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We wanted to ensure that our children and our communities, were physically well and emotionally well and we held that as just as important as academic outcomes.”

• **Key tags** Special school; North East England; founding school; diverse range of children with SEND.

Intent

Durham Trinity Sports College joined Well Schools in 2020 as one of the 33 founding schools, motivated by the opportunity for collaboration with like-minded schools and to share good practice especially in relation to special needs at a national level. They want to be a pioneer in the field and promote mental wellbeing as central to school life. The school is also a sports college and so using physical activity to promote wellbeing and the ethos of Well Schools “was a no brainer really.”

Implementation

Well Led:

The school has undergone a cultural shift in the last five years to recognise the importance of wellbeing along with academic achievement. The senior leadership support each other and the importance of nurturing staff health and wellbeing. Staff wellbeing is an integral aspect of Well Schools, so this is recognised as essential for good teaching and underpins the leadership practice at the school. The senior leadership apply the PACE approach - being **playful, accepting, curious and empathetic** - with pupils as well as the staff to improve engagement and ensure the school is a pleasant place to work and there is a feeling of community.

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We have a good SLT, where there’s four of us in particular who are of a similar mind set and are very supportive of each other.”

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It opens up a network for collaboration and sharing of ideas, people who have, unofficial research, that have just tried things on the ground and things that have worked and things that haven’t worked so it’s time saving and that helps massively.”



Leaders are sensitive to the amount of work that staff do. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and they feel valued by the school leaders. They appreciate the importance that leaders give to their wellbeing."

OFSTED 2020

Well Prepared students:

The school focuses on providing each pupil with positive physical and mental health. They have an outdoor learning programme and provide high quality physical education for the pupils to enable them to support their emotional regulation. They have also adopted Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) to take learning outside of the classroom.

A specialist Yoga programme has seen positive impact on the physical development on the children and *"seen first-hand the impact it has had... some of the children focussing on their breathing which helps them calm down."* A triage system has been put in place so that if there is a concern about a pupil's wellbeing they can provide the necessary support, as well as a three-tier curriculum supporting pre-formal, semi-formal and formal provisions based on the cognitive abilities of the pupils. They are focused preparing the pupils for life after school, so the curriculum is designed to be *"purposeful and attainable and allowing the children to progress around independence and life skills and preparation for work"* to improve their outcomes.

Well Equipped students:

The school are committed to ensuring that their pupils can develop into *"regulated learners"* and have necessary life skills to thrive at school and beyond, *"it's personal development and it's life skills through an exciting curriculum that is creative and hands on and practical"*. They offer transition support, so pupils can come and visit the school, share stories with pictures of staff and the school, and offer a platform where families pupils can be signposted for emotional support.



The skills that young people learn when they're outdoors supports with their regulation, supports with their wellbeing, using the green space and for a lot of our young people, we need to be teaching the curriculum that's relevant."

Impact

Similarly for staff, a focus on workload support and wellbeing surveys has shed light on ways to improve staff wellbeing and led to the formation of a working party to achieve this. This impact is reflected in the Ofsted (2020) report wherein staff said they felt that the leadership cared about their wellbeing.

Well Schools has presented the opportunity for collaboration with other like-minded schools and sharing hands on learning through case studies and practice which they find easier to implement than academic research.



Everybody likes PE one way or another so it's nice if we've got a young person who's presenting as quite challenging and not wanting to be in the classroom to give them the responsibility of working with smaller young people in a PE lesson."