



Supporting Student Wellbeing in Schools

A Toolkit for Educators

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What is student wellbeing?

Wellbeing, by definition, is the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy - in education student wellbeing is fundamental to successful student learning and development. Ensuring students are safe, healthy and are sufficiently educated on how to support and look after their wellbeing is a part of our duty as educators, and the need to educate our students on this is increasingly important given the current state of society. Social media sites add a whole new dimension to student wellbeing what with the increased risk of cyber bullying and the negative impact altered images can have on body image to name just a few of the risks they pose. This combined with the pressures students put on themselves when it comes to school, especially during exam season, means our role in supporting student wellbeing has never been more necessary.

This need for greater care and attention to be paid towards student wellbeing has been embraced on a global scale, yet as always, there is still more that can be done. This guide will provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of student wellbeing in the UK as well as the ways in which schools can begin to support wellbeing or improve on the support they currently provide.



Importance of student wellbeing

As a result of the teaching crisis, education is now fully aware of the consequences that poor teacher wellbeing can have in schools such as lower student attainment and increased spending on supply teachers. Although schools have suffered as a result of this, it has meant that they are now fully aware of just how important wellbeing is and are starting to pay more attention to the wellbeing of students. This was apparent most recently when [Ofsted announced a new framework](#) that will focus more on the way in which subjects are taught, as opposed to just looking at exam results - this new approach means that students and teachers will feel less pressure come exam season.

Inspectors will also take into consideration the steps schools are taking to prevent bullying, a strong contributor to poor student wellbeing and mental health. In addition to this, the Chancellor has allocated [a larger budget for mental health services](#) which includes funding for specialist crisis teams linking schools, social services and young people's mental health services, as well as teams in schools who can support those with mild and moderate mental health problems.

With half of all mental health issues occurring in people [before the age of 14](#), schools play an undeniably important role in student development. This is why, when pupils are in our care, we need to make their wellbeing a priority, look out for warning signs that suggest a mental health problem, and provide them with guidance on how to maintain and look after their own wellbeing.

Poor wellbeing in students can also have detrimental long term effects, with childhood mental health issues being linked to:

- Negative impacts on academic development and employment outcomes
- Long-term mental health issues

It has also been found that students with mental health issues are [less likely to achieve academic qualifications](#) when compared to their peers and are more likely to get excluded or have time off school.

Aside from the consequences poor wellbeing has on students directly, there is also a huge financial strain that is placed on schools and education as a whole:



The NHS estimates mental health problems in children and young people costs the economy, NHS and society [£105 billion a year](#).



[£1778 per person](#), per year, is the estimated cost associated with mental health problems in young people.

What's most shocking about the current state of student wellbeing is that we are in a position where we can help to tackle the mental health issues that are facing students head-on which will, in turn, alleviate some of the financial pressures we are facing. If teachers receive proper training, they'll be able to: identify the signs of mental health issues and offer help early on, provide students with a proper education on what poor wellbeing is and what to look out for, help to breakdown the stigma surrounding mental health, and educate their students on how to seek help when needed.

The state of student wellbeing in UK schools

3 children



in every classroom

have a diagnosable

mental health problem

90%

of **senior leaders** reported an **increase in student anxiety or stress** over the last five years

1/2 of the **mental health issues** we face occur **before the age of 14**



1 IN 12 young people **self-harm**



70% INCREASE in reports of **depression and anxiety in teenagers** over past 25 years

Young people **attending A&E** due to **psychiatric conditions**

DOUBLED

between 2010 and 2015

36% INCREASE

in number of **young people** calling **Childline** about **mental health** in the last four years

Suicide is the most common cause of death **between ages**

5 and 19



The school's role in supporting student wellbeing

The early years of life are instrumental to students' mental and social development, and schools have a pivotal role to play here considering a child spends over [7800 hours in school](#) and during this time they are under our duty of care.

When parents identify their child's wellbeing as a cause for concern, often their first port of call is the school. Parents believe that teachers are in a position whereby they can offer them advice and guidance on what to do if their child is experiencing feelings of poor wellbeing. These beliefs are based on the amount of time teachers spend with children in comparison to other adults - parents believe teachers would be able to offer insight into behavioural changes, and may have had previous experience dealing with students who have experienced similar issues before.

This assumption on behalf of parents confirms that teachers are in a position where they should be able to provide adequate support to students when it comes to wellbeing issues. This is further cemented by the fact that teachers may be a direct witness to/have control over some of the things that could impact student wellbeing eg. exam stress, bullying, friendships etc.



