Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	Salendine Nook High School
School address and postcode:	New Hey Road, Salendine Nook, Huddersfield, HD3 4GN
School telephone:	01484 657541
School website:	https://snhs.kirklees.sch.uk/
Head teacher:	Mrs Jenny Hornsby
Head teacher's email:	JH@snhs.uk
WAS coordinator:	Mrs Sam Johnson
WAS coordinator's email:	sj@snhs.uk
Award verifier:	John Rees
Award adviser (if applicable):	
Date of verification:	Thursday 3rd April 2025

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The school has engaged very positively with the Wellbeing Award for Schools, and although they have not uploaded much information onto the dashboard, a wealth of evidence is stored on their shared drives.

Staff, students, and members of the governing body enthusiastically triangulated all this evidence and more. The governing body and senior leadership team, under the leadership of the former principal, Mr Christian, and more recently, Mrs Hornsby, have worked hard to create and sustain a culture where the well-being of staff is prioritised so that they, in turn, can optimise their support for students.

Staff are trusted and encouraged to be autonomous professionals, working collectively for the benefit of children and young people, which, as the school website suggests, places a great emphasis on relationships and well-being so that the school can provide a first-class education to their student students so that all can achieve their unique potential.

The evidence collected stretches over an 18-month period. Under Mrs Johnson's dedicated and focused leadership, the change team, which has included representatives from every aspect of the school community, has provided an excellent range of very sound evidence to support their WAS, which meets all the KPIs to an excellent standard.

© Copyright Optimus Education 2018

Mrs Johnson has done an excellent job leading and supporting the development of well-being across the school and has quietly consolidated existing and developing new approaches to well-being.

The school was already meeting many of the expectations before embarking on the WAS journey but has used the letter and spirit of the award to consolidate some excellent practice and act as a catalyst to develop new foci for staff and students throughout the curriculum and beyond, and into the wider school community.

The evidence provided, almost inevitably, does not fully represent all the excellent work that so many people throughout the school have contributed towards. There is a sense that the snowball is gathering increasing momentum as the importance of well-being is highlighted throughout and across the school. As the school has recently converted to become an academy trust with other schools, this provides an excellent opportunity to disseminate this excellent practice more widely.

The evidence and supporting narrative demonstrate that promoting the well-being of students and the adults who work with and for them is being refined and improved very effectively.

Strengths identified during verification:

The wellbeing of staff and students is so thoroughly embedded within and throughout the school, it is hard to identify particular highlights. That said, there is a tremendous amount of excellent work being done to promote the well-being of staff so that they are even better equipped to support students.

This has been a conscious, strategic approach by members of the governing body, including senior leaders, and has resulted in improved student attendance and academic results, and improvements in staff wellbeing, which will, no doubt, be reflected in recruitment and retention.

The students spoke so very well, with insight and maturity. They were accredited to themselves, their families and the school. They were emphatic that "The school does LOADS [student emphasis] of things to support well-being." They valued the one-to-one mentoring, collective approaches and opportunities for drop-ins.

Students also recognised the strength and importance of the Philosophy, Morals, and Ethics (PME) curriculum, which meets and exceeds the statutory expectations of relationships and sex and health education. They particularly valued the work the school does to address any homophobic comments and to ensure equity between different members of the school community.

They described the importance of healthy eating, how the toilets are not locked, and that measures have been put in place to reduce potential disruption. They described the importance of restorative meetings when students fall out *"They are never not fair".*

Although they acknowledged that bullying happens sometimes, "*The school deals with it very effectively."* Students also valued the emphasis on being an 'upstander' to prevent bullying and unkind behaviour and the lessons to address violence against girls and young women and online bullying in both ICT and PME.

The staff were equally passionate about the practical plans and ethos created by senior leaders, including the governing body. This starts with a comprehensive induction package emphasising the importance of relationships and staff well-being.

The change team has been particularly effective as a result of engaging with the WAS process. It has developed staff well-being ambassadors and created opportunities for 'supervision' for staff dealing with the most vulnerable students. Staff also value the BUPA cover and Vivup app, which provides

© Copyright Optimus Education 2018

employee benefits for a range of purchases. As one member of staff reported, “The support I received was exemplary.”

Staff also value the honesty and transparency of school leaders when they have approached SLT with requests for improvement. This clearly demonstrates that a culture of well-being is embedded throughout the school.

This is exemplified by the school's investment in a parent support worker who had been engaged through the local authority. When changes in policy threatened this provision, the school stepped in to fund this important post. An investment that can now be disseminated throughout the Trust.

