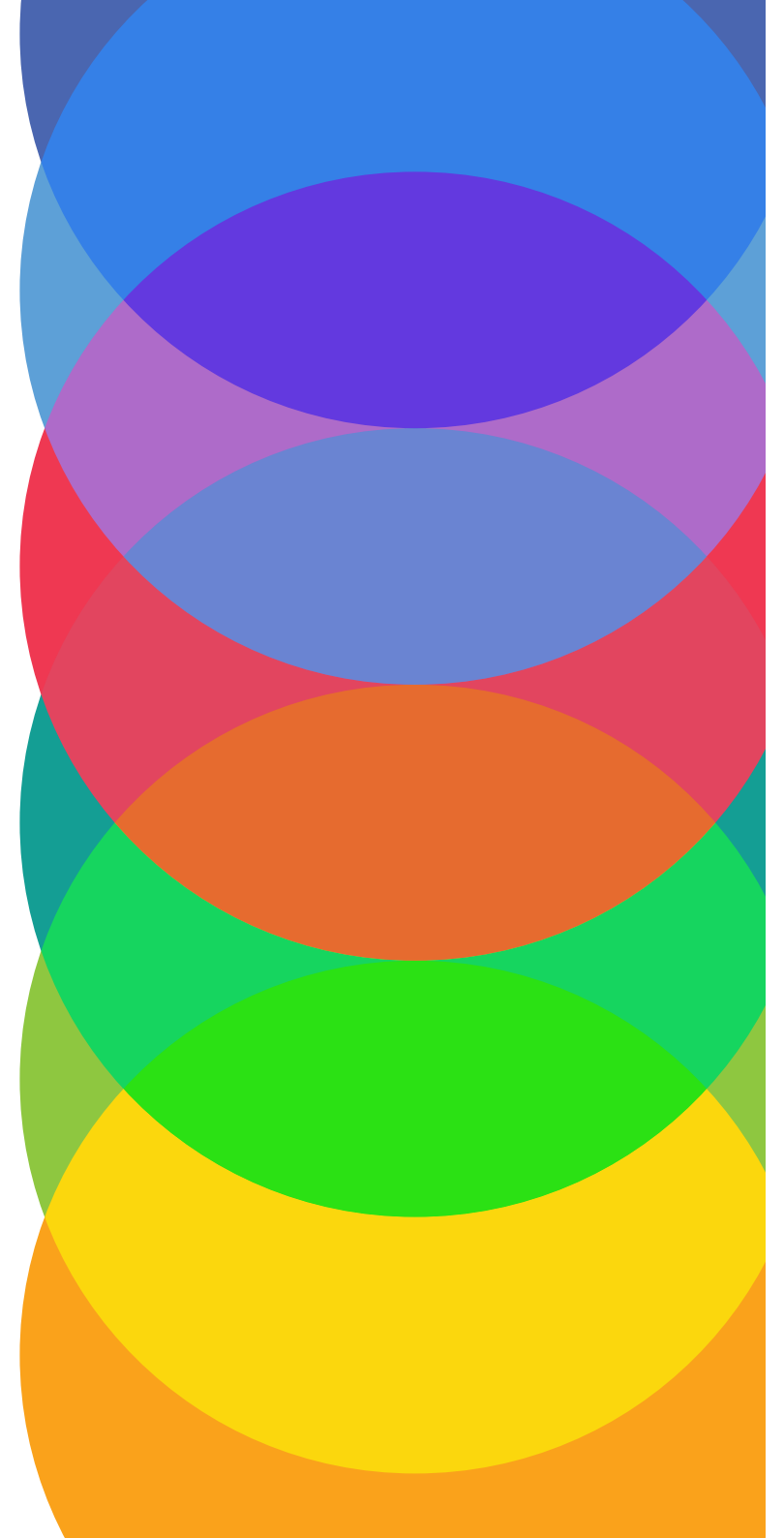


Unveiling Wellbeing in Education

Start the conversation on
wellbeing today

Insights from Irish Teachers.
Actionable Strategies for Your School.

Dr. Niamh O'Brien, Dr. Wesley O'Brien and Dr. John Goodwin





Dear Principal,

We are delighted to share with you this Dissemination Pack, developed as part of the “Wellbeing in Education Unveiled” research. Our aim is to support you and your staff in reflecting on and strengthening wellbeing practices within your school.

This pack has been carefully designed to translate key findings into accessible and actionable tools. It aligns directly with the Department of Education’s Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2023) and can be easily integrated into your School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process. We hope it will assist you in identifying what’s working well, where gaps exist, and how your whole-school wellbeing approach might evolve.

