



Health and Wellbeing Assessment Report

St Mary's High School Newry

Project reference: NI 19 00055

Accreditation valid from: 16 May 2019

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Acknowledgements

This assessment was undertaken through consultation and engagement with the Senior Leadership Team of St Mary's High School Newry.

My sincere thanks to Mrs Margot Cosgrove (Principal), Ms Denise Crawley (Vice Principal) and Mr Maurice Fitzpatrick (Senior Teacher) for coordinating and accommodating all aspects of this Health and Wellbeing assessment, including the planning meeting, the desktop research, and the schedule of interviews and observations that took place on Thursday 16th May 2019. Your hospitality and your generosity in giving your time was much appreciated during each visit.

St Mary's High School are thanked for their warm welcome and their flexibility in allowing the assessment to be completed in their school. The openness and generosity of the staff is greatly appreciated, as was their willingness to share their experiences, thoughts and views on both people management and the approach to Health and Wellbeing. This provided a valuable insight and a good understanding of the approach the organisation has taken in formulating its Health and Wellbeing strategy.

The staff of St Mary's High School are inspirational, and it was a genuine pleasure to spend time with them.

Executive Summary

St Mary's High School was assessed for accreditation against the Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Award in May 2019. Having held IIP accreditation for 9 years, 6 of those years at Gold, in the spring of 2019 St Mary's High School opted to assess its Health and Wellbeing strategy, as set out in the School Development Plan 2018-2019, rather than an IIP Insights Review. This is due to (a) cost, with school budgets across Northern Ireland fixed at 2016 levels, and (b) on-going industrial action which potentially could impact on the ability to complete an IIP Online Assessment.

During the planning meeting on Tuesday 7th May 2019, a number of key documents relative to the assessment were identified, including the School Development Plan, School Prospectus, and evidence of activities and contributions to Health & Wellbeing in the school. On Thursday 16th May 2019 a total of 27 people completed focus-group interviews, enabling a comprehensive discussion on Health and Wellbeing activities and capturing a range of qualitative data.

Following a collective examination and consideration of all the evidence, **Investors in People are delighted to accredit St Mary's High School Newry with the IIP Health and Wellbeing Award.**

The approach to 'Leading and inspiring people' is found to be at 'Established' level, with clear, transparent objectives clearly communicated, staff supported by line-managers to perform, and school objectives are achieved. There are excellent levels of planning, stakeholder engagement, evaluation of past performance and adjustment of plans, demonstrating good practice. Staff feel trusted, they trust their leaders, and there is strong motivation to perform at the highest level.

The approach to 'Living the organisation's values and behaviours' reflects the ethos of Catholic education, and St Mary's values and behaviours are explicitly presented in school literature. As a faith-based school St Mary's High School promotes the Catholic faith, whilst accommodating those of different faith and no faith in a spirit of inclusivity and respect. During assessment the school values were consistently cited as being critical and fundamental to the life of the school.

There is strong evidence of collaboration, consultation and involving people in decision-making at all levels, and staff assert they are consistently trusted and empowered. The approach to 'Empowering and involving people' is found to have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing, contributing to reducing stressors in every day work routines. The support of both the School Leadership Team (SLT) and Heads of Departments was cited consistently by teaching staff when investigating this Indicator.

Even though this is the beginning of a journey, St Mary's High School has demonstrated a strong commitment to Health and Wellbeing and has made significant progress in a relatively short period of time. The School Development Plan (SDP) presents achievable objectives and actions relevant to all three themes of the IIP Health and Wellbeing Indicator.

Compelling evidence has been presented to demonstrate progress and implementation of a range of Health and Wellbeing interventions across all three themes of the Health and Wellbeing Indicator into the fabric of the school. Two of three themes are demonstrated at 'Established' level, which is a significant achievement, whilst the third is at 'Developed'.

With ownership of Health and Wellbeing at SLT level, St Mary's is commended in its use of 'committees' to advance initiatives, and this assessment process recognises the significant contribution made by both the Health and Wellbeing committee and the Operation Transformation committee in particular. However, it is also acknowledged that individuals in the school staff are able to progress initiatives outside those committees, for example the PE Department.

Taking into consideration the progress of St Mary's High School, and its plans for future initiatives, some areas for development have been highlighted in this report and are outlined on page 21. These recommendations should be considered within the overall context of the findings of this assessment. Progress will be reviewed at both the 12 and 24-month contact meetings.

Alongside this assessment, St Mary's High School are encouraged to use the IIP sixth generation Framework to support future people management and development activities to assist in achieving and embedding a culture of high performance.

St Mary's High School assessment outcome



Organisational context

St Mary's High School is a maintained, all girls, non selective, all ability 11–19 school for girls in the city of Newry, Co Down. A high performing school, St Mary's was designated in 2009 with specialist status in Mathematics and Business through the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, and is recognised as both an 'Eco School' and a 'Rights Respecting School'. Opened in 1961 the school currently has a staff of 48 and 573 pupils. In the ETI 'Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection' dated January 2019 St Mary's High School found *'The school has an embedded, robust culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. There is an appropriate focus on the development of middle leadership. The evidence provided demonstrates a well-tailored staff development programme with an emphasis on creating a consistent approach to learning and teaching; this has impacted positively on the outcomes the pupils achieve'*. ETI March 2019

The following excerpt from the school website states *'St Mary's is an all ability 11 -19 school that develops the potential and celebrates the achievements of all our pupils. We provide high quality education through a broad and balanced curriculum and our students enjoy a wide range of extra curricular activities. We can offer each pupil the opportunity to realise her full potential and develop self discipline, good interpersonal skills and the spiritual and moral values essential to her spiritual growth. We are very proud of our school, its child centered approach to learning and teaching, its excellent record of academic success and its progressive vision.*

As a Catholic School we promote dignity, self esteem, respect and foster the faith of all pupils. We are an inclusive school, respectful of and engaging with people of all beliefs; we encourage the religious development of all in their own faith. St Mary's a 'Rights Respecting School' creates a very happy and caring environment built on positive relationships between Governors, staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. Through our Specialist Status in Mathematics and Business we have developed strong associations with local and national Business and Financial Institutions. These have many benefits for both our Curriculum and Careers Education Programme'.

