

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
School address and postcode:	Portman Road, Ipswich IP1 2AX
School telephone:	01473251614
School website:	Home St Matthew's Church of England Primary School (stmatthewsprimary.co.uk)
Head teacher:	Darren Gates
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WAS coordinator:	Darren Gates
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Award verifier:	Jackie Lamb
Award adviser (if applicable):	N/A
Date of verification:	25 th November 2021

Commentary on the evidence provided:

St Matthews's Church of England School is an outstanding school in terms of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH).

EWMH is an integral part of the school and its ethos. The current head teacher took over the headship of the school in 2019 and despite the pandemic the school has remained focussed on EWMH and has cared for all its stakeholders.

The portfolio of evidence was extremely organised, abundant, clear, and relevant. It reflected the excellent work being carried out by all the staff under the strong and caring leadership of the head teacher. During the school visit it was clear that staff, pupils, governors, and families all value the school's focus on the EWMH of the whole community.

The head teacher, staff, governors, parents, and pupils, who provided evidence for the verification, demonstrated an impressive understanding of the EWMH needs of all their peers, colleagues and families, the wider community and indeed the whole world! There is evidence throughout the school and in the portfolio that EWMH is about the *whole* person and their connection to the school and wider community, enabling empowerment and supporting resilience.

Strengths identified during verification:

The school's vision and value statement, describes fully what the school believes in, and it is evident that this is put into action every day. EWMH permeates everything they do at St Matthew's school. The approach to EWMH is proactive and embedded in all areas of the school. EWMH are strategically evidenced in the school's development plan and policies and there is a real sense of all the staff working as a team.

EWMH is not an 'add on' at this school, it is part of school life, learning, and it goes beyond the school gates. The pupils talked about being supported by staff and caring for each other and all human beings, not just within school. One pupil in year 3 commented on how everyone needs to stop the bullying throughout the world! A parent shared how her son gave the family's fruit, which they had just purchased, to a homeless person sitting on the pavement, because he had been studying 'the Good Samaritan' at school. The head teacher and family support advisor have supported families with many different aspects of their lives, all of which, impact on the EWMH of the children and the community, for example: delivering food parcels, providing school uniforms, helping with the 'right to remain' for some European families, the list is endless.

Staff, parents, governors, and pupils, all praised the school and the ways in which it supports the positive EWMH of everyone and has systems in place when individuals need help. The whole school community is regularly consulted on their views and are encouraged to share them and seek help when required.

Parents reported that they felt that their children were physically and psychologically safe at school. They praised all the staff and particularly the head teacher. They were keen to tell me that the head teacher is at the school gate at the start and end of the school day, come rain or shine, and this added to their sense of wellbeing and knowing their children are cared for. Staff could not praise the leadership of the school highly enough. Staff said their EWMH is well looked after and that they felt 'known', never judged, valued, and encouraged. The staff at the school rarely move on to work at other schools, some members of staff have returned after leaving to work at other schools, and pupils often return to the school (when qualified and for work experience): a testament to the caring ethos and leadership of the school.

The pupils are well informed about EWMH and actively involved with all areas of school life. From the pupil questionnaires and talking to pupils, it is evident that they feel empowered and that their voice is heard.

There is evidence of joint working with a wide range of external agencies and other schools as well as involvement in wider initiatives in Ipswich. Strategically, within the school, the work, and initiatives already in place are continually being scrutinized and analyzed, ensuring continued progression in all areas of EWMH.

Even during a pandemic, the school has managed to continue with some enrichment activities for the pupils and link with the wider community.

Areas for development:

The School identified the following in terms of future development:

The reintroduction of Playleaders when it is possible. St Margaret's school in Ipswich were considering a similar approach, so it may be useful to link with them with regards to this.

The following publication may also be useful:

<https://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/sites/default/files/Playleaders%20-%20improving%20primary%20school%20playtimes%20through%20peer%20support.pdf>

Consider the role of Y6 pupils as mentors/mediators for younger children.

Consider expanding the role of 'restorative justice' within the school.

Continue to embed and improve all the current EWMH initiatives and work within the school.

Other ideas:

Pupils from Y6 said that they have 'bonding time' with pupils that they have fallen out with, and it really works. Other pupils suggested this could work for all KS2 classes.

The pupils I spoke to, raised the idea of a 'safe place' or 'chillout space' within the school. (Due to the size of the school, this would obviously be difficult, but might be possible with some imaginative thinking. E.g., is there a space under the stairs or a large cupboard that could be adapted? I have seen a 'chill out' space in another school, which was under the stairs, with a couple of bean bags, some fairy lights, stress balls and colouring equipment. – just an idea!)

Verifier recommendation:

I am delighted to recommend that this school be awarded the Wellbeing Award for Schools for a period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

Wellbeing has long been a priority at St Matthew's Church of England Primary School. However, the process of applying for this award has helped us evaluate, reflect and improve the way we support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils, parents and staff. The verification visit itself was a very positive experience, helping us all appreciate what goes on in the school. It was reassuring to receive praise from an independent source with considerable experience and expertise.

We look forward to continuing the wellbeing journey and will be looking at ways to implement the agreed future actions.

May we use your comment for website/marketing purposes? **Yes**