

An emphasis on whole school approaches to wellbeing

There is a clear correlation between wellbeing and learning readiness. The higher a student's wellbeing, the more they will thrive in education.

For all children to benefit long term, sustained, whole-school approaches need to be implemented.

Both children and adults thrive and learn best in a supportive, nurturing environment. This is therefore closely connected with teacher retention issues, and the need to create a space for transformative leadership.

A whole school approach also includes parents/carers and families, creating supportive, emotionally healthy relationships between home and school.

We are calling for whole school approaches to wellbeing

A happy child is a learning child.

The Good Childhood Report states that between 2009-2010 and 2016-2017 there has been a significant decrease in happiness amongst children aged 10-15. [1] These statistics do not bode well for the future, especially if “a happy child is a learning child”. [2] In order to create better prospects for students we need an education system that supports the whole child, one that recognises the reasons for the decrease in wellbeing in young people, (for example worries about having enough money in the future, getting good grades and getting a job) and that addresses them through long-term, sustained whole-school interventions.[3] After all, “emotional health at age 16 (is) a stronger predictor of mental health and life chances at age 30 than either demographic or socio-economic factors”. [4]

What is a whole child approach?

“A whole child approach to education is defined by policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.” [5] However, funding constraints and accountability pressures mean that more and more young people are suffering in schools under a results-driven culture which is affecting emotional and mental health. In the most extreme cases, exam pressures have been found to be a factor in just over a quarter of deaths (27 %) by suicide by children and young people. [6]

We need to focus on the environment in which children are learning - the relationships between the staff and parents, and their peers, and the social and emotional skills that are being modelled on a daily basis.



Pegasus School, Oxford

Pegasus School were early pioneers of the Family Links Schools Nurturing Programme. [Read how they went from being in special measures to a good/ outstanding rating in eight areas using this framework here.](#) [7]

A recent study into school organisational culture found that: ‘resilience is more than an individual trait. It is a capacity which arises through interactions between people within organisational contexts.’ [8]

Cuts to funding for creative arts are incredibly damaging

Numerous studies have shown that taking part in creative arts can boost wellbeing. An inquiry report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing confirmed that art activities with children can improve their cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development and enhance school readiness. [9]

However, art GCSE courses in England have reduced by 28 % since 2010 and there has been a 17 % decline in arts subject teaching time. [10] To tackle the trend of decreased wellbeing amongst children we need to stop cutting back on creative subjects in school and encourage a rounded education.

“At school you’re told exams are everything, but they’re not everything. We still have feelings, but feelings don’t seem to matter anymore. The stress is too much.”

Young person, Anonymous [11]



Whole school approaches to wellbeing.

Frameworks for reference

A number of countries are already focusing on student wellbeing in schools. However, the picture is more fragmented in the UK. [12] In order to improve student outcomes, we need to put wellbeing at the forefront of our education system. Below are some frameworks that can be used to improve the wellbeing of the whole school community: parents and carers, staff and children.

1. A whole school framework for emotional wellbeing and mental health



Schools want to provide effective and enjoyable teaching and learning environments, where children and young people flourish. These depend on good staff and student relationships across the whole school, including with governors, and externally with families, the wider community and other services. This framework provides the tools to help schools think about how they can integrate wellbeing and mental health into their school, benefiting everyone from pupils to teachers.

[Read more here.\[13\]](#)

2. Evidence based advice for promoting wellbeing in schools

This framework covers two overlapping areas of school practice: promoting positive social and emotional wellbeing for all in schools and tackling the mental health problems of pupils in more serious difficulty. It is designed to support schools, in particular, school leaders, in the delivery of their work on these two areas.

[Read more here.\[14\]](#)

3. Spirals of enquiry educators pack



Spirals of Enquiry is a framework for collaborative professional enquiry. It helps teachers to develop a greater understanding of their learners and take evidence-informed action in their own settings.

[Read more here. \[15\]](#)

[Read the case study here. \[16\]](#)

4. Habits of the mind, effective thinking framework

The Habits of Mind are a set of thinking dispositions at the core of social, emotional, and cognitive behaviours. Based on research into and descriptions of the characteristics of effective thinkers and high performers, the framework focuses on the patterns of thought and behaviour individuals must draw upon in order to effectively navigate complex and uncertain situations.

[Read more here. \[17\]](#)