

Hazelbury is an incredible school. I have been overwhelmed by the amount of effort and dedication the Team have invested into the Art of Brilliance and the children's wellbeing as a whole. Sophie Ings has been instrumental in leading the project and her effervescence shines through the school at every turn. Sophie, Kelly Waring and the Team have used the Art of Brilliance concepts and blended them seamlessly with a variety of emotional intelligence and wellbeing programmes to create their very own wellbeing programme. Kelly has recently shared this with other schools in Dorset as an example of excellence. Kelly is passionate about the children's wellbeing and every time she is around the children she shines even brighter. This is not only evident to me, but Hazelbury have also been recognised in the Pearson National Teaching Awards and won 'Primary School of the Year 2024 for Making a Difference'. This is what you first see when you enter the school...



Hazelbury is a place of nurture, encouragement, safety, positivity and joy. The children are at the absolute centre of everything. They are treated and respected as individuals with unique gifts. The children's wellbeing, happiness, care and development are an absolute unshakeable priority.



Hazelbury live by their school values (compassion, courage, resilience and responsibility) and the school moto of 'Have Courage, Grow Roots, Shine Bright!' These values and aspirations are echoed throughout the whole school, brought to life through every staff and student interaction and positively promoted by the whole school community.





From the moment I arrived, it was unquestionably clear that Hazelbury is truly and most certainly a Gold standard **Outstandingly Happy School** – and that's official.



Both Kelly and Sophie demonstrate extraordinary leadership as the schools Headteacher and Assistant Head. They lead with compassion, empathy, positivity and self-reflection. Both Kelly and Sophie say they couldn't do what they do without the support of their amazing team. Hazelbury has an incredibly strong team work ethic where everyone is encouraged to play to their strengths and flourish. The school has also been recognised on a national level for their excellent and nurturing staff wellbeing programme.





The children love their school and are empowered to make choices, find their independence and develop their own voice. When I asked the children what they love about school answers included:

Luissa says 'I love to sing'

Issac says 'I am good at swimming'

Theo says 'I get to play with my friends'

Huw thanks the adults for helping him with his stutter (he shared that in a whole school assembly. A true 2%er!)

Rufus really enjoys the Daily Mile.



The children are encouraged to speak about their feelings often and use the Zones of Regulation. It is reiterated that there are no bad zones. All feelings are welcome and Hazelbury support children in navigating these emotions from Nursery age. The Art of Brilliance concepts have provided a strong framework for emotional regulation.



Sophie has shared an extensive list of evidence to support Hazelbury's journey to Outstandingly Happy School status. I would encourage the school to share this with Parents and Governors. It is a substantial list and testament to Hazelbury's amazing commitment to children's wellbeing. In true Art of Brilliance style, Hazelbury 'Does It Better Than It Has To'. The children of Hazelbury receive unique and diverse opportunities, contributing to a fun, enriching and positive school experience.

The last week of every month is Hazelbury's Wellbeing Week. They have devised a plan devoting time every day to complete a morning task within the themes outlines below, underpinned by key Art of Brilliance concepts:

- Mindful Monday (Calm start)
- Try it Tuesday (Comfort zone)
- Wellbeing Wednesday (Compliments for others)
- Thankful Thursday (Gratitude)
- Feel it Friday (Compliments for myself)
- Share it Saturday (Share happiness with family)



I was lucky enough to be invited back to Hazelbury in the last week of June so I was able to see some of the work. These snakes were created in just one morning in reception. The class loved the activity and not only was it something new for them, but Mrs Gillibrand cleverly wove in scissor skills too!



We believe that the sooner we start talking to our young people about The Art Of Brilliance the better. Hazelbury are nurturing, growing and developing the programme to make it bespoke for their school.

This is no small task, requiring consistency, commitment and passion. Attributes the school have in abundance.

Hazelbury have an Outstandingly Happy School Board which the children contribute to. This is a very well thought-out display and embodies the 2%er ethos of each child and Hazelbury as a whole.





It is evident that the children are flourishing at Hazelbury. I think this quote from Sophie encompasses how:

“Our school prioritises children’s mental health and wellbeing over everything we do. We feel it is vital to ensure children are happy, healthy, brave, courageous, polite, respectful, equal, resilient, positive and kind; who strive to make a difference to others as well as themselves.” Sophie goes on to say “It’s not what we do, it’s who we are. Everything that we do, isn’t because we have to, it’s because that is what we are about and these are things we prioritise on a daily basis.”

From my first visit back in January 2024 I was greeted by the children with smiles, offers of help with my bags or to hold the door and the sharing of exciting things that are happening in the children’s lives. On the very first day I arrived, Logan did a tennis ball demonstration



for the whole group; Charlie showed the group his signature dance move and Huw had an insightful reflection that happiness is different for everyone.

I feel that Hazelbury have created a new narrative based upon positive psychology, emotional intelligence, healthy striving, respect, integrity, kindness, joy and bravery.



Hazelbury give their students a voice. I met the group of Happiness Heros, that are so excited by their role. Within their role they help make people feel better, be kind, keep their eyes open for people who are showing positive behaviours and those who are needing some support. Each week they nominate one person from each class for the Positive Person Award. This person will also be celebrated in the newsletter. Ellie, one of the Happy Heroes said that she would nominate Mrs Ings for the Happy Teacher Award, then suddenly she said, actually all the teachers are really happy! Hazelbury also have a Friendship squad who work alongside the Happiness Heroes and help others. Again, these are two shining examples of Hazelbury living their values.





Not only has the Art of Brilliance had a profound positive impact on the School community, it has rippled out into the wider community. The school newsletter contains positive affirmations and celebrations each week. Further embedded into Hazelbury's DNA is their focus on gratitude, considered on a daily basis. I wanted to highlight this beautiful display.





Special thanks to the entire inspirational team for making amazing things happen.





*Valid until July 2026

Signed:

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