Therefore, not only do schools play an important role in helping to support parents when they come to them with concerns surrounding their child's wellbeing, but also that their support extends into identifying poor wellbeing in students. This includes recognising the warning signs of poor wellbeing and implementing preventative measures that can help to reduce the risk of students experiencing this.

Preventative measures and support that schools can offer students includes providing them with relevant information surrounding wellbeing - including what it is and why it's important. By making this information readily available, we're helping to remove the stigma surrounding mental health whilst providing students with information on what to do if they, or someone they know, are experiencing feelings of low wellbeing. This information may include who they can talk to, and reassurance that such feelings are normal. Initiatives emphasising the importance of student wellbeing have already been supported by the Government and Ofsted, but ultimately it is individual schools who are responsible for how well they support student wellbeing and the steps they must take to tackle the problem head-on.

Areas within school this can be addressed

PSHE

When it comes to student safety, health and wellbeing - PSHE is at the core of this. The subject is hugely important having overwhelmingly positive results on student outcomes both non-academically and academically. At present, PSHE is a non-statutory subject within the UK curriculum for state schools and academies, although this is set to change by 2020, whereby the [majority of all topics](#) covered in PSHE will be compulsory.

This change shows how we, as a society, are shifting and recognising the importance of teaching students on subject matters that aren't necessarily academic, but are educational and necessary for later life. As well as this, the DfE recognises it as a crucial part of the curriculum, claiming it to be an important part of a child's education.

At present, the onus is on schools as to how valuable PSHE lessons are - it is up to them to design their own PSHE programme and subsequently the content that is covered within these lessons. Therefore, it is your responsibility to ensure lessons are provided regularly and the content covered is rich, informative, relevant and engaging. Health education which covers physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing and recognises that good physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked, will become compulsory by 2020. However, until that point, it is within our students' best interest to cover these topics in your current PSHE lessons and ensure that they are educated on how best to look after their own wellbeing.

PSHE is an opportunity to not only teach students about their mental health and wellbeing, but to provide them with the skills, understanding and confidence they need to seek support when needed, for themselves and others. It should also give them a clear understanding of when to seek help, what help is available and the outcomes of doing so.

Educating students on their own wellbeing also helps with safeguarding as it teaches them how to keep themselves healthy and safe both mentally and physically. In addition to this, teaching students about mental wellbeing helps to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and can encourage students to speak up about their troubles and ultimately get help.

Teaching students about mental health and wellbeing can be daunting as sensitive topics will inevitably be addressed and we don't know how students are going to react. In order to ensure that students get the most out of the lesson, the conversation remains constructive and that the lesson is truly valuable, we've outlined some key areas to consider when covering this topic:

Guidance for teaching mental health and wellbeing in the classroom

Encourage openness

When discussing mental health and wellbeing in class, ask students to be as open and honest as possible but ensure they don't disclose any names or descriptions that are personal to anyone, and no one should share their own personal issues with the class.

For example, encourage students to share experiences in the following manner: "I have heard some people struggle with/talk about/express feelings off" and "Based on conversations I've had I thought/I assumed"

Trust

Students need to feel safe when discussing sensitive issues such as wellbeing and mental health. Ensure they understand you will not repeat anything discussed in the classroom unless you believe a child to be at risk.

Don't judge

Regardless of the views your students have in class and if they're confused, misunderstood or conflicting, ensure they don't judge or ridicule one another. Instead, operate an approach where students are allowed to challenge opinions and express their different beliefs.

Offer optional participation

Although participation is strongly encouraged, remind students that they have the choice to not take part in activities or discussions, especially if this makes them uncomfortable for any reason.

Have an open mind

Neither you nor your students should make assumptions about people's opinions or beliefs.

Listen carefully

Some of the topics broached in class may be upsetting or spark a reaction and students may disagree with one another. If this does happen, remind students to always hear people out and listen attentively to one another.

Be wary of language

There are a lot of derogatory terms that can be used when discussing mental health, as well as terminology being used to trivialise it. Encourage students to be mindful of this and ensure you're aware of the language you're using.

Encourage questions

Reiterate to students that there is no such thing as a stupid question, and encourage them to share their thoughts. However, it is important to also remind the class to not ask questions that are meant to deliberately embarrass others. Consider adding an anonymous question box to your classroom for those students who may not feel comfortable asking questions in front of the entire class.

How to ask for help

Provide students with the knowledge they need to seek help and reassure them that they should do this if they ever have any concerns about themselves or a friend.



Bullying

One clear area in which schools can help to address and reduce the instances of poor mental health and wellbeing in students is through their behaviour policy. Having a strict behaviour policy that operates zero tolerance to bullying can help encourage positive wellbeing in students.

