



Re: Pilot Programme of Counselling and Wellbeing/Mental Health Supports in Primary Schools

22 June 2023

Dear Principal

The Department of Education is committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing of our children, and believes that this is key to helping them to be happy in their lives and to reach their full potential. The Minister for Education, Norma Foley, TD, has announced the establishment of a programme of counselling and wellbeing/mental health supports to be piloted in a number of primary schools from September 2023. The pilot is designed to recognise the impact of Covid-19 on primary school-aged children and will work to mitigate the mental health challenges, which may be experienced in schools. The Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will assist in the delivery of this pilot. The pilot has two strands and we are delighted to advise that your school along with a number of primary schools in Cork, Dublin 7, Dublin 16 and Carlow will be included in Strand 2 of the pilot, which will commence in September 2023.

Strand 2 will see the establishment of a new type of support for clusters of primary schools in your area from Education Wellbeing/Mental Health Teams. This Strand will also see the introduction of Education Wellbeing/Mental Health Practitioners, who will work under the direction and supervision of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The focus of the support to be provided is on strengthening whole school preventative approaches. This includes the provision of psycho-education support for parents and teachers, and the provision of early intervention to groups of children or individual children with mild/emerging need, using low-level therapeutically-informed approaches.

The programme is not a substitute for services provided by HSE Primary Care Psychology and/or CAMHS. It is also not intended to replace the work that is currently provided by school staff to promote the wellbeing of children and young people. It is intended to supplement these services and provide mental health and wellbeing support for children in primary schools. The operation of the pilot programme is for the school year 2023/24 only. The Department will provide more detailed information on the operation of the pilot in your school. The Department is looking forward to supporting the selected schools in this new and exciting initiative.

Yours sincerely

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