Sourced from <https://www.stmarysnewry.com/principals-welcome>

St Mary's achieved IIP recognition on May 2010 and achieved the prestigious award of IIP Gold on it's first review in June 2013. The school decided to withdraw from IIP accreditation in May 2019, and focus on the IIP Health & Wellbeing Award. This is the first assessment against that award.

Strategy

The **school vision** is stated as:

'Our vision is to educate and develop the students in our school to the highest possible standard and as a Catholic School, to awaken them to the challenge of living according to the Catholic Faith whilst also appreciating diversity'.

We acknowledge that Catholic Education:

- Takes place in communities inspired by the Spirit of Christ. Christ's commandment to love God and neighbour inspires a caring ethos which is expressed in relationships within and beyond Catholic schools

- Promotes the dignity, self esteem and full development of each person who is made in God's image and uniquely loved by God
- Is inclusive. It is respectful of, and engages with people of all beliefs: it encourages the development of all in their own faith
- Is rooted in the Gospel values of Respect for Life, Love, Solidarity, Truth and Justice: it aims to harmonise faith and culture, build a better society and pursue the Common Good

Organisational Ambition

'We will work in collaboration with stakeholders to promote the Psychological, Social and Physical wellbeing of all staff through a supportive and inclusive culture to maximise their full potential'

Assessment Approach

Following the initial planning meeting with key senior leadership team members, St Mary's High School was assessed using standard IIP methodology.

There are 48 members of teaching staff and support staff. Interviews (Focus groups) were carried out with 27 members of staff, from all functions and levels, selected purposively because they were ideally placed to discuss IIP and Health and Wellbeing related issues. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Respondents were willing to share and discuss their experiences and discuss the Health and Wellbeing journey of St Mary's.

Detailed Assessment Outcome

This section provides a detailed analysis of St Mary's High School's assessment against the first three Indicators of the IIP framework (Leadership Principle), and the three themes of the Health and Wellbeing Indicator. The table in Annex 1 shows the assessed maturity level for the 9 themes within the Leadership Principle.

Leading

Creating purpose in a changing environment, whilst motivating through change, have become essential skills for many roles. High performing organisations foster leadership skills at every level of the organisation to deliver outstanding results. Clarity of vision and purpose and how well leaders in the organisation inspire employees to perform are central to this principle, and all three Indicators contribute significantly to creating a culture which will enable health and wellbeing to flourish.

Indicator 1: Leading and Inspiring People

Creating transparency and trust

St Mary's High School will be abbreviated to St Mary's from this point forward.

St Mary's **School Development Plan of 2017-2020** (SDP) explicitly clarifies the school's purpose (Vision and Mission) and objectives (Strategic Aims, Objectives and Evidence). The plan is developed through a tried and tested process of consultation and contributions from Staff, Governors, Parents and Pupils. The current SDP has a specific Health and Wellbeing objective (2E), which is reproduced in Annex 2. The planning process is inclusive and consultative with a wide range of stakeholders, and there are clear examples of contributions made by teachers and support staff, allowing staff and other stakeholders to have tangible input into what is included in the SDP.

"Everyone must play a consultative role"

"It's very important to have an open dialogue"

"The views of staff every year feed into whole school improvement"

Heads of Department and Post Holders (middle managers), along with their departmental teams create plans commensurate with the SDP. Continuous iterations and reviews are required to ensure alignment with the requirements of key stakeholders such as Examination Boards and the Education Authority (EA). Communications are continuous, an ongoing narrative, with the SDP central to the school's service delivery. Review and evaluation is an organic activity with formal checkpoints to gather data and measure performance, and departments presenting to the Principle and Vice Principle. At the end of each year, all staff take part in an operational review designed to contribute to continuous improvement.

"It is good to have an open dialogue"

"The views of staff every year feed into whole school improvement"

Teachers and classroom assistants are informed and involved in all aspects of school life. It is evident St Mary's demonstrate good levels of trust between leaders and people. Staff consistently feel they are trusted and valued by the Principal and her SLT, and their personal

behaviour and commitment is demonstrated by staff making reasonable concessions to current industrial action, to ensure the school continues to perform, whilst the parameters of the industrial action is respected by the SLT.

Motivating people to Delivery the organisation's objectives

St Mary's staff engage in the development of teaching plans and action plans designed to contribute to achieving school Strategic Aims. Line management is embedded within subject departments or specialisms, and staff naturally support each other and work together to achieve objectives. Heads of Department collaborate with colleagues within their department, including technicians and where appropriate, classroom assistants, to focus on and to achieve high performance. This facilitates high levels of personal motivation, driven by a personal desire to see pupils excel – as stated in the school motto, '*Optimum Semper Facere*' (Always to do one's best).

St Mary's has a very supportive culture, and people are supported to deliver. There are many anecdotes of teachers sharing practice, utilising the exposure to modern approaches by new teachers, whilst also ensuring new teachers have sufficient support in developing plans, and accessing departmental resources. Staff support each other, ensuring classes are covered, enabling colleagues to attend family events and appointments, especially around Christmas and exam periods. St Mary's demonstrates a strong culture of flexibility. The SLT make themselves accessible and approachable, and actively support their colleagues, giving generously of their time and experience.