The impact of bullying on [student mental health](#) can be severe, with studies finding that bullying causes an array of mental health issues such as [anxiety, depression and low-self esteem](#), all of which have a direct negative impact on wellbeing and can even continue into students' adult life.

Behaviour policies are a requirement for all schools in the UK and including explicit reference to bullying is standard procedure. Schools can help protect students' wellbeing by enforcing a behaviour policy which has a no-nonsense approach to bullying and ensures that this is upheld throughout the entire school.

Educating students on the impact bullying can have on another person, as well as reminding them of the consequences that they will face if they do bully another student, will help to reduce the number of incidents of bullying and in turn protect students against the negative effect this can have on their wellbeing.



School Behaviour Policy Checklist

The purpose of a behaviour policy is to outline the types of behaviour your school expects all stakeholders to exhibit and adhere to. Having a clear, well-communicated and easy to understand behaviour policy helps to foster a positive school environment where learners feel safe and can flourish.

This checklist has been created following guidelines provided by the DfE regarding behaviour and discipline in schools and includes the key areas you should factor in when writing a school behaviour policy.

Before checking or creating your school's policy, it is first important to familiarise yourself with the laws surrounding behaviour policies to ensure yours is up to standard, includes the relevant information and is communicated appropriately:

Maintained schools

In accordance with the law, a school's behaviour policy should promote good behaviour in all students, prevent bullying, ensure students remain on task and it should encourage these behaviours as a standard, as well as instil self-discipline and respect.

When schools are deciding on what to include within their policy, they must take into account the governing body's statement of behaviour principles and regard any guidance provided by them on screening and searching students, disciplining students outside of the school gate, use of reasonable force and associated physical contact, the pastoral care for those accused of misconduct and when is appropriate to work with external agencies for those students who are continuously disruptive.

It is the responsibility of the headteacher to decide on the standard of behaviour that is expected by students at their school. They must determine these school rules alongside any penalties that will incur for breaking the rules. The headteacher must also decide on the standard of behaviour expected by pupils, as well as consequences and processes for breaking rules outlined in the policy, which must include explicit reference to teachers' power to discipline pupils when they are outside of school and not under the supervision of a staff member.

The school's behaviour policy should be made public to all stakeholders, in writing, at least once every year, as well as displayed on the school's website. In circumstances where a school does not have a website, it is the responsibility of the governing body to make the behaviour policy available on a website and make the website address and details known to the parents.

Academy schools

For academies, they too are required to write up an effective behaviour policy which promotes good behaviour and ensure it is implemented. It must include explicit reference to consequences and actions taken against students when they misbehave, as well as include an anti-bullying strategy which should be effectively implemented.



Behaviour Policy Checklist

We've identified the key areas that each behaviour policy should include and provided guidance on what to include in each section. Use this when creating or evaluating your existing policy.

Approach to behaviour management

- Set your school's aims and expectations in regards to behaviour and bullying.
- Clarify measures that will be used to uphold these expectations and apply them consistently throughout the year.
- Design an action plan to deal with behaviour incidents that occur outside the school.
- Ensure that the behaviour policy is clearly understood by all staff, parents and pupils. Display school rules clearly in classrooms and around the building. Staff and students should be clear on how they are expected to conduct themselves.

School leadership

- The governing board will review this behaviour policy in conjunction with the headteacher and monitor the policy's effectiveness, holding the headteacher to account for its implementation.
- Set out the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, teachers and senior leadership team.
- Promote good behaviour and support staff members that implement the policy.
- Provide staff with training and guidance on how to effectively enforce the school's policy.
- Make behaviour management a general responsibility for all adults in the school.

Classroom management

- Set out responsibilities for classroom teachers.
- Outline measures to promote good behaviour and how to act against poor behaviour.
- Ensure each teacher keeps a record of behaviour incidents.
- Display rules in the class - and ensure that the pupils and staff know what they are.



Rewards and sanctions

- Outline a reward system for positive behaviour including: praise, merits/house points, letters or phone calls home to parents, special responsibilities or privilege.
- Set out measures and sanctions for poor behaviour, for example a verbal warning, sending the pupil out of class, detention at break or after school, isolation etc.
- Include a statement on the use of reasonable force and confiscation.
- Ensure both parents and students are aware of the rules surrounding sanctions and include reference to the law on areas such as punishment outside of school, detentions outside of school hours, confiscation of objects etc.

Staff development and support

- Provide your staff with training on how to effectively manage student behaviour.
- Provide staff with the necessary support and resources needed to improve their practice on behaviour management.
- Take action to deal with poor teaching or staff who fail to adhere to and enforce the behaviour policy.