Impact:

Although the change team and SLT have planned for some measurable improvements as a result of the range of initiatives developed as part of the WAS process, they also recognise that some ‘softer’ targets, which are less easy to quantify, are also indicative of positive change.

There has been a significant and overwhelmingly positive response to parental and staff surveys, which have helped identify gaps in the provision of wellbeing resources. This is typified by the open and transparent communication between the recommendations of the change team and senior leaders, which has already led to changes in staff structure and will result in some additional staff training next term to raise awareness about mental health and emotional well-being for adults and young people.

Staff have a very strong sense of engagement with a shared set of values, which has been augmented by a gradual but persistent adaptation to the curriculum, which has provided greater depth, to which students have responded very positively.

All members of the school community recognise and appreciate the gradual but significant change in culture, where well-being is now an essential component of all aspects of school life. The increased recognition of the importance of well-being has resulted in improved attendance by students and the positive recruitment and retention of staff. In their recent report (January 2025) Ofsted noted students' excellent behaviour, that low-level disruption is rare, and that staff take time to build positive relationships with students, which is a conspicuous strength of the school.

Students recognise and appreciate the importance of this level of staff commitment to wellbeing, which has made the school such a better place. Students report feeling even better supported, partly by consolidating some of the more formalised structures, but also a general sense of opportunity, feeling safe, and opportunities to recognise and celebrate different aspects of personal development. As one student commented: *“The staff always put you before themselves.”* And *“it’s like a second family, they* [the staff] *are always there for you even when you can’t be there for yourself.”*

Parents and members of the governing body also recognise and appreciate how the positive change in the school's ethos has supported the well-being of young people and adults alike. Parents endorse the school’s ambition to develop student resilience and increasingly engage parents as partners to support the learning and life chances of children and young people.

There is an excellent range of extracurricular activities for students but also opportunities for staff to engage with yoga, swimming, the Monday raffle and opportunities for ‘flexi-periods’.

Working as part of the change team to meet the WAS requirements has changed some aspects of staff engagement. There is a very strong sense of mutual support, with a focus on improving opportunities for students.

© Copyright Optimus Education 2018

The school has made a significant investment to support some of the most vulnerable students – a rising tide that will lift all boats.

School leaders have been very considered in the development of a variety of more formal structures to support well-being but also to recognise that 'one size does not fit all' and create a variety of opportunities for students and staff alike.

Areas for development:

As noted above, the school was a standalone academy until a matter of days ago but has now become part of a small but growing Trust that is due to expand over the coming months.

School leaders will inevitably focus on developing and disseminating some of the excellent work noted here, and priorities will, no doubt, evolve.

Plans are already in hand to provide a range of CPD to improve the social and emotional/mental health outreach offer.

The school already invests in Leeds City Council's " My Health, My School" survey. The data should be used to identify students' PSHE needs, which should then inform adaptations to the provision of RSHE through the PME curriculum. If this is revisited in future years, it should provide evidence of impact and could also be used to generate positive social norms to influence and endorse healthy behaviours.

The school should also consider ways to develop staff understanding of 'trauma-informed approaches' to learning and teaching, which would benefit all members of the school community.

The school is also working hard to ensure that support staff, including catering and cleaning staff, are recognised and engaged as members of the school community, even if external agencies employ them.

Verifier recommendation:

There is no doubt that Salendine Nook is a very special place. Staff have provided strong models of resilience to which students can aspire. There is a strong sense that although the WAS has provided a framework for school improvement, this is also an almost inevitable incremental stage on an exciting but carefully planned journey, which is now reaping its rewards.

School leaders have created a vision and ethos for academic success and physical and emotional well-being for all members of the school community. This is now being actively supported by staff at all levels and by students who are increasingly confident, articulate, and appreciative of the opportunities provided for them and are capitalising on an increasing range of opportunities both within and outside the classroom.

The school has long been outward-looking and is now engaging with new academy partners, a process which is set to continue and expand over the next 10 months. Similarly, the school has always enjoyed good academic results which, no doubt, will be sustained but has become increasingly confident in its values and vision and now has, at its heart, the well-being of students and adults.

I have no hesitation in recommending Salendine Nook for the Well-being Award for Schools and wish them every success in the future.

© Copyright Optimus Education 2018

Head teacher comments:

We are delighted with the outcome of this report and it superbly reflects the culture we have all been working to establish over the past few years. The awarding visit by John was professional, challenging and supportive.
Whilst he challenged us to evidence our thoughts, he also allowed staff and students involved in the process the opportunity to have their voice heard about what it feels like to be part of our school.
The report has given our school community something to really celebrate.

May we use your comment for website/marketing purposes? **Yes / No** (please delete)

© Copyright Optimus Education 2018