"I have never gone to Margo or Denise and they have said 'could you come back later'. They are always available, they set the tone"

"Much of the culture is down to the leadership of Margo and her leadership team over the last ten years"

The St Mary's team are passionate about the performance of their pupils, and St Mary's are out-performing similar schools and increasingly as a first choice for year 8 girls in Newry city, competing favourably with local Grammar Schools. The findings of the ETI demonstrates the commitment to performance: *The outstanding results achieved by the pupils in public examinations at Key Stage 4 have been sustained. At GCSE, nearly all of the pupils attain five or more examinations at GCSE or equivalent level at grades A*-C; the majority of the pupils attain five or more GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics. The attainment at GCSE is consistently well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools in the same free schools meals band. At post-16 the majority of pupils attain 3 A level grades or equivalent at grades A*-C; this is well above the NI average for similar schools in the same free schools meals band.* ETI March 2019

Developing Leadership capability

Leadership and management within the school framework is clearly defined, and the school has experienced staff in both SLT and middle manager posts. Those who have attained leadership roles have done so through a prescribed and highly structured pathway. Two teachers in St Mary's have completed their 'Steps into Leadership' programme this year, whilst another is completing a Master's degree in Education, to enable future progression into a senior leadership role. CPD is an ongoing activity for all staff, and whilst not every teacher might choose the leadership pathway, those who do so are facilitated.

"When staff evaluate their action plans, that also ties into their professional development"

There are great examples of leadership within the school at all levels. Post Holders lead, and distribute leadership within their teams. An example is a teacher with experience in higher level apprenticeships, who will present to peers in August to ensure they have enough information in higher level apprenticeships and how they are linked to their subject areas.

Whilst this assessment did not deploy an online assessment (which would have presented a level of quantitative data), it is apparent staff have complete confidence in the SLT and their ability to manage and lead the school. The SLT has an awareness of the need to develop future leaders, and there is confidence there is a lot of talent in the current staff group. It is noted the retiring Principal will be succeeded by the Vice Principal in July 2019, and during assessment, the process for the succeeding Vice Principal was taking place. Middle managers are encouraged to develop with a longer-term view to fill future vacancies emerging in the SLT. People suggest coaching and mentoring the SLT is highly effective in developing staff across the school.

As a result of St Mary's approach to the leadership, inspiration and motivation of people to deliver against objectives, in a culture of openness and trust, positive outcomes can be clearly evidenced. All three themes for this Indicator are found to be at Established level, that is, they are *'engaging and activating'*, and there is a strong likelihood in a full Insights Assessment, corroborated by results from an Online Assessment, evidence can be found to support Advanced level – *'creating positive outcomes'*. St Mary's are commended for a strong performance in this Indicator.

Links to Health and Wellbeing:

- The approach to Health & Wellbeing is led by the SLT, who have enabled a culture of trust, and make themselves accessible and available to their staff, helping to reduce stress and anxiety through good leadership and management techniques, making a significant contribution to improving psychological wellbeing
- Health & Wellbeing approach is given prominence within the strategic planning of the school and has been highlighted as a key objective in the current and in the future SDP
- The use of committees for both Health and Wellbeing and Operation Transformation enables leadership for specific aspects of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Trust, motivation, inspiration and confidence in leadership is consistently evidenced across the school

Performance Level Achieved: Established.

Indicator 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours

Operating in line with the values

School values are explicitly expressed, reflecting the values of Catholic Education, as

- *Takes place in communities inspired by the Spirit of Christ. Christ's commandment to love God and neighbour inspires a caring ethos which is expressed in relationships within and beyond Catholic schools*
- *Promotes the dignity, self esteem and full development of each person who is made in God's image and uniquely loved by God*

- *Is inclusive. It is respectful of, and engages with people of all beliefs: it encourages the development of all in their own faith*
- *Is rooted in the Gospel values of Respect for Life, Love, Solidarity, Truth and Justice: it aims to harmonise faith and culture, build a better society and pursue the Common Good*

Values are clearly and consistently applied in the management style demonstrated by SLT. Christian faith and values are important to the school, and in an increasingly secular society are viewed as a grounding for staff and pupils alike. School assembly is described by staff as ‘critical’ in starting each day. Staff cite finding spiritual and physical strength and support in attending a special Mass. The Christian ethos establishes strong values of respect, love, solidarity, truth and justice, dignity, self-respect, inclusiveness, and the development of all in their own faith.

The outworking of the values is that staff are consistently managed, led and developed in line with the school values. Staff identify with a leadership team who are receptive, visual, approachable and empathetic, and describe a culture where the SLT take a personal interest in their staff, interested in what is happening in their lives as much as what is happening in school. There are powerful anecdotes of support for members of staff experiencing personal trauma in their private lives (not included in this report).

“When you walk in through the door of our school, you know you are going to be supported, you are going to be included”

“There is a sense of community being together in Chapel”

“The prayer each morning in Assembly grounds you for the day”

Adopting the values

The examples of the provision of pastoral care is a clear indication that people have an understanding of school values, and being personally motivated to behave in line with those values.

“Cleaners and canteen staff talk about ‘our school’. They take a pride in their job”

During interviews it became apparent that the levels of personal motivation is inspirational. There is genuine warmth and enthusiasm, not just for pupils, but for colleagues within the school family. What really comes across is a culture of consistent, supportive behaviour, making St Mary’s an enjoyable place to work, were staff are naturally motivated to perform at their best. It was said more than once, that the positive culture of the school comes from the SLT, in particular the Principal and Vice Principal, and supports an environment that genuinely cares for people’s Health and Wellbeing.

