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It was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together, and it is about a school having wellbeing that's at the core and the heart of what we do. It's the golden thread that permeates through the school."

Key tags

Primary school; multi academy trust; West Midlands; ▲ above average number of students eligible for FSM; ▲ above average number of students speaking EAL; ▲ above average number of students registered with SEND.

Intent

The school had been rated as 'requires improvement' by Ofsted, but now has achieved 'good' overall. The changes at the school have been led by a new focus on the wellbeing of both pupils and staff. Joining Well Schools "was like the jigsaw puzzle coming together" - they were already well into their own wellbeing journey when it was introduced and it fitted the school ethos of 'Healthy bodies, healthy minds, promising futures'.

Implementation

Well Led:

Leading by example was important so that teachers believed that the school's "leaders were going to be here for the long haul, stick out the journey, and really believe in it". They created a "shared ownership" between senior leaders and staff on the vision of the school, and recognised "staff coming together and creating that vision as well, meant that everybody played a part, and everybody felt that they had invested in this journey and this process."

Valuing staff's physical wellbeing - an overall focus on physical wellbeing which permeates the curriculum:

- Onsite gym for staff.
- Opportunities within the school day for staff to focus on physical health.
- All staff involved in team teaching PE lessons with support from sports coaches.
- Able to support and lead on different aspects for Well Prepared and Well Equipped pillars, for example by undertaking mental health first aid training, or training as Thrive practitioners.

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The traditional route of just doing English and Maths all day every day hadn't worked, so obviously our research around why it hadn't worked meant that we needed to find another option, and another way was through wellbeing."

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We were on our own journey anyway, this gave me the validation that what I was doing was right."



It was really taking the time to strip it all back and say this is going to be a long process and not a quick fix, because that's not sustainable, we're just going to be papering the cracks [...] It was absolutely pointless to keep having a diet on the timetable of English and Maths in the morning, and then English and Maths again, and interventions in the afternoon."

Well Prepared students:

They realised that many pupils were coming to school hungry and unable to focus on schoolwork: "*having a bit of breakfast, then hitting something like fitness and circuit training [...] really changed the attitudes of the students as the day went on*". They wanted to lay the foundations for a healthy life. In early years the children have around eight hours of physical activity built into their week to encourage them to keep physically active, including access to an outdoor classroom, and making sure pupils have the opportunity to choose the equipment they want to use.

Well Equipped students:

The school run a weekly enrichment programme for pupils to learn other skills outside of the curriculum. This includes activities such as health and beauty, photography, DJ-ing, mountain biking, paddle boarding, darts, gardening and cookery. Pupils choose their top three preferences and are enrolled in one of these programmes for a half term. At the end, pupils must demonstrate an outcome, for example by putting on a performance or an art exhibition. In their most recent Ofsted report they were praised for the strength of its curriculum enrichment programme.

Impact

The decision to focus on wellbeing as the "*golden thread that permeates the school*" received validation - academically results went from the bottom five percent nationally, to top 1%. The school have gone from a "*failing school*" to a school where pupils achieve above the national average. Now rated 'good' by Ofsted, they have won awards for their sports provision, and individuals staff members have also received awards. They have been invited to speak about their approach at conferences, both within the MAT and nationally. The school are keen to build relationships with secondary schools to ensure pupils in Year 6 are able to continue their wellbeing journeys when they move on.



Pupils grow and develop, and leave at the end of Year 6, completely resilient and confident, and ready for Year 7. [Before] they would have been running out of the door, ready to leave because they hated it so much, that's quite hard to quantify, but you can see it and feel it."