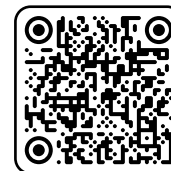
Whether you use it as a discussion starter in a staff meeting, a guide for SSE documentation, or a planning tool for wellbeing initiatives, we encourage you to engage with it in ways that best suit your context.

If your school would like to explore this work further, we would be very happy to support workshops, deliver presentations, or share additional resources tailored to your needs.

With sincere thanks for all you do to foster wellbeing in education,

The Wellbeing in Education Unveiled Research Team

Dr. Niamh O’ Brien (SETU), Dr. Wesley O’ Brien (UCC) and Dr. John Goodwin (UCC)



Research Article

If you would like to read more about the research behind this project, you can read the full article by following the QR code here.

Why we conducted the study:

- To explore teachers' interpretations and attitudes towards the concept of wellbeing and their engagement with the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines.
- To identify enabling factors and barriers to promoting wellbeing in post-primary schools.
- To illustrate effective approaches used in enhancing wellbeing in Irish schools.

What were our findings overall:

1. Teachers value wellbeing and generally support its inclusion in the curriculum, recognising its importance for students' mental, emotional, and social development.
2. A shared vision of wellbeing within schools is essential for effective whole-school implementation. Schools with a shared vision were over three times more likely to successfully adopt a whole-school approach.
3. Barriers persist, including:
 - Lack of time and competing academic pressures,
 - Limited teacher training and confidence in delivering wellbeing content,
 - Insufficient support from national policy structures (e.g. vague and lengthy guidelines).
4. Teacher wellbeing is often overlooked, even though it's crucial for student wellbeing. Many teachers feel under-supported and overwhelmed, which hinders their ability to promote wellbeing effectively.
5. Professional development and practical tools are urgently needed to help teachers embed wellbeing meaningfully.
6. The study shows how wellbeing is shaped by multiple ecological influences (e.g. home, school, society), supporting the use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework as a way to conceptualise wellbeing as a "wicked problem" — complex and ever-evolving.

In summary, the study calls for more practical supports, training, leadership buy-in, and teacher-centred policies to make wellbeing a lived and effective part of school culture—not just a curricular tick-box exercise!

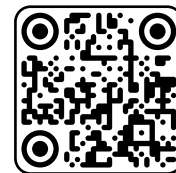
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development is integral to the Irish Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2023), providing a systems-based understanding of wellbeing.

The model emphasises the need for systemic change in Irish school wellbeing reforms rather than isolated wellbeing-related interventions.

The Bronfenbrenner Model emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to wellbeing, underscoring that interventions must consider the complex interplay of social, familial, and cultural factors that collectively shape individual experiences.

Wellbeing in education isn't just a one-time effort; it's a continuous journey that involves each of us at every level. Together, by taking small actions within our spheres of influence, we can foster a culture of resilience and wellbeing that benefits everyone in our educational ecosystem.

