

## Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School

### Wellbeing Policy

An Educate Together second-level school will be guided by the four core principles as laid down in the Educate Together Charter (1990):

- 1) They will be **equality based** in character, ensuring that children and young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have equal access to and rights within the school;
- 2) They will be **co-educational**, thereby encouraging children and young people to learn and live together;
- 3) They will be **child-centred**, respecting individual students' abilities to learn in unique ways;
- 4) Finally, Educate Together schools will be run on a **democratic** basis, encouraging active participation by parents and students in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

### Mission

*Blackrock ETSS is a student-centred, democratic school community that celebrates difference and creativity in a dynamic and vibrant learning environment defined by equality, integrity, and respect.*

## Vision

Educate Together is working towards an Ireland in which all people have access to an excellent education that is inclusive of all, irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle and ability.

## Values & Commitments

Educate Together is committed to:

- Placing the child and young person at the centre of the educational process;
- Respecting and celebrating the different and unique identities of all;
- An educational philosophy that promotes the values of justice, equality and human rights for all children and young people, and challenges injustice and unfair discrimination;
- Providing children and young people with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that they need, enabling them to make informed moral decisions and preparing them to become caring members of society;
- Empowering children and young people to take an active role in society and in the stewardship of the environment;
- Working in a democratic way that embraces the input from children, parents, teachers and supporters to enable the highest level of partnership and participation;
- Working together and with other educational partners in a consultative and collaborative way;
- Building school communities which engage with, and work meaningfully with, the local community;
- Ensuring that this type of education is provided by the State and available to all families who wish to access it.

These commitments are reflected in the following mottoes: “Learn Together to Live Together” “No Child an Outsider”

Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School seeks to educate the whole person as a responsible member of society, confident of personal worth. Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School implements policies and practices which further the development of self-discipline and enable students to take progressive responsibility for their own lives and actions. It is within this framework that the Wellbeing Policy is enacted by the stakeholders.



## Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools: Key Areas

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Curriculum, Teaching &amp; Learning</b></p> <p>▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide a curriculum and learning environment that equips students for the challenging world of the 21st century. The school will ensure that students are supported to take responsibility for their own learning, their physical, personal and social wellbeing, their relationships with others and their role in their local, national and global communities.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>By integrating 21st century teaching and learning strategies comprehensively and purposefully into the curriculum, and by assessing not only what students learn but how they learn, schools will nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Ethical Curriculum</b></p> <p>▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide an ethical curriculum that focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of young people. It will provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that young people need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and prepare them for life in a pluralist society which embraces diversity.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>The ethical curriculum will be part of the daily life of the school, part of every subject, visible in curriculum resources and woven into the very fabric of all school processes, policies and practices.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leadership, Management &amp; Structure</b></p> <p>▼</p> <p>In an Educate Together second-level school the inclusive and democratic principle will extend to the various sets of relationships in the school. Schools will promote collective responsibility for the development of a shared vision and purpose. Underlying every decision taken in the school will be the need to provide the best learning environment, where all students can achieve and become enthusiastic, independent lifelong learners.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>The fullest participation by parents, students and teachers in decision-making processes will be developed. The management of the school will reflect the belief that leaders come from many places in an organisation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Built Environment</b></p> <p>▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school community will consider how the built environment influences students' academic performance and well-being in school. The learning environment will express the Educate Together ethos and the physical setting will enhance and support the way students learn, teachers teach and the wider school community interacts.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>The Educate Together ethos and principles in school building design will address such issues as efficiency and sustainability, functionality and flexibility, building in context, accessibility, democratised spaces and aesthetic quality.</p>

## Introductory Statement

The Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School Wellbeing Policy is a structured document that describes the school Wellbeing programme. It is an integral part of the school's overall development plan.

## Relationship to the Ethos of the school

Blackrock ETSS is *a student-centred, democratic school community that celebrates difference and creativity in a dynamic and vibrant learning environment defined by equality, integrity, and respect*. Blackrock ETSS aims to develop a broad and inclusive range of aptitudes in each student, to develop the self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence of each student, and to provide a supportive and caring environment. The School Wellbeing Policy reflects this philosophy. The enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of potential – academic, personal and emotional – leading to greater autonomy for all students, are its central goals. The policy reflects the uniqueness of Blackrock ETSS and its own context and circumstances.

