leaders and therapists meet on a termly basis to discuss children's needs in a holistic way. External agencies commented, "During COVID 19 Jennie [Wellbeing Coordinator] and her team have been amazing, we've had daily communication and updates on the children, it's been a seamless approach. We hold social care disability drop in sessions at school for parents and it helps with parental relationships. The school provides really good provision every day. We have a close relationship and work well together to meet families needs, it's an holistic approach, it reduces barriers to accessing services and increases parental confidence and provides reassurance in child in need and EHCP reviews, together we find solutions and the feedback from families is fantastic". Apple Trees respite commented, "It's an invaluable relationship, staff from school will give up their time to support us, share information and training to help us". Another agency commented, " It's joined up working, consistency and families get on board. They [Newfield school] are committed to putting children and families at the centre of everything, providing the best care, support and education together".

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, families and staff.

Impact:

Development of innovative and highly personalised curriculums and integrated services ensures that each young persons needs are met, contributing to improved emotional wellbeing and mental health and achieving the best they can in everything they do.

Whole school training and awareness events in emotional wellbeing and mental health has resulted in staff recognising when children and colleagues are not mentally well, and are able to seek or provide support to improve their emotional wellbeing by using a range of techniques, contributing to improved resilience.

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 further escalation of mental health issues.

Effective communication has resulted in a seamless approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health with everyone feeling confident to ask for support when needed.

Investment in staff wellbeing, training, supervision and a supportive and open approach has created a culture where staff are able to talk openly about their own mental health needs and has resulted in a reduction in staff stress and an increase in staff managing their own wellbeing.

Significant Investment in a highly trained, professional, dedicated and supportive teaching and non teaching teams and integrated health and social care services and collaborative working with agencies, facilities, equipment and numerous intervention rooms has resulted in all children and

their families with additional emotional wellbeing and mental and physical health needs being provided with a safe space and for interventions to be delivered, enabling their needs to be met.

The passionate and nurturing staff alongside the individualised curriculums, range of activities and interventions available for young people to participate in has increased their self-esteem, independence, and resilience, enabling young people to thrive.

The nurturing ethos of the school and effective partnerships across the whole school community has ensured that children, families and staff feel safe, supported, secure and happy. The whole school team at Newfield School work passionately to make a positive difference to the lives of all the young people, parents and staff.

Areas for development:

As already stated, continue delivering staff training, developing the outdoor facilities and provision and further improving staff induction.

As discussed, introduce dedicated supervision time for the wellbeing warriors to offload, staff 'all about me' forms, add local and national support available to the school wellbeing policy and website, continue to monitor student and parent stakeholder evaluations and share progress of emotional wellbeing and mental health with all stakeholders, consider monitoring student's mental health using the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQ's) and introducing staff wellbeing buddies.

To further promote staff wellbeing, display the positive parental and student quotes and signpost support available in the staff toilets (employee assistance and free education support partnership counselling).

Showcase the schools multiple examples of outstanding practice in emotional wellbeing and mental health work, including the impact of the school based nursing team, clinics and multidisciplinary health and social care team. Continue to influence future decisions and priorities at local mental health forums including the mental health trailblazer.

Verifier recommendation:

Newfield 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:

We are absolutely delighted to have successfully achieved the Wellbeing Award for Schools. The wellbeing of our pupils, families and staff is paramount to all aspects of what we do, so we are very pleased to have this national recognition. It is down to everyone to make the magic happen and all members of the Newfield Family should be proud of their contribution in this area. It was a pleasure to welcome assessor Helen Mills to school – in person and virtually – and we would like to thank her for this very positive report.

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