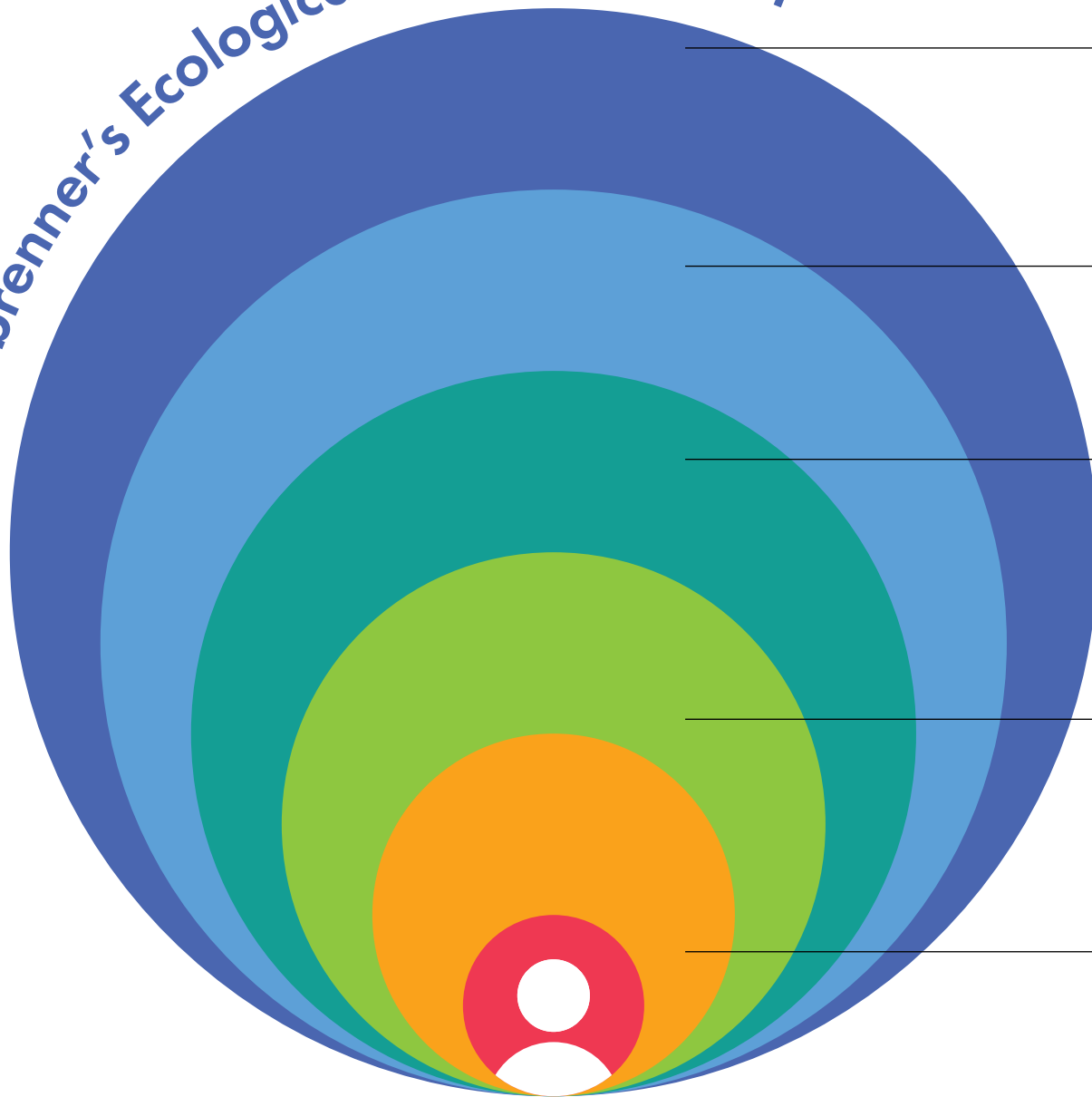


Explainer Video

If you would like to find out more about this Dissemination Pack, and its application in your school, follow the QR code here.



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model



• Chronosystem

The dynamic nature of human development and the impact of historical events, transitions, environments, and life change over time.

• Macrosystem

Broader Systemic Factors Influencing Wellbeing Practices in School.

• Exosystem

Elements that operate outside the immediate school environment but can have an indirect impact on the experiences and wellbeing of students and teachers within the school microsystem.

• Mesosystem

The interconnections or interactions between different microsystems in which the individual student is involved.

• Microsystem

Interactions, practices, and events within the immediate school environment, directly impacting the experiences of students and teachers.

Activities

Teachers' perceptions of actions and activities that enhance wellbeing in a school system mapped to Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework.

Microsystem

1. The school embraces the ethos of wellbeing.
2. Teacher wellbeing.
3. Incorporating the JCT Wellbeing Framework indicators into classroom activities.
4. Providing information sessions on wellbeing (to all school community).
5. Initiatives in place to support students transitioning from primary level to post-primary.
6. Learning to support wellbeing through experiential activities.
7. Additional hours in the school week allocated for wellbeing due to NCCA guidelines.
8. Student enjoyment of wellbeing content and activities.
9. The guidelines formalize what teachers are doing for wellbeing.
10. The guidelines formalize the role of teachers in promoting wellbeing.
11. The guidelines offer helpful tips for implementing wellbeing practices.
12. Emphasis on wellbeing in the classroom.
13. Wellbeing committees.
14. Pastoral systems.
15. Day trips.
16. Wellbeing Day.
17. Student achievement celebrations.
18. LGBTQI support.
19. Anti-bullying initiatives.
20. Mental Health Week.
21. Media and Posters in the Environment.
22. Physical Education.
23. Reading.
24. Drama.
25. Guest speakers.
26. Positive health week.
27. Wellbeing classes.
28. Fun sports activities.
29. Extracurricular activities.
30. Random act of kindness initiative.
31. Pacing and spacing out wellbeing activities over the year.
32. Sports week.
33. Ensuring students enjoy wellbeing activities.
34. The use of Yondr pouches.
35. Wellbeing journaling.
36. Meditation.
37. Games and sporting matches.