Student support systems

- Outline what school-based support is available to students.
- Put in place suitable support for students with behavioural difficulties.
- Create a plan for students who are likely to misbehave.

Liaison with parents and other agencies

- Create a plan which outlines how the school will work with parents to help address poor behaviour and recognise positive behaviour.
- Give feedback to parents about their child's behaviour - let them know about the good days as well as the bad ones.
- Include rewards for positive student behaviour which directly involves parents such as postcards and letters home, or awards evenings.



- Build positive relationships with the parents of pupils with behaviour difficulties.
- Include information surrounding the external companies and organisations you work with to promote positive behaviour.

Managing pupil transition

- The transition between year groups, key stages and school settings can be disruptive to some students - setting out a plan which ensures a smooth transition will help to make this a positive experience for all.
- Identify key members of staff to manage this transition period/for students to speak to if they have any concerns.
- Ensure behaviour is continually monitored and that support is available for students.
- Set out a support plan for students with specific needs during these periods.

Organisation and facilities

- Detail how facilities and rooms in schools will be used for behaviour intervention such as isolation rooms, detention rooms etc.
- Include details on how staff will be expected to manage these rooms.
- Ensure these rooms are clean and well-maintained.

Malicious accusations against the school

- Outline information regarding conduct for staff to follow to avoid such allegations.
- Include the actions that will be taken against students who make malicious accusations against staff.
- Provide support available to staff who are subject to malicious allegations.
- Explain how the school will investigate accusations.
- Explain how the school will support a pupil who has made a malicious allegation in terms of safeguarding and mental health.



School's legal duties

- Acknowledge the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of SEN (Special Education Needs) students.
- Ensure your policy takes into account the requirements enforced by the law.
- Recognise that certain pupils will require a different approach to the ones outlined in your policy due to certain circumstances.
- Ensure your policy doesn't unintentionally discriminate by keeping a clear and detailed record of all incidents.



Banter vs Bullying

There's a fine line between banter and bullying, and when a type of humour does incorporate elements of teasing, that line can get blurred. We've come up with a few points to bear in mind to help you differentiate between the two:



Know What Humour Is Acceptable

Making fun of someone's race, gender, religion, disability, ethnicity or appearance isn't cool.



Channel Your Inner Mean Girl

Even if someone pokes fun at themselves it doesn't make it okay for you to do the same - remember Janis and Damian in Mean Girls 'That's only okay when I say it'.



Don't Humour Unfunny Banter

We've all been there, you're all having a laugh and someone oversteps the mark. Because they're your friend you laugh it off, but if you don't call someone out on the fact they've taken it too far, you're only going to encourage more comments of a similar vein.



Don't Be A Bystander

Even when you're not on the receiving end of banter you can still make a difference. If you can tell someone isn't enjoying the banter being thrown their way, point it out. It will help them in feeling supported, but it will also let the perpetrator know the jokes they're making aren't funny.



Read The Room

Every relationship is different and it's important to take this into consideration when bantering. Always remember to read the room and don't join in on teasing you may not feel comfortable with, especially if you don't know the person well enough to join in.



Don't Hone In On People's Insecurities

Poking fun at something you know someone is already insecure about is never nice, no matter how close you think you both are - it's only going to make them feel more insecure, and bringing it up in front of others is only going to embarrass them.



Turn The Tables

By saying 'it's only banter' doesn't excuse your actions if you've upset someone. Before you make a jibe you're unsure about put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself if you'd find it funny in their position.

