

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	<input type="text" value="The John Fisher School"/>
School address and postcode:	<input type="text" value="Purley, CR8 3YP"/>
School telephone:	<input type="text" value="02086604555"/>
School website:	<input type="text" value="www.johnfisherschool.org"/>
Head teacher:	<input type="text" value="Philip McCullagh"/>
Head teacher's email:	<input type="text" value="p.mccullagh@johnfisherschool.org"/>
WAS coordinator:	<input type="text" value="Andrew Dean"/>
WAS coordinator's email:	<input type="text" value="a.dean@johnfisherschool.org"/>
Award verifier:	<input type="text" value="Malcolm Goddard"/>
Award adviser (if applicable):	<input type="text" value="Malcolm Goddard"/>
Date of verification:	<input type="text" value="30/6/21"/>

Commentary on the evidence provided:

This was an on-site advisor led final verification visit following a remote interim assessment where around 60% of KPIs had already been signed off. Evidence provided was clear and concise at final verification. The evidence for final verification was presented in a paper-based folders for each objective. Oral evidence from stakeholders, during the learning walk and during the presentation triangulated well and the coordinators and other leaders were able to expand on answers on request during the presentation and throughout the day to add detail and colour.

The Optimus SSEFs showed stakeholder views had improved over the process. Parent views in particular had shown a significant rise. The school had also undertaken a range of other surveys during the award period to listen to stakeholder views and stakeholders reported that leaders responded carefully when feedback was provided, took appropriate action, and kept them informed of changes. Leaders recognised many of their own next steps, understood that the journey was not yet complete and fully engaged with the advisor to develop these for the final report.

Strengths identified during verification:

There is a strong culture of supporting each other and being a strong community with a strong sense of belonging. This was reported consistently by stakeholders who were proud of their school and valued being a part of the “Fisher Family”.

The universal offer for wellbeing through the PSHE and RSE curriculum is effectively delivered through form time and carefully coordinated and monitored to ensure it is good quality.

There have been many small-scale initiatives developed to build and maintain a sense of team for the staff. These have continued through the pandemic often remotely. Staff have found many ways to support each other and remain connected.

Staff, and other stakeholders, feel there are clear processes for them to raise concerns and make suggestions and these are listened to and lead to real change. They identified that senior leaders are approachable and value their opinions.

Form time plays a key part of the school’s provision. Form tutors build strong relationships and deliver key aspects of the taught wellbeing programme alongside PSHE and RSE. Students and parents feel form tutors are someone they can turn to for support and form tutors play a key role in referral processes.

Many different aspects of the school have played their own part in the school’s focus on wellbeing from the Chapel and Chaplaincy team to the Sports department and its wider participation culture and aspects as diverse as Music and Food technology. Individual students are able to find their “niche” to feel their own sense of belonging and find their own support and place within the wider school.

Throughout the pandemic the whole school community has very visibly demonstrated they care about each other and are prepared to go the extra mile to support any member of the community in need in line with the school’s Catholic values. The school’s work is underpinned by these values which are carefully applied.

Impact

Through the award process wellbeing and mental health are now much more explicit and openly talked about. They are reported by leaders to be at the very heart of everything the school is trying to do and an important consideration in decision making.

The school’s focus on wellbeing is now much more visible to stakeholders, from the innovative support board to displays in classrooms and staffroom and its place on the website.

The leadership of wellbeing has been strengthened through the appointment of two middle leaders to work alongside the award coordinator. Each now brings their own expertise and enthusiasm to the roles and their appointment has raised the profile of wellbeing and allowed greater focus on each of the stakeholder groups. These leaders understand the importance of their role, have vision and have the ability to strategically plan.

The school has brought together all the key staff in a coordinated way to review individual need and find solutions through the ‘Magdalen’ team which meets regularly. They are a structure based on supporting individual’s mental health in a uniquely catholic way. Leaders have demonstrated their commitment to this process by timetabling all members for fortnightly meetings. There is a strong collaboration process by all to support the students.

Through developing external partnerships such as the local NHS provider and 'Worth It' the school has been able to access additional provision including training for staff and a Mental Health and Wellbeing practitioner who is based at the school two days a week.

Over the past two years a beautiful and peaceful 'Wellbeing and Spiritual garden' has been developed from a bare patch of earth to provide a sanctuary for all members of the school community and a very visible sign of the school's commitment to wellbeing. This has been achieved largely through bids, donations, and the efforts of the wider community.

The place within the school of mental health and wellbeing has become "normalised" so that it is now deeply embedded and respected as a core part of what the school is and what the school does, and it is ok to talk about or seek support and members of the community feel empowered to support themselves and each other. All leaders are excited about the progress that they have made together and have clear plans to develop their work and impact further beyond the award and the pandemic.

Areas for development:

- 1) Develop an overview of "What skills/awareness do we aspire to empower every member of our school community with for life" to guide your developing programmes of support and learning for each group of stakeholders. (Staff/Parents/Governors/Students)
- 2) Consider where the responsibility for contacting and engaging parents will sit within the Magdalene process and what training/support is required for this to be delivered effectively. Make this responsibility explicit within the process.
- 3) Relaunch your peer-to-peer support programmes:
 - for Years 7/8 through training with 'Worth It'.
 - for Sixth Formers to provide mentors to younger students.
- 4) Decide which wellbeing non-negotiables must be visible in each form room and check periodically to ensure these are available to all students.
- 5) Relocate and update the wellbeing section of the website and consider adding a series of short training videos for parents related to any wellbeing training provided in school for parents and the topics students are learning about in school.
- 6) As the library provision is developed further include relevant resource sections on wellbeing for staff and students and charge the new librarian with sourcing relevant materials and displaying them prominently.
- 7) Within the current strategy document identify (by initials) the person who will lead each next step and separate next steps into short term actions and longer-term aspirations.
- 8) Consider what further steps might be needed to remove any remaining stigma among students by facilitating open conversations and through providing greater support to identified vulnerable groups. Consider setting up supported groups for students who may "act in" any distress in the same way as you currently have groups for those students who "act out" any distress.

Verifier recommendation:

Recommend that The John Fisher School receives the WAS award for a period of three years.

Request the school share their support poster with the advisor so that this can be shared as best practice with other schools.

Head teacher comments:

This has been a thorough process and the Verifier captured the distinctiveness of the school and the effort going in to support the mental health and wellbeing of its stakeholders. School leaders see this very much as the beginning of a process rather than the end. Leaders remain ambitious and have an appetite to move things along even further. I would like to thank our enthusiastic team of staff, dedicated parents/carers, supportive Governors and our wonderful students. It humbling to be a member of this special community. We look forward to welcoming this experienced Verifier back to The John Fisher School in three years to determine how much further progress we will have made.

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