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Pregnant Duchess of Cambridge hosts charity awards party at her home in Kensington Palace

THE Duchess of Cambridge welcomed guests to her London home tonight to honour children who have overcome difficulties and become shining examples to their peers.

By: Richard Palmer
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Kate, Duchess of Cambridge hosted a party at her home Kensington Palace

Kate, now four months pregnant with her second child, hosted the first ever Wellbeing in Schools Awards for her children's mental health charity Place2Be in the Kensington Palace State Apartments.

She looked the epitome of sophistication in a black Hobbs top and Jenny Packham skirt when she arrived for a reception at the Queen's Gallery.

After the reception, the ceremony began at 7pm in the King's Gallery where Kate was due to present the Child Champion Award to a young person who has overcome their own struggles and gone on to help others.

She and William moved into the palace a year ago, spending £4.5 million of taxpayers' money on renovating Princess Margaret's 21-room former home, Apartment 1A.

But guests tonight did not get to see their private home, remaining in the neighbouring State Apartments, which are used for public events and entertaining.

Kate, who has been Patron of Place2Be since 2013, was scheduled to meet the 20 awards finalists.

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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."

Finalists for the awards include 11-year-old Bailey Dunne from Highfield Community Primary School in Sunderland.

Thanks to Place2Be Bailey has gone from being a quiet boy to one who shows confidence and determination to do well.



He has been invited to speak in assemblies about the importance of young people looking after themselves and now mentors other children in the school. He was awarded Pupil of the Year for overall progress.

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Kate was also scheduled to chat to Bailey's headteacher Simon Marshall, who has been working to integrate Place2Be into schools over 14 years.

His inspirational leadership has enthused other Sunderland schools to invest in mental health.

The charity runs classes in 230 schools across the UK and has supported around 90,000 children.

Kate did not make a speech but wrote a foreword for the awards programme.

She wrote: "As Patron of Place2Be, I have been thrilled to hear about the launch of The Place2Be Wellbeing in Schools Awards.

"It is wonderful that this important area of children's emotional health is being recognised with these inaugural awards.

"The commitment, dedication and hard work that is going on across the schools involved with Place2Be is truly humbling, and to recognise this feels incredibly important."

She continued that the charity helps children cope with "a range of complex issues including bullying, bereavement, domestic violence, family breakdown, parental substance misuse, neglect and trauma".

Kate concluded: "I hope that you all have a wonderful evening here at Kensington Palace and the very best of luck to all the finalists!"

The 32-year-old Duchess presented the final award of the night to 11-year-old Bailey Dunne from Highfield Community Primary School in Sunderland.

He had met Kate earlier at a reception before the awards.

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He said: "I said congratulations on your pregnancy.

"She said thank you very much.

"Because of Place2Be I've found more friends and I've found it much easier in life."

The Duchess also presented a surprise award to Place2Be founder Benita Refson who started the charity in 1984.

The audience was shown moving films which showed why children might need Place2Be and how it has helped them.

The awards themselves, designed by Italian Venice-based Murano glass maker Seguso, featured a small glass egg leaning against a larger egg to represent support parents and teachers can give children.

Kate said she hoped to visit Venice one day.

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