schools, as recommended in the Action Plan on Bullying (2013).

The key elements of the new procedures are

- A requirement on boards to adopt and implement revised Anti-Bullying Procedures. A template policy is available in the procedures, and schools are advised to use this in revising their policy, to ensure consistency with the guidance and direction set out in the document. Schools are required to have their revised policy in place before Easter 2014.

- A requirement on schools to communicate their policy to the school community, through their website or other appropriate means. A copy must be given to the parents’ association.

- A revised definition of bullying, encompassing cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying is included. The definition emphasises that bullying, by its nature, is repeated over time, and that once off incidents of inappropriate behaviour should be dealt with through the school’s code of behaviour. The importance of a shared understanding of bullying among the whole school community is also highlighted.

- A noting of the increasing prevalence and evolving nature of cyber bullying, and that the impact of this may be felt in school. The role of parents in prevention of cyberbullying is referred to explicitly.

- Identity based bullying, including homophobic bullying is specifically referred to, as is the importance of the prevention of harassment under any of the nine grounds referred to in legislation.

- An emphasis on prevention of bullying through the development of positive school culture which is welcoming of diversity and difference and is based on inclusivity and respect.

- A requirement to set out the school’s procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying, consistent with the DES Procedures, emphasising that the primary aim is to resolve the issues, and if possible restore relationships between the parties involved.

- New provisions for recording bullying, generally where bullying behaviour has not been appropriately addressed within 20 school days.

- A requirement on principals to report on recorded incidents of bullying to the board of management.

The Procedures also include a template policy for schools and a template for recording incidents.

The INTO welcomed the publication of the Procedures, which were drawn up following consultation with the partners in education, pointing out that the Procedures reflect much of the good practice already in place in primary schools. However, concern has been expressed that no budget has been allocated for upskilling teachers in this vital area. The INTO will include a module on the new procedures in the upcoming ‘Leadership in Challenging Times’ seminars for principal teachers. See www.into.ie or page 29 of this InTouch.

If you were to ask parents what they want for their children, the first thing they would say is happiness. Yet, learning about what makes people happy and strategies on enhancing well-being is not yet part of the Irish curriculum.

The Geelong Grammar School in Melbourne made history by creating the first Positive Education School in the world. Their purpose is to use positive psychology, which is a science of wellbeing, to help their 1,500 students flourish. The principal recognised that the journey needs to begin with his faculty members. A year before the change began, he trained all his teachers on how to enhance their own wellbeing, reduce their depressive symptoms, develop resilience in the face of adversity, enhance their positive emotions, physical health and prepare themselves to help their students flourish.

A Positive Education department was created, the aim of which was to manage the change. It incorporated teaching children stand-alone courses on their character strengths, positive relationships, meaning in life, engagement and more. It used the latest science to enhance students’ creativity, problem solving skills, critical thinking and teach them optimism. It also encouraged teachers to incorporate the science of wellbeing in their daily classes. Geography teachers began talking about measuring wellbeing of nations; English teachers discussed King Lear’s character strengths and Gregor Samsa’s resilience; while PE teachers were introducing ‘letting go of grudges’ activities.

To ensure the whole-school approach, parents were given regular talks about evidence-based exercises and activities they can use with their children to improve their mood, wellbeing and school performance.

The outcomes of Positive Education changes in the Geelong Grammar School continues with their record breaking results and improved students’ wellbeing. What changes can we bring into Irish school today to create Positive Education?

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