Other examples cite the flexible approach to facilitating time off for child-care events, medical appointments, or emerging family crisis. Staff are cognisant this might necessitate additional cover, but they are never made to feel that they are inconveniencing the school, but rather that their needs come first.

Inclusion is a value which staff often refer to, and whilst St Mary’s promotes Catholic worship, the school welcomes and includes staff and pupils from other faiths, and of no faith. Interviewees cited examples of inclusion, some of which were very personal (not included in this report). However, one well known example is of a retirement function for two colleagues in 2018, one a teacher, one a classroom assistant. Both were equally celebrated, and the function made no differentiation between either in terms of recognition.

“We ‘walk the walk’ in terms of diversity and inclusion”

“A school is made up of many people doing different things, and they need to feel that they are valued and included ”

“It is about a sense of inclusion, no matter who you are”

“You are made to feel included”

Living the values

School values are clearly and consistently demonstrated by staff at all levels. There is an understanding that many children attending the school come from challenging family circumstances, and school provides a source of stability in their lives. ‘Promoting Equality and Inclusion’ is a Strategic Aim within the school and is applied to staff, as well as the student population. Whilst predominantly one faith, there is a diversity of faiths amongst staff and pupils, and whilst one faith ethos is promoted, those of a different faith are accommodated without feeling marginalised or vulnerable. What comes across is a clear commitment to each other.

“Mutual respect is very much at the heart of the school”

“There is little or no conflict, there is this communication going on, there are no secrets”

Mutual support, pastoral care, both formal and informal, levels of trust and care, are all evident with staff, with some very emotive examples presented in interviews. Living the values is to be found at every level of school life and was demonstrated in every interview. St Mary’s demonstrates it is on the road to achieving Advanced or High Performing on all three themes of this Indicator. The organisational culture is built around the school values, and the approach is consistent throughout the school.

Values are both internal and externally facing. They take the school ‘to market’, and this is evidenced with a growing reputation as a ‘school of choice’ school, demonstrated by healthy Year 8 intakes, year on year. Values are a valuable internal tool when integrated into people management practices such as recruitment, managing performance, learning and development, continuous improvement, reward and recognition, and discipline, and the evidence gained in this assessment would indicate St Mary’s have placed its values at the heart of everything it does.

St Mary’s demonstrate all three themes in this Indicator at Established, and it is very likely that a more focussed (Insights) assessment, with the support of an online assessment would uncover evidence to demonstrate all three themes are either Advanced or High Performing.

Links to Health and Wellbeing:

- The positive school culture is tangible, it can be felt, and is openly discussed by staff.
- The accessibility of senior staff, and the support given to colleagues at all levels across the school has a positive impact.

Performance Level Achieved: Established.

Action Points to support the Organisational Ambition:

Review evaluation processes to capture how **values** create positive outcomes, or show embeddedness and continuous improvement. This will enable values to be linked directly to other people management practices. This can be achieved using short pulse surveys, and can be linked to your Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Indicator 3: Empowering and involving people

Empowering People

Knowledge and information is the currency of schools, and staff in St Mary's engage in information sharing and knowledge transfer continuously. Staff meet both formally and informally, share teaching aids, support each other in developing resources, and collaborate to improve and refine pedagogical approaches.

Monitoring and evaluation processes have been developed to ensure standards are maintained, and staff are encouraged to identify, share and develop best practices. Staff work mostly, though not exclusively within subject departments and have freedom to develop resources and materials.

"The guidance is there but you have complete freedom"

Meeting structures include whole school staff meetings, department meetings, small group meetings and one-to-one meetings, and St Mary's is commended for maintaining a good level of communication and meetings within the confines of industrial action.

"We have departmental meetings every three weeks or so, any ideas you want to bring forward you can"

Within the school structure leadership roles (Post Holders) have been widely distributed amongst staff covering subject departments, year groups, functions and co-curricular activities. There is strong evidence of distributed leadership within both the school and departments. During interviews members of staff gave examples of being encouraged to take the lead.

"I am happy that someone takes responsibility, and if they make a mistake they learn from it and move on"

Participating and collaborating

St Mary's demonstrates itself to be resilient to the change that influences school provision, for example change of criteria by Examination Boards. These externally driven changes impact on staff, and are managed through a process of consultation with the people involved. By necessity departments meet regularly, involving the whole team through a collective approach. The SLT are cognisant of the pressures on staff's time, and with on-going industrial action which limits opportunities for meetings to take place after school hours.

The approach to active participation and collaboration facilitates staff to participate in all the decisions that affect them, to take ownership and responsibility, and to bring about changes that have an impact on school performance. Interviews with staff demonstrate they consistently believe their contribution to the school makes a difference.

There is very much a sharing of responsibility"

"You get a list of what needs to be done and you have the freedom to get on and get it done"

The culture of St Mary's is such that everyone feels involved, everyone is involved in problem-solving and decision-making, and people cite examples of how their individual contribution makes a difference. Some of those examples include working with peers in other schools to share practice and resources.

Making decisions

Staff know they are trusted by the SLT, and the SLT places significant trust in their staff. Teaching staff and support staff are empowered to have appropriate levels of decision making, whilst all staff have explicit understanding of their responsibilities, and who they report to by way of line management.

There are good examples of leaders involving colleagues in decision-making, such as when an Examination Board introduces a new specification. This typically involves the entire department that is affected, both teachers and technicians. There are examples of the Principal and Vice Principal meeting with post-holders to ensure they are fully supported in making their decisions for the following term/year.