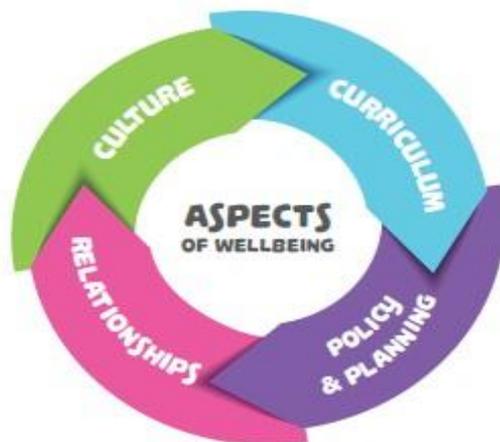
## Rationale

In the context of Junior and Senior Cycle reform, there is an increased focus on the need to ensure that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of school life. Accordingly, the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) has developed Wellbeing Guidelines. These guidelines govern what we, as a school, now set out to achieve. Wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community (The Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2017).

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 required that by 2023 the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and that all schools will provide evidence informed-approaches and support, appropriate to need, to promote the wellbeing of all their students. The role of the school is now understood as a place which develops the “whole child”, one who should leave school with a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, the school undertook a Wellbeing Promotion Review in December 2023 which led to the updating of this Wellness policy, and began the journey towards embedding a whole-school wellness plan.

## Wellbeing in Schools

The Wellbeing Guidelines identify four key aspects of wellbeing within the school setting: They are:



### Curriculum

This aspect refers to the subjects we provide and how we cater for wellbeing in the curriculum.

### Policy and Planning

This aspect refers to how we as a school endeavour to look after the wellbeing of the school community, for example, through policies, planning and school self-evaluation. We should make decisions with due regard to the wellbeing of our school community.

### Relationships

Good relationships amongst all members of the school community form the backbone of a positive working environment. Relationships between students, staff and parents/guardians should be characterised by openness, respect and listening.

### Culture:

Culture refers to our ethos, mission statement, physical and social environment, classroom culture and teaching, learning and assessment. We strive to make sure our students and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

## Wellbeing Indicators

Six indicators of wellbeing have been identified by the NCCA. They are:

- **Active**  
Being physically active is an important element in staying well.
- **Responsible**  
Each person must take responsibility for their own choices and make decisions, which promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.
- **Connected**

It is important to feel connected and also to appreciate that actions and interactions taken by one person will impact on their wellbeing and that of others.

- **Resilient**  
Everyone goes through challenges in their life. By building resilience, students learn the skills to cope with life's challenges.
- **Respected**  
Feeling respected, listened to and valued are key aspects of wellbeing. Positive, respectful relationships are central to maintaining wellbeing.
- **Aware**  
Self-awareness is important for wellbeing, being able to make sense of thoughts, feelings and behaviours and being aware of personal values and personal limitations.

## Wellbeing Guidelines



Blackrock ETSS places a strong emphasis on the wellbeing of the school community. The implementation of a formal Wellbeing Programme embeds the support structures and activities already in place in the school. Through its policies and procedures, the school seeks to provide a safe and caring environment for all.

This wellbeing programme is led by the Senior Leadership Team, the Wellbeing Team, and the Student Support Team.

## Wellbeing in The School

### **Wellbeing Coordinator**

Blackrock has appointed a wellbeing coordinator who leads the Wellbeing Team. The co-ordinator will oversee the implementation of the wellbeing programme in the school, and lead initiatives designed to support maintaining a positive climate and culture conducive to promoting wellbeing. The Wellbeing Coordinator makes reports to the Student Support Team on a frequent basis to update on the overall impression regarding student wellbeing, and to recommend further initiatives which can be implemented to maintain a positive culture and climate.

### **Wellbeing Team**

The Wellbeing Team consists of the Wellbeing coordinator, a representative of the Senior Management Team, and several staff members. The team meets termly to oversee the implementation of the Wellbeing plan for the school, to reflect on progress, and to gather feedback for future refinement.

### **Student Support Team**

The Student Support Team consists of the Guidance Counsellor, a representative of the Year Head Team, a representative of the IEN department, and the Senior Management Team. The team meets weekly to discuss key students about whom there might be concerns, academically, emotionally or in terms of behaviour. The staff member refers the student to the team by filling out Student Support Team referral form. The student is assigned to a member of the Student Support Team. They work with the student and offer feedback to the team and to the staff member who referred the student (while keeping within the confines of confidentiality).

### **Guidance Counsellor**

Blackrock ETSS has a Guidance Counsellor that assists students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. Guidance encompasses the three separate but interlinked areas of Personal and Social Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Guidance. The Guidance Counsellors in conjunction with staff and management are central to, and supportive of, the care system and policies which aim to deal with student support issues.