Mesosystem

1. Provide and assist in facilitating mental health support outside of school.
2. Wellbeing committees.
3. Pastoral systems.
4. Access to mental health experts.
5. Communication with external Mental Health Agencies.
6. Extracurricular activities.
7. Parent involvement in wellbeing initiatives.
8. Support from parents.

Exosystem

1. Access to mental health experts.
2. Communication with external Mental Health Agencies.
3. The involvement of parents in wellbeing initiatives.
4. Involvement and support of parents.
5. Teacher wellbeing.

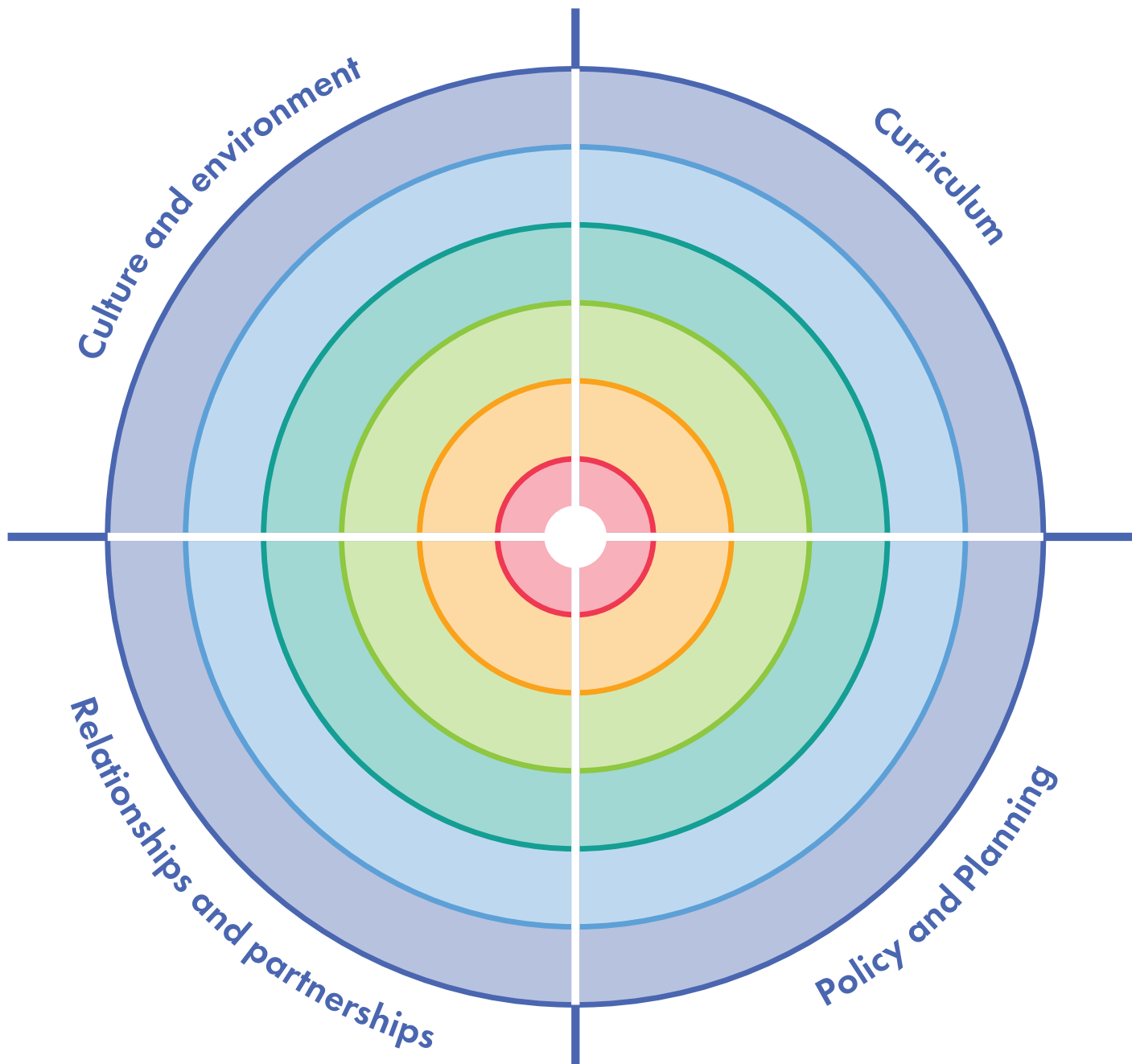
Macrosystem

1. NCCA Guidelines allow for tailored implementation for schools.
2. Emphasise a practical, thought-out, and connected approach to wellbeing.
3. A purpose-designed wellbeing program is recommended.
4. Regular reviews of wellbeing initiatives are deemed necessary.
5. The connection between wellbeing and mental health needs to be strengthened.
6. Enhanced communication between teachers regarding wellbeing.
7. Practical implementation of activities.
8. Specificity within the JCT Wellbeing Guidelines.
9. Teachers provided with CPD courses need practical application of the content.
10. Visibility of NCCA Wellbeing guidelines.
11. Wellbeing needs to be meaningfully reflected in the school timetable.
12. Wellbeing should be embedded across all subjects.
13. A habitual, not tick-box, approach to wellbeing is recommended.
14. Wellbeing subjects (PE, SPHE, CSPE) need to connect better for a comprehensive approach.
15. Avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
16. Flexibility is considered important when addressing wellbeing in short courses.
17. Inclusivity.
18. The learner's voice needs to be heard in wellbeing discussions.
19. Dedication of time, space, and resources for effective wellbeing initiatives.
20. Designated physical space for wellbeing in schools.
21. Funding for better programs.
22. Teacher Training.
23. Identifying champions.
24. Training for all staff on NCCA Guidelines.
25. Secure buy-in at all levels.
26. Celebrate how teachers are already addressing wellbeing in their practice.

Chronosystem

1. Initiatives to support students transitioning from primary level to post-primary level.
2. Changes over time in educational policies and NCCA guidelines.
3. Regular reviewing of wellbeing initiatives to move and adapt with the times.
4. NCCA Guidelines allow for tailored implementation for each school's unique context.
5. Funding and financial resources are allocated to support wellbeing initiatives.
6. Ongoing training for teachers.
7. Access to mental health experts.
8. Communication with external Mental Health Agencies.
9. The involvement of parents in wellbeing initiatives.





Interaction

Use this interactive page to reflect on your current wellbeing practices across the four domains.

- Step 1: In each quadrant, list activities, policies, or routines (using pages 4 and 5 of this pack) your school currently uses to support wellbeing.
- Step 2: Use this during a staff meeting or SSE session to identify strengths and areas for development.