“Discussions take place with all 17 pastoral leaders”

The SLT promote an environment where people are enabled to make their own decisions, rather than making decisions for them. The school has a ‘trusted colleague network’ which enables staff to consult, collaborate or support each other. New staff are supported by the Vice Principal, and benefit from formal and informal coaching from both the SLT and post holders.

Overall, St Mary’s is found to be a school that makes determined efforts to share information across all departments and teams. School leaders make themselves visible and approachable, and operate an open door policy which is used extensively. Staff are generous with their time and their resources. This creates a very healthy culture.

Observations, Strengths and Measures:

St Mary’s facilitates and expects staff to take on responsibility and ownership in a culture of trust and empowerment, and make individual decisions, or make decisions as part of a team. There is no differentiation between permanent and temporary, experienced or new staff. Participation and collaboration is very strong.

All three themes for this Indicator are found to be at Established – they are embedded and activating, and with an online assessment to corroborate the findings. It is very likely that in a more in-depth assessment, all three themes could be evidenced at either Advanced or High Performing, presenting evidence of creating positive outcomes or embeddedness.

Links to Health and Wellbeing:

- People have sufficient knowledge and information made available to them
- People feel trusted and empowered. They are not micro-managed
- Collaboration is part of the school culture. It happens organically and is at the heart of decision making
- The SLT support empowering and involving staff
- Staff are involved in managing the changes that will impact on their roles and responsibilities

Performance Level Achieved: Established.

Action Points to support the Organisational Ambition:

Achieving Advanced or High Performance in the Empowering and involving people Indicator is within St Mary’s High School’s reach, and progress can be evidenced through evaluation of how well people and teams collaborate across the school. This is linked to Health &

Wellbeing as it impacts on people's social wellbeing in the workplace. Identify ways to evaluate the impact of simple measures such as the communication of information, the meetings structure etc and how they enable people to develop good social practices and relationships. This can be achieved using short pulse surveys, and can be linked to your Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Health and Wellbeing Indicator

Background to the Health and Wellbeing approach

St Mary's is commended for the level of detail presented during this Health and Wellbeing assessment. A body of evidence including a number of activities was presented prior to assessment, providing an overview of how St Mary's is implementing its Health and Wellbeing strategy.

In September 2018 St Mary's established a Health and Wellbeing committee, and during this assessment it was very useful to meet with them collectively and discuss how their current strategy is being implemented.

It is noted in the **School Development Plan 2017-2020**, that Health and Wellbeing is a area identified under the Key Priority Leading Learning, and is monitored and reviewed each year. Part of that review included a consultation where feedback was elicited from staff and stakeholders. The full strategic objective for Health and Wellbeing is presented in **Annex 2: Arrangements for Managing Attendance and Promotion of Health and Well Being of Staff** (Page 25-26). St Mary's are commended for the high level of staff engagement that takes place as part of the evaluation of the SDP, and as part of the future planning process.

This consideration of the work St Mary's has accomplished sets the scene for an assessment against the three themes of the IIP Health and Wellbeing Indicator. Physical, psychological and social wellbeing are the building blocks towards achieving sustainable performance. Assessment against these three themes provides a comprehensive review of how embedded wellbeing practices are within the organisation.

Physical wellbeing

St Mary's demonstrates a positive approach towards physical wellbeing amongst the staff group. The school sports-hall facilities are utilised by staff at lunch times, as long as staff have received an induction to use the equipment from the PE staff. The PE department has been quite influential in putting on physical activities, running programmes, such as HIT programmes on Friday afternoons between 3pm–3:45pm. This has enabled some of the novice staff to build their confidence and participation is across the entire staff group.

“The fact that the staff are now using the gym is excellent”

“It wasn't just the teaching staff, for example we had some of the girls from the canteen coming across to the HIT sessions”

Not all physical activities are gymnasium-based, and evidence was presented of the following activities taking place in this school year:

- Pilates
- Yoga (led by Art teacher)
- Badminton
- Cycle to work
- Lunchtime walking

One of the interesting initiatives is known as ‘Operation Transformation’, ran by a committee of teaching and support staff to enable, in a competitive environment, individuals to improve their health and lose weight whilst at the same time raising funds for school charitable causes. With a weekly weigh-in, staff pay £1 for every lb they lose, and pay £2 for every lb they gain. The staff raised a total of £537 in an eight-week period, and staff were involved across the school.

“It was very inclusive, it was a great way of trying to get everyone together”

The current initiative for Operation Transformation requires people to work in teams of four over a six-week period, with a challenge to walk, cycle, swim or row at least one mile each week, to see who has travelled furthest on a map of Ireland. Participants use a fit-bit or smartphone app to measure their progress. There will be a prize for the team that collectively loses the most weight at both the half-way mark and the end of the six weeks. Looking to the future, the committee have decided to rename Operation Transformation to ‘Operation Motivation’.

Some of the physical health initiatives are around diet and nutrition. St Mary’s operates a ‘water-only’ policy, avoiding sugary drinks, and many of the staff carry water bottles with them between classes. There is free fruit provided for pupils and staff. Colleagues are sharing nutritious recipes. On Thursdays, tasty, healthy sandwiches are ordered in for staff at lunchtime and provided in the staff room.

“Staff are now sharing healthy recipes with each other in the staff room”

The Parent Teachers Friends Association (PTFA) arrange for the Cancer bus to visit the school, and it is hoped this will be utilised more often.