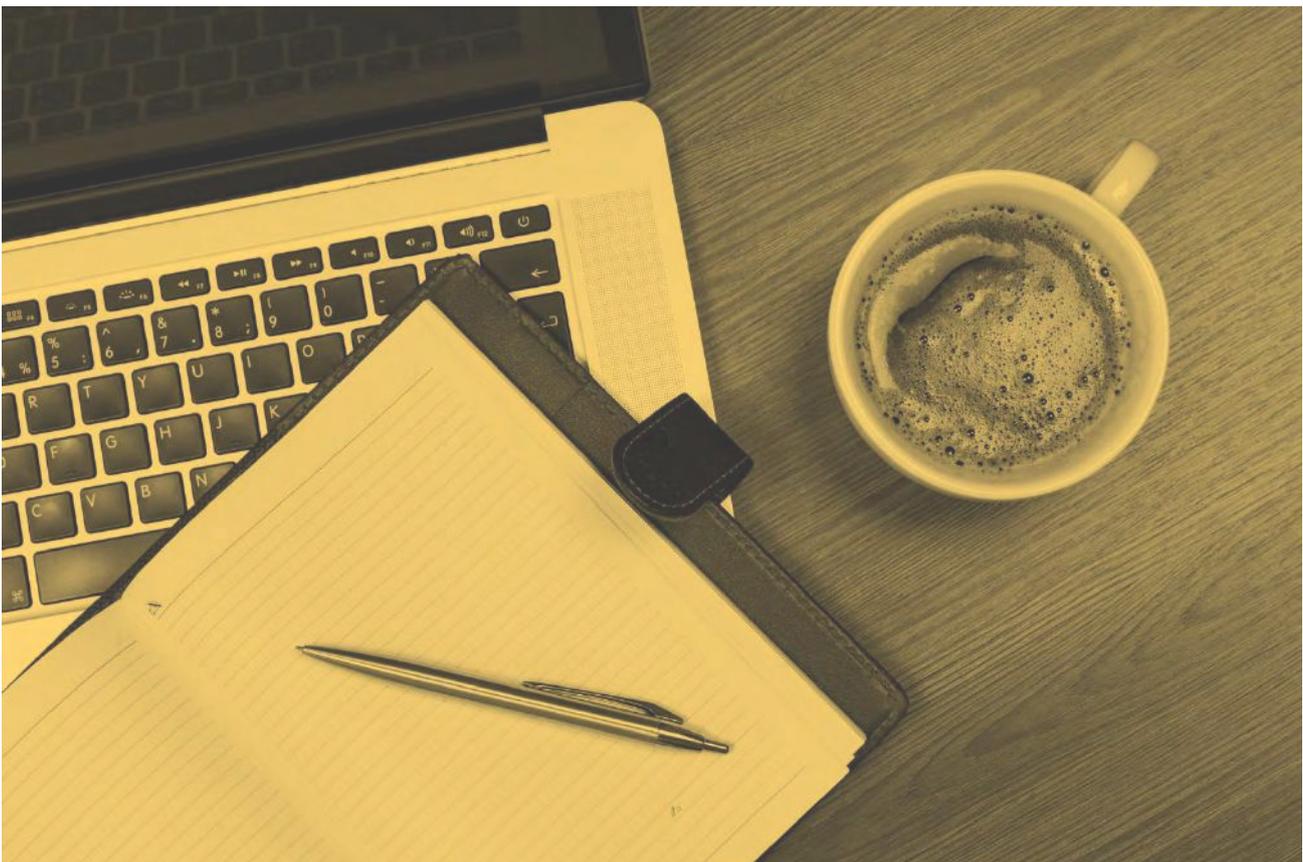


Wellbeing Policy

A wellbeing policy is not only a surefire way to guarantee that your students' wellbeing remains a core focus within school, but this active attempt to improve staff and student wellbeing also helps to ensure outstanding teaching and learning takes place in our school. When students are happy and healthy, they are in a better position to learn and excel!

In addition to this, having a wellbeing policy sends a positive message to those looking at your school, whether that's prospective parents, teachers or Ofsted. It also gives your current stakeholders the safety in knowing how students are looked after, that you're aware of the issues they may encounter and are actively preparing them for life outside of school.

It isn't currently a DfE requirement for schools to have a wellbeing policy in place, however, it is good practice to have one. It isn't currently a DfE requirement for schools to have a wellbeing policy in place, however, it is good practice to have one. There are key things to consider when creating your wellbeing policy to ensure it effectively communicates your approach to wellbeing and the steps you are taking to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your students:



Wellbeing Policy Checklist

Your school's stance on wellbeing

Within your school's wellbeing policy, clearly state your school's stance on wellbeing - how this intertwines with your school's ethos and vision and what you will do to look after the wellbeing of both your staff and your students.

Leadership and management

Clearly define the role of your leadership team and their approach to wellbeing, what their responsibilities are and how they will promote this across their teams.

Key people

Within your school there should be key members of the team who are designated to deal with issues surrounding wellbeing - make these people known in your wellbeing policy, and also communicate this to the whole school. This should serve both parents and students should they ever need help or support.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

Provide a thorough overview of your school's current stance on PSHE and the topics you will cover as part of this subject. Be sure to outline the outcomes you wish pupils to achieve and any classroom rules you have established for such topics. In addition to this, include how you will communicate with students regarding wellbeing and how you will encourage them to share their opinion and talk about wellbeing and mental health. In addition to this, include how you will communicate with students regarding wellbeing and how you will encourage them to share their opinion and talk about wellbeing and mental health in class.

Duty of care

Outline the symptoms and warning signs teachers will be looking out