### **Individual Educational Needs (IEN) Department**

The IEN Department is committed to supporting students with individual educational needs in the school. It provides support through early identification, tuition and comprehensive liaison with parents and staff. The department ensures that the diverse needs and learning differences of all students are adequately accommodated and that appropriate structures are put in place to support them.

### **Year Head**

Each year group has an assigned Year Head, formerly (Student Support Coordinator). The role of the Year Head is also crucial to the successful implementation of the student support system. They monitor the students in their year group, ensuring that they are supported throughout their time in the school. Year Leaders work closely with the Senior Management Team, the Student Support Team and Class Tutors to ensure the wellbeing of the students in their care. The Year Head attends a regular meeting with the Student Support Team to guide the wellbeing of their students.

### **Class Tutor**

Each class has a class tutor. The role of the class tutor is crucial to the successful implementation of the student support system. The work done by class tutors can help ensure that student welfare is looked after, and that good communication is kept up between home and school. The class tutor acts as a filter for students, signposting them to the different support areas of the school, and resolving minor issues in

tandem with students. They create a positive atmosphere in the class every morning during roll call, and keep students informed about the various events and activities taking place in the school.

### **Class Teacher**

Each class teacher is responsible for the wellbeing of students in their class. They adhere to the wellbeing policies of the school, and make referrals using the ladder of referral to ensure students are best served in the school.

### **Child Protection**

The latest child protection procedures came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023, with newer guidelines to be implemented by December 2026. As a result, the school has prepared a comprehensive Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment. This document is prominently displayed in the reception. The Principal is the Designated Liaison person and the Deputy Designated Liaison person is the Deputy Principal. This information is also displayed on the Blackrock ETSS website. The Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment is reviewed annually and is approved by the Board of Management.

### **Student Council**

The school encourage students to play a positive role in the effective running of the school. Blackrock ETSS has a Student Council made up of elected representatives from each year group and special class. They meet regularly and a subcommittee sometimes report to the Board of Management. The Student Council provides a focus for student opinion, to enable their voices to be heard and to be communicated to the staff, management and the BoM. They work to maintain and improve a positive school culture and climate.

### **Junior Cycle Co-Ordinator**

Blackrock ETSS has appointed a Junior Cycle Co-ordinator. The co-ordinator oversees the formal wellbeing programme in the school and supports teachers in their implementation of the Junior Cycle Key Principle of Wellbeing as part of their daily practice.

### **Wellbeing in the Curriculum**

Wellbeing is present in the Junior Cycle Curriculum through the provision of PE, SPHE and CSPE in tandem with Ethical Education. While all teachers in all subjects can support student learning about and for wellbeing, wellbeing is enhanced when it is embedded in the curriculum and visible to students within specific allocated time. For this reason, Blackrock ETSS places a strong emphasis on the role that CSPE, Ethical Education, PE, SPHE and guidance can play in supporting learning about wellbeing and learning for wellbeing.

The students also learn the behaviour and skills necessary to be a good digital citizen and to safeguard their digital wellbeing. By examining the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) students will learn what is correct and proper behaviour when using iPads, Office 365 resources, and when online. The school's Digital Learning Team advises the Wellbeing Team on digital wellbeing factors

Senior cycle students also have wellbeing classes embedded in the curriculum. All senior years have PE classes, Guidance, Ethical Education, and SPHE classes. In Transition Year the students will engage in a broad range of activities designed to support wellbeing and to foster further self-awareness and responsibility. These activities include; careers, first aid and RSE.

In line with guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Skills, the school has allocated 400 hours of wellbeing related learning at Junior Cycle, mandatory SPHE classes in Transition Year, and has assigned SPHE time at Leaving Cert.

Subject	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Total hours
SPHE	1	1	1	100 Hrs
CSPE	1	1	1	100 Hrs
PE	2	2	2	200 Hrs
Ethical Education	1	1	1	100 Hrs
<b>Total Wellbeing hours over 33.4 weeks x 3 yrs =</b>				<b>500 Hours</b>

Subject	TY	5 <sup>th</sup> Year	6 <sup>th</sup> Year	Total hours
SPHE	1	1	1	100 Hrs
Career Guidance	1	1	1	100 Hrs
PE	2*	1	1	133 Hrs
Ethical Education	1	1	1	100 Hrs
<b>Total Wellbeing hours over 33.4 weeks x 3 yrs =</b>				<b>433 Hours</b>

### Staff Wellbeing

Staff wellbeing is formally supported through the various policies and procedures which govern the employment of staff in the school – e.g. Staff Handbook, Dignity in the Workplace Charter, Harassment and Bullying Policies, etc. Employees may also avail of the Employee Assistance Service.