It is clear St Mary’s has made a real effort to improve the physical wellbeing of its staff, and have been able to make great strides by utilising existing facilities and harnessing the internal expertise and skills of staff.

Even though the action plan has been in place for a short period of time, evidence very much points to this theme taking place at ‘Established’ level – that is, it is ‘*Engaging and activating*’ people.

Action Points to support the Organisational Ambition:

- St Mary’s High School are encouraged to utilise the resources of ‘Health Matters’ to put in place a three-year strategy addressing Health and Wellbeing, funded by the Public Health Agency
- Explore the opportunities to offer people tailored programmes commensurate with individual needs and health plans across the organisation. This is a progressive step from where you currently sit on the theme ‘Supporting physical wellbeing’
- Explore opportunities to extend the range of agencies attending the school who can provide health checks. For example it is possible Health Matters, or Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke can provide a suitable clinic which supports that already being provided by the ‘Big Bus’

- Explore how the school PE Department might be utilised to increase the opportunity for staff to avail of facilities, either self-supervised or under supervision
- Explore how other School Departments might contribute in providing presentations or workshops in Inset days, such as Home Economics (nutrition, diet, hydration, mood food etc),
- Explore how those who are currently not motivated to participate might be reached by activities that interest them.

Psychological wellbeing

This assessment takes cognisance of the levels of stress that teaching staff are currently exposed to, brought about by pressures from the external environment directly impacting on school life. The absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and an Education Minister, the impact on the EA's inability to award updated school budgets, and by extension, the increase in workload, class sizes, the amount of marking, and the change of exam specifications all are potential stressors for teachers and the wider school community. During interviews, staff suggest the levels and layers of accountability forced upon the school from external agencies contribute to stress.

Cognisant of these pressures, St Mary's has put some interventions in place to help staff deal with stress and mental health issues:

- With staff engaging in training to help pupils, such as 'resilience training', they are also able to transfer some of that skill to their teaching and support colleagues. The programme includes:
 - Managing reactions from the person's 'downstairs brain' to their 'upstairs brain'.
 - Elements of mindfulness
 - Doing things, you enjoy doing
 - Engaging in reflection practice
- Hopeful Minds, programme, presented to Y8 pupils. Ten members of staff also took part and found it very useful, including all the Year Heads, as a pastoral team.
- Suicide awareness training – 'Loving life', which was delivered quite powerfully to all students, enabling staff to attend as well
- Yoga – allowing staff to focus on themselves and to engage in meditation
- Access to confidential telephone helpline – Inspire Workplaces
- Relaxation and visualisation

"As staff we are a very close community. We are very tight, we are aware of each other's strengths, but also each other's challenges"

"You definitely come out of yoga feeling a bit lighter, a bit less stressed"

"In terms of stress there is a relationship with staff that you can go to any of them"

Some of the simple interventions staff can access include:

- An authentic 'open door' policy with any member of the SLT,
- A personal appointment with the Principal or Vice Principal
- Confidentiality in all matters
- Bereavement and carers leave
- Access to mental health support services
- Peer support and trusted colleagues.

Some very personal examples were surfaced during conversations with staff, and whilst not reflected in this report, clearly demonstrate St Mary's is a school that doesn't just 'talk the talk', but genuinely offers quality levels of empathetic and sympathetic support to staff during times of personal crisis. The SLT are commended for their personal and professional approach to supporting the psychological wellbeing of their teams.

This also raises a key consideration for SLT members. Whilst they can mutually support each other to an extent, it is important to remember they also need opportunities to seek support for their own psychological wellbeing. There is a significant risk they may take on too great a burden of responsibility.

All school Staff have access to the Inspire Helpline. www.inspirewellbeing.org

On consideration of all of the evidence presented, this theme is taking place at 'Developed' level – that is, it is *'In place and understood'*.

Action Points to support the Organisational Ambition:

- It might be possible to build relationships with other specialist organisations such as Action Mental Health, or there may be other opportunities that exist within the Education framework
- Signposting can take place in creative ways – such as an opening screen saver on computers when powering up, as well as posters and leaflets which are bespoke to St Mary's High School
- The provision of Mental Health First Aiders from the staff group is a practical step in providing a level of trained people who are available to their peers
- Benchmarking with similar schools might provide opportunities for collaboration or the sharing of good practice, or possibly the sharing of resources

Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing underpins both physical and psychological wellbeing, and St Mary's demonstrates itself to be a workplace with a very social culture. People describe the staffroom as a social place, staff mingle, and whilst there are natural groups of friends, people outside those groups are not excluded. During interviews staff talked about the friendships they have formed in school which have developed into private life. St Mary's has a history of social cohesion, with staff fondly recalling a trip to Rome to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary, which really cemented life-long friendships.

Nights out, such as going to the cinema, or out for a meal are arranged and people are free to choose to attend or not. Staff credit the SLT with creating a social culture in the school, making themselves accessible and personable, able to join in with celebrations, or have a conversation where you know they genuinely care.

Examples include:

- Christmas games, dinner and quiz for staff
- A Mass and dinner to celebrate the retirement of the Principal
- Annual day out at the end of the term, for example to Belfast, commencing with brunch and returning to Newry for dinner
- Every Christmas and Easter, the Principal and Vice Principal leave small bottles of wine, or Easter eggs in each staff pigeon hole
- Team-building days
- World book day with each member of staff dressing up

“It was fun, and a strong competitive edge comes out with some people”

“If there was someone retiring we will talk to them and ask what they would like to do”

One of the striking things about St Mary’s is that former staff members return each year to take part in staff trips and functions, and are included in the wider St Mary’s family.

