

## Student Wellbeing and Engagement

### The Thrive Approach

---

Over the past three weeks, staff at Heany Park Primary School have been participating in professional learning about a newly introduced student wellbeing program known as the *Thrive Approach*. The Thrive Approach originates from the UK and was devised by a multi-agency team that have been working with staff in education and care settings since 1994.

#### What is the Thrive Approach?

The Thrive Approach is a developmental approach designed to meet the social and emotional developmental needs of all children and young people. It is informed by established findings in neuroscience; child development theory; attachment theory and research into the importance of play and creativity.

The program helps to support all children in line with age-related expectations, by equipping them to cope more effectively with the challenges they face, so that they can recover from difficulties rather than becoming overwhelmed. It also provides a way of identifying those children who are most vulnerable to stress, and offers practical strategies for working with them in a targeted way to help them cope better.

The model gives educators a framework for understanding what healthy child development looks like in terms of behaviour and learning, and clarifies what the role of adults should be in facilitating a child's development at each of the different phases:

- *Being* (0–6 months)
- *Doing* (6–18 months)
- *Thinking* (18 months – 3 years)
- *Power and Identity* (3–7 years)
- *Skills and Structure* (7–11 years)
- *Interdependence* (11–18 years)

These phases broadly match important developmental changes that are taking place in the brain and body of the growing child. Children's progress through the developmental phases is extremely relevant for schools because it has an impact on children's attainment, as well as on their ability to thrive socially and emotionally during childhood and later life.

Achieving competence in the developmental tasks of each phase sets a child up to be an effective learner and provides them with the relational skills they need to engage with their peers and teachers.

The understanding that children's behaviour represents a form of communication is central to the philosophy that underpins the Thrive Approach. When children or young people present with difficult or concerning behaviour, they are expressing feelings and needs that they are unable to express any other way. This is likely to be because they have not yet developed the capacity to regulate their emotional state effectively or to articulate their feelings and needs.

The five staff professional learning modules that comprise The Thrive Approach are:

1. Introducing the Thrive Approach
2. How Thrive supports children's brain development
3. What children need to support their 'right time' social and emotional development
4. What happens when children's needs are not met and how Thrive can help
5. Embedding Thrive as a whole school approach

The Thrive Approach is a whole school approach, as it supports all students' social and emotional wellbeing. The Thrive-Online tool can help Teachers to assess which children in a class are developing in line with age-related expectations, where there might be some gaps that the whole class can work on together and which children might need some additional, targeted support.

We look forward to providing regular updates on our school's progressive implementation of the Thrive Approach program, in future school newsletters.

Adriana Dickinson  
(Assistant Principal: Student Wellbeing)