Blackrock ETSS has appointed Droichead supervisors to work with Newly Qualified Teachers to ensure that they feel supported and connected and understand the ethos of the school. NQTs are mentored on a formal basis through the Droichead programme, and through frequent meetings with the Senior Management Team through a comprehensive *Induction Programme*.

The role of the Staff Social Committee is both social and personal. They organise social events during the year for staff and celebrate occasions such as births and marriages and remember staff when there is an illness or a bereavement. The Staff Social Committee makes reports to the Senior Management Team to maintain a positive culture in the school.

### Extra-Curricular Sports and Activities Programme

Blackrock ETSS has an extensive range of extra-curricular sports and activities that take place after school on Wednesdays and during lunchtimes on other days. They include; drama, soccer, GAA, basketball, chess, debating, art, green schools and more.

Furthermore, throughout the course of the year, the school organises, in tandem with the Wellbeing Team and Student Council, many co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to offer experiential learning and to support student wellbeing. These include, and are not limited to, *September Adventure Day* activities for all year groups, trips to museums and galleries, a comprehensive TY activities programme, trips to theatres, etc.

### Thematic Weeks

Blackrock ETSS hosts a number of Thematic Weeks geared towards experiential learning and bringing the learning outside of the four walls of the classroom. These weeks see activities take place for students both inside and outside the classroom, and often adopt a key focus on wellbeing to support learning. Though each Thematic Week aims to support wellbeing in the school (e.g. Seachtain na Gaeilge hosting a céilí to improve physical wellbeing and enhance relationships), some key Thematic Weeks are dedicated to

cultivating student wellbeing. These include, but are not limited to, Diversity Week, Active Week, Ethical Education Week, Stand Up! Week, Healthy Eating Week, Active Citizenship Week, etc.

### **Anti-Bullying**

Blackrock ETSS has an antibullying policy, now Bí Cineálta policy, which is reviewed annually. All 1<sup>st</sup> year SPHE teachers deliver an antibullying programme to all first years, with the topic of bullying revisited in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year SPHE. This topic is revisited during the Senior Cycle.

An Anti-Bullying week takes place in the school, with frequent whole-year or whole-school assemblies delivered regarding the topic.

### **Wellbeing Surveys & Amber Lists**

The wellbeing coordinator works with the Student Support Team to survey all years each term to get an overall impression of wellbeing in each year group, and to ascertain if there are any students in distress, or if there are concerns regarding bullying occurring. The results of these surveys form an “Amber List”. The results of this survey inform decisions around, for example, supervision of the school building and grounds, or the need to deliver guidance-related learning or to take proactive actions.

### **Healthy Eating School**

Blackrock ETSS encourages healthy eating. The school hosts a Healthy Eating Week and works with the school community, the Student Council, and Parent Staff Association to ensure that healthy lunches and snacks are brought to school.

### **Green Schools Committee**

The aim of Green Schools is to encourage students to live responsibly and increase their awareness of environmental issues through various means and to transfer this knowledge into positive environmental action in the school and in the wider community. The committee seeks to make cultural change based on education and encouragement.

### **Parent Association (PA)**

Blackrock ETSS has an active PA which provides a forum to represent the views of parents to the Principal and the Board of Management. It also engages with the Student Council, supports the aims and objectives of the school, encourages parent participation in school activities, organises fundraisers, social events and parent evening talks on topical issues. All parents or legal guardians of students attending Blackrock ETSS school are members of the association. The PA committee and PA executive committee are elected, and meet frequently.

### **Physical Environment**

Every effort is made to support student wellbeing through the provision of a comfortable and functional physical environment. Though Blackrock ETSS is located in temporary accommodation, and will continue to be thus for the next few years, the school works tirelessly to resolve any difficulties for students caused by this temporary arrangement. For example, the school has procured use of a local sports complex in which to engage in P.E. lessons, the school has sourced “lunch pods” for students in which to congregate during lunchtimes and offers extra-curricular activities during lunch breaks.

## Links to Other Relevant Policies

A non-exhaustive list of the other policies which incorporate the different dimensions of school wellbeing contains:

- Administration of Medication Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying (Staff) Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Code
- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Bí Cineálta Student-Friendly Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Critical Incident Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy
- Dress Code Policy
- Ethical Education Policy
- Harassment Policy (Staff)
- Health and Safety Policy
- Homework Policy
- Job Share, Secondment, and Career Break Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- SEN Policy
- SPHE RSE Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Tour Policy

## Policy Review and Evaluation

This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management at its meeting on 2nd December 2025. The policy will be reviewed during the academic year 2028-2029, or earlier as required.