“I think it’s great that they are involved, they are still part of the St Mary’s family”

An engaged and inclusive staff room is important, and this is a place where staff meet and congregate every day. St Mary’s has made deliberate attempts to encourage staff to come to the staff room at break time, and interact with their colleagues, including providing a new boiler and providing free milk for staff.

“Some of this comes from our staff satisfaction survey a couple of years ago, when it became apparent staff were not using the staff room”

We now have a lovely, welcoming staff room, so much so that student teachers always comment on it in their feedback”

It is important to acknowledge the role of faith as a social aspect of St Mary’s, and whilst not all staff are of the Catholic faith, there is an inclusive approach that brings people together in the act of congregational worship, which takes place prior to each term commencing.

“We always have a staff Mass in those first couple of days”

Some suggestions that have been made by staff and are in implementation or consideration include:

- Suggestion box in the staff room
- Book club/film club
- Fitbit club
- Theatre nights in Armagh, Dublin or Belfast.
- After school ‘fun classes’ – Pilates, dance, cookery, learn a language, make up and beauty
- People trained in certain skills offering ‘taster sessions’
- Newsletter (monthly)
- Lunch and learn – talks at lunchtime
- Discounts off treatments/pampering (Canal Court Hotel)
- Talks on style/fashion/dress to impress

- Trips to Ulster Rugby/Belfast Giants
- Trip to Christmas market in Belfast
- Christmas quiz and dinner

It is apparent St Mary's has a sociable team of people who work well together and take steps to enjoy activities that bring them together.

This theme is found to be at **Established** level – '*Engaging and activating*' people.

St Mary's High School are to be congratulated for implementing their Health and Wellbeing approach and presenting strong evidence.

Action Points to support the Organisational Ambition:

1. Continue to develop the culture where people feel more comfortable talking about personal issues without risk of embarrassment. This is a progressive step from where you currently sit on the theme 'Supporting social wellbeing'.
2. You have subject experts who you can draw on (if they are willing) to provide additional activities which will impact on social relationships, and by extension, contribute to both physical and psychological wellbeing, for example utilising the music department to develop a staff choir, or the drama department to utilise a staff drama group.
3. Consider using part of an pre-term (August) planning day to provide 'taster' sessions of a range of health and wellbeing activities. One Northern Ireland school have done this successfully, utilising a 'working group' drawn from a range of staff and departments, and two ex-pupils. Their activities included:
 - Pilates
 - Staff Singalong (Music Department)
 - Painting for fun (Art Department)
 - Fitness/circuits (PE Department)
 - Dress to impress
 - Five-a-side football (PE Department)
 - Card-making and crafting (Staff member)
 - Nature walk in the grounds of the school (Staff member)

Implications and Recommendations

The following recommendations for the leadership team are based on the professional judgement and assessment of St Mary's High School undertaken by Andy Galloway.

A number of action points have been identified to support the continued development of The St Mary's achieve its ambition **'To engage in a process of affirmation and external review to ensure St Mary's has a contented staff who feel they are valued and appreciated, and are empowered to deliver the best outcomes for pupils'**.

The intention is not to highlight what might be interpreted as 'weaknesses', but rather to identify opportunities that enable St Mary's to continuously improve its people management practices and retain its status as a 'high performing organisation'.

The following recommendations are made to enhance the process of implementing the Health and Wellbeing strategy, and are based on the assessment findings. It is suggested the action points are prioritised over the three-year period of accreditation. These will be revisited at the 12-month and 24-month review. Building on the good practice already in place consideration should be given to the following:

Living the organisation's values and behaviours

1. Review evaluation processes to capture how values create positive outcomes, or show embeddedness and continuous improvement. This will enable values to be linked directly to other people management practices. This can be achieved using short pulse surveys, and can be linked to your Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Empowering and involving people

2. Achieving Advanced or High Performance in the Empowering and involving people Indicator is within St Mary's High School's reach, and progress can be evidenced through evaluation of how well people and teams collaborate across the school. This is linked to Health & Wellbeing as it impacts on people's social wellbeing in the workplace. Identify ways to evaluate the impact of simple measures such as the communication of information, the meetings structure etc and how they enable people to develop good social practices and relationships. This can be achieved using short pulse surveys, and can be linked to your Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Health & Wellbeing

Physical Wellbeing

3. St Mary's High School are encouraged to utilise the resources of 'Health Matters' to put in place a three-year strategy addressing Health and Wellbeing, funded by the Public Health Agency
4. Explore the opportunities to offer people tailored programmes commensurate with individual needs and health plans across the organisation. This is a progressive step from where you currently sit on the theme 'Supporting physical wellbeing'
5. Explore opportunities to extend the range of agencies attending the school who can provide health checks. For example it is possible Health Matters, or Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke can provide a suitable clinic which supports that already being provided by the 'Big Bus'

6. Explore how the school PE Department might be utilised to increase the opportunity for staff to avail of facilities, either self-supervised or under supervision
7. Explore how other School Departments might contribute in providing presentations or workshops in Inset days, such as Home Economics (nutrition, diet, hydration, mood food etc)
8. Explore how those who are currently not motivated to participate might be reached by activities that interest them.