- Step 3: Refer to the SSE Appendix for guidance on how this links to your school's self-evaluation process.

Notes

Appendix

Shared Vision Matters

A shared vision of wellbeing is essential for success. Schools with a shared vision were over three times more likely to adopt a whole-school wellbeing approach effectively. Use this pack to start conversations and build that shared vision together with your staff, students, and wider school community.

Using This Pack with the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Process

The Department of Education requires all schools to use the SSE process to promote and review wellbeing. This research pack is designed to support your work through all six steps of SSE:

* Refer to the interactive quadrant tool on page 6 to help visualise your school's wellbeing practices across the four domains. This tool can be used in staff meetings to surface insights collaboratively.

Step 1: Identify Focus

Use the research findings to help decide:

- What aspect of wellbeing matters most in your school right now?
- Do you want to focus on staff wellbeing, student voice, or whole-school CPD needs?
- Refer to the infographic and Bronfenbrenner model to identify a relevant entry point.

Prompt questions:

- How well are we supporting staff wellbeing?
- Where does wellbeing feature in the school ethos?
- Do staff have a shared vision of what wellbeing means to them?
- What issues are raised by staff that align with this research?
- What aspects of wellbeing in our school can we meaningfully influence? What lies outside our control?

Step 2: Gather Evidence

This pack can guide you in planning evidence-gathering strategies:

- Use the enablers/barriers listed as a basis for surveys, focus groups or reflection tools.
- Cross-reference the four wellbeing domains: Culture & Environment, Policy & Planning, Curriculum, Relationships

Prompt activities:

- Run a quick staff wellbeing reflection using themes from the research.
- Hold a discussion group with students or parents about current wellbeing supports.

Step 3: Analyse and Make Judgements

Use the included visual tools and examples to:

- Compare your current practices with those identified in the research.
- Judge areas of strength and areas for development.

Step 4: Write and Share Report & Plan

- Link your improvement targets to themes from the research (e.g., "Improve leadership structures supporting staff wellbeing.")
- Consider referencing this pack in your SSE report as the evidence base.

Steps 5 & 6: Implement, Monitor and Evaluate

- Use the video explainer and infographic as tools in staff meetings or wellbeing teams.
- Refer back to the Bronfenbrenner tool as you implement and evaluate your plan.



School Self-Evaluation Process

If you would like to access the School Self-Evaluation Guidelines, you can read them by following the QR code here.



Acknowledgments

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Wellbeing in Education Feedback

We want to hear from you. Please leave any feedback on the pack and it's application in your school via the form linked here.