

The glowing duchess: Pregnant Kate can't hide her bump as she welcomes guests to charity event at Kensington Palace

- Pregnant Duchess of Cambridge wore a top by Hobbs to charity event
- Kate is patron of mental and emotional wellbeing charity, Place2Be
- She hosted awards ceremony for 20 finalists

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The Duchess of Cambridge showed off a very visible baby bump as she welcomed guests to Kensington Palace for a reception and awards ceremony on behalf of a mental health charity.

Kate, who is around four months pregnant with her second child, wore a pretty spotted black top by High Street store Hobbs - which has long since sold out - and a skirt by designer Jenny Packham.

She was joined at the Kensington Palace State Apartments by visitors her children's mental health charity Place2Be for their first ever Wellbeing in Schools Awards.

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© REUTERS
The Duchess of Cambridge's baby bump was clear to see as she spoke to children at the charity event at Kensington Palace



Kate Middleton wows in POLKA DOTS at awards for brave children

The Duchess, 32, arrived for the reception at the Queen's Gallery at 6.20pm, leaving her son, Prince George, with his father and nanny next door, and was introduced to Place2Be Chief Executive Benita Refson.

Writing in the event programme, she described the awards as recognition for the 'wonderful' work in children's emotional health.

She wrote: 'The commitment, dedication and hard work that is going in across the schools involved with Place2Be is truly humbling, and to recognise that feels incredibly important.'

She presented the Child Champion Award to 11-year-old Bailey Dunne, from Highfield Community Primary School in Sunderland.



Having a ball: The Duchess shares a joke with some of the guests



Guests of honour: Kate meets some of the children celebrated on the awards night

Accepting the prize, Bailey said the schools-based mental health charity helped him gain confidence and friends.

Highfield also took home the Community award, while its headteacher, Simon Marshall, won the prize for School Leader.

The Staff Member gong went to Ellie Francis, of Trinity St Mary's in Balham, south London, while colleague Veronica McKenna won the Volunteer Councillor award.

Sara Loveday, from Stewards Academy in Harlow, Essex, won the School-Based Clinician award, while Hermoine Alvey, mother of nominee Georgina, from Cotsford School, was recognised in the Parent or Carers Champion category.

Kate and William moved into Kensington Palace a year ago, spending £4.5 million of taxpayers' money on renovations on Apartment 1A, Princess Margaret's former home.

Although guests did not get to see their private home, the State Apartments for public events and entertaining are just a stone's throw from the apartment, meaning the Duchess didn't have far to go for her engagement.



Deserved: Kate gives the Child Champion Award to 11-year-old Bailey Dunne



Organiser Benita Refson asked Murano glassblowing company Seguso to create the awards, which featured a small glass egg leaning against a large glass egg, representing the provision of support to children and young people by the charity



Showing her support: Kate has been a patron of Place2Be since 2013



Night out: Kate was all smiles as she arrived for the Place2Be reception at Kensington Palace

The Duchess, who has been Patron of Place2Be since 2013, was scheduled to meet all 20 awards finalists, including Bailey, who has gone from being a quiet boy to one who shows confidence and determination.

His nominator said: 'Bailey has taught his peers that it is okay to be individual and that you don't always need to follow the crowd to be successful and popular.'

The Duchess also spent time chatting with Bailey's Head Teacher Simon Marshall, who has been working to integrate Place2Be into schools over 14 years and whose inspirational leadership has enthused other Sunderland schools to invest in mental health.

Place2Be Chief Executive Benita Refson said: 'This is a wonderful, exciting opportunity to honour our young people and schools in such a wonderful setting. The Duchess' total and utter belief in what we do and her commitment to children's mental health is incredible.'

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Each award was hand blown in the Seguso furnace on Murano, before being flown to London for the evening where Giampaolo Seguso attended the awards and met with the Duchess of Cambridge, before she presented them.



Making a difference: Kate hears how the charity has helped numerous people

In total, the charity supports 90,000 children in 230 primary and secondary schools in England, Scotland and Wales - some of whom joined the Duchess at Kensington Palace.

Elizabeth Day, head teacher of Oldfield Primary School in Ealing, west London, and nominee in the School Leader category, said: 'Our work has been about intervention and engaging with other members of the community so that everybody can spot where support might be needed.'

'The Duchess is a mother, of course, and I think she really understands the need to help children.'

Georgina Alvey, 11, from Cotsford School in County Durham, was nominated for her work in helping other children benefit from support services.

She said: 'I was going through a difficult time and someone suggested Place2Be.'

'Their help was really important to me. We've now made a DVD about it and taken it in to other schools. I met Kate tonight - she's so beautiful.'

Kate, who is the patron of several charities working to improve the lot of children, has been working with Place2Be since 2013. Other patronages include SportsAid, which saw her step out at a workshop aimed at boosting the chances of young athletes last week.



Polished look: Kate wore elaborate gold drop earrings and her usual smoke eye make-up



The expectant Duchess was her usual engaged and expressive self with people she was talking to



No doubt it's a relief for her to be feeling better now in her second trimester