Psychological Wellbeing

9. It might be possible to build relationships with other specialist organisations such as Action Mental Health, or there may be other opportunities that exist within the Education framework
10. Signposting can take place in creative ways – such as an opening screen saver on computers when powering up, as well as posters and leaflets which are bespoke to St Mary's High School
11. The provision of Mental Health First Aiders from the staff group is a practical step in providing a level of trained people who are available to their peers
12. Benchmarking with similar schools might provide opportunities for collaboration or the sharing of good practice, or possibly the sharing of resources

Social Wellbeing

13. Continue to develop the culture where people feel more comfortable talking about personal issues without risk of embarrassment. This is a progressive step from where you currently sit on the theme 'Supporting social wellbeing'.
14. You have subject experts who you can draw on (if they are willing) to provide additional activities which will impact on social relationships, and by extension, contribute to both physical and psychological wellbeing, for example utilising the music department to develop a staff choir, or the drama department to utilise a staff drama group.
15. Consider using part of an Inset day to provide 'taster' sessions of a range of health and wellbeing activities. One Northern Ireland school has done this successfully, utilising a 'working group' drawn from a range of staff and departments, and two ex-pupils. Their activities included:
 - Beginner Pilates
 - Staff Singalong (Music Department)
 - Painting for fun (Art Department)
 - Fitness/circuits (PE Department)
 - Dress to impress
 - Five-a-side football (PE Department)
 - Card-making and crafting (Staff member)
 - Nature walk (Staff member)

Next Steps and Key Dates

St Mary's High School Accreditation date	St Mary's High School 12-Month Review	St Mary's High School 24-Month Review	St Mary's High School Accreditation Expiry
16 th May 2019	16 th May 2020	16 th May 2021	16 th May 2022

Formal Feedback will be presented on a mutually agreed date in June 2019.

Annex 1: Assessment outcome table

St Mary's High School 's final outcome against 9 themes of the Leading Principal, and against the 3 themes of the Health & Wellbeing Indicator		Developed	Established	Advanced	High Performing
1. Leading and inspiring people	Creating transparency and trust				
	Motivating people to deliver the organisation's objectives				
	Developing leadership capability				
2. Living the organisation's values and behaviours	Operating in line with the values				
	Adopting the values				
	Living the values				
3. Empowering and involving people	Empowering people				
	Participating and collaborating				
	Making decisions				
Health and Wellbeing	Supporting physical wellbeing				
	Supporting psychological wellbeing				
	Supporting social wellbeing				

Annex 2: Arrangements for Managing Attendance and Promotion of Health and Well Being of Staff

The Governors have adopted the CCMS and EA Attendance Policies and procedures are followed in relation to all staff.

The vision for the Health and Well Being of staff is to create a safe and supportive environment for staff in which they are valued as individuals, supported in maintaining good health and treated with dignity and respect. This will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the work of teachers and result in positive outcomes for pupils. We work to develop terms and conditions in school that demonstrate a supportive culture valuing staff, prioritising their health and wellbeing and reducing as far as possible levels of work related stress. We foster innovative partnerships with educational agencies, Public Health Sector and CCMS to examine ways of working together to support the health and wellbeing of all staff. Current good practice includes involvement of the EA and CCMS Staff Welfare Service, External Counselling Services, Flexible Working Arrangements, Staff INSET promoting Good Health/Work Life Balance.

Evaluation:

- We are fully committed to promoting the health and well-being of all staff. (*'Policies such as equality and diversity, recruitment and selection and addressing work life balance are robust'* **IIP Report April 2016**, *'Personal Health and well-being issues are a priority in this school'* **RRS Report Dec 2016**, *'Staff spoken to during review indicated enthusiastically that they feel valued and personally motivated working in the school. It is apparent St Mary's enjoys a very positive, rewarding work environment'* **IIP Report April 2016**,
- Principal, Vice Principal and SLT promote an ethos of care for staff and offer support in time of personal challenge. (*The Senior Leadership Team (SLT has a clear strategic vision for the school and provides outstanding, transformational leadership'* **ETI Inspection Report Oct 2015**
- Staff have access to EA and CCMS Welfare Service (Care Call).
- The teaching staff annual absence rate in 2016-2017 was 7.5% which is below the regional average of 9.8%.
- Staff benefit from flexible working arrangements in agreement with the Governors. (*'People work closely with the SLT and are on personal terms with all of their colleagues including the Principal and Vice Principal. This enables a relationship where people are supported, their pastoral and professional needs are met and there is equality of opportunity'* **IIP Report April 2016**
- The school environment both inside the building and the outside grounds are maintained to the highest standards. (*'A pastoral and welcoming atmosphere permeates throughout the school'* **Welcoming School Oct 2013**
- Staff work in a bright welcoming school which is well resourced. Refurbishments in recent years include: Teaching and Non-Teaching Staffrooms, the library and many classrooms. (*90% of staff were very satisfied/satisfied with levels of job satisfaction, 92% of staff strongly agreed/agreed that there is good communication in the school*).
- *'An outstanding forward thinking school, child centred and creative'* **Staff Satisfaction Survey June 2016)**

Evidence:

- Staff Satisfaction Survey (June 2016)
- SLT and Staff Challenges and Opportunities (June 2017)
- IIP Gold Report (April 2016)
- Rights Respecting Schools Report (Dec 2016)
- ETI Inspection Report (Oct 2015)
- Welcoming Schools Report (Oct 2013)
- ECO Ambassador School Award (Sept 2017)
- Staff Development Days – Team Building, Health and Wellbeing Days
- PTFA Workshops

- Staff Communication – Bulletins, Meetings, Fronter, Website, Emails and School App
- Staff applications for Careers Breaks and Variation in Contracts
- Staff uptake in Continuing Professional Development (particularly Leadership and Development)
- Staff Retention and Recruitment
- Staff opportunity for promotion
- Management of the Staff Attendance Policy and Return to Work Meetings
- Timetabled Department and Pastoral Team Meetings
- Invitation to comment on personal wellbeing through Biennial meeting with Principal, Staff satisfaction Survey and Challenges and Opportunities Survey

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