



Supporting the Wellbeing of School Communities as Schools Reopen: Resources September 2020

Supporting the wellbeing of school communities at this time of transition is helped by fostering resilience using five key principles:

- Promoting a **sense of safety** – so that people feel that they are safe, and that those around them are safe
- Promoting a **sense of calm** – so that people feel relaxed, composed and grounded (regulated)
- Promoting a **sense of belonging and connectedness** – so that people experience having meaningful relationships with others who understand and support them
- Promoting a **sense of self-efficacy and community-efficacy** – so that people believe that they can manage and do what is needed, and so can their school community
- Promoting a **sense of hopefulness** – so that people believe that things will work out well

Supporting a successful transition back to what will be our new normal is best achieved when those within the school community feel safe, calm and hopeful, when they feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school community and feel that they can manage with the support of their community.

The foundation for the provision of a continuum of support in schools is the provision of support for school staff wellbeing, and guidance to help school staff to feel confident and equipped to support the wellbeing of their students. The Department has worked closely with its broad range of support services and agencies¹, and with the HSE/HSE-funded services and the Tusla Education Support Service to create an aligned and coherent package of supports and resources to assist schools in this regard. Supports include:

- Short video clips to communicate with students and parents about the return to school with key universal messages.
 - Post Primary Students: [here](#) and [here](#)
 - Primary Students (3rd to 6th): [here](#) and [here](#)
 - Primary Students (J1 to 2nd): [here](#) and [here](#)
 - Parent Advice: [here](#) and [here](#)
- A range of Resources and Support for School Communities developed by NEPS:
 - [Wellbeing Webinars](#) for primary/special/post-primary schools - supporting wellbeing as schools reopen
 - [Wellbeing Toolkits for Schools](#) with a range of easily downloadable, user-friendly materials

¹ The Department's Support Services/Agencies include the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), Centre for School Leadership (CSL), National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).



- Additional guidance for schools, to supplement the Wellbeing Toolkits, [Supporting the Wellbeing of Students with Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) Returning to School](#)
- [Advice and resources for parents, student and school staff](#) to support their wellbeing as they return and settle into school
- Support services will work with schools over the coming academic year in phases as follows:
 - Phase 1: School reopening to Hallowe'en
 - Phase 2: Hallowe'en to end of December 2020
 - Phase 3: January 2021 to end of academic year

Directories and catalogues of online supports to outline available wellbeing CPD and provision for primary, special and post-primary schools and parents during Phase 1 have been developed. This information, which is available [here](#) and will be updated on an ongoing basis, includes:

- Directory of Wellbeing CPD and Support for Schools in Returning and Settling into School for Primary/Special and Post Primary schools
- Directory of Online Support for Schools in Returning and Settling into School for Primary/Special and Post Primary schools
- Directory of Wellbeing Supports & Online Resources for Parents on Returning and Settling into School for Primary/special and Post Primary schools
- There are also links to support for school staff wellbeing provided by:
 - Spectrum Life, the new dedicated employee assistance provider for school staff has developed a range of accessible supports. These include access to a Wellbeing Content Hub, an Employee Assistance Programme and Mental Health Supports and Digital Wellbeing Events. Further details are available [here](#)
 - Professional Development Service for Teachers ([here](#))
 - HSE's Health Promotion Team
 - HSE/HSE-funded service providers - e-mental health services, including free on-line counselling [here](#)

In addition, enhanced services for wellbeing will be provided by NEPS, to include the wellbeing of all of our special school communities. An additional 17 NEPS psychologists are being appointed. In Phase 1 NEPS will be providing a service to all schools with a focus on wellbeing. NEPS psychologists will connect with each school, listen to their needs and engage in initial planning with schools on how best to respond. Furthermore, for our post-primary schools, approximately 120 posts are being provided for guidance to support student wellbeing recognising the particular importance for this support in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic challenges.

Finally, our partners in the HSE and in HSE-funded services such as *Spunout*, *Jigsaw*, *MyMind*, *Childline* and *Turn2Me*, are providing access to e-mental health services, including on-line counselling, if needed. Details of the services being provided are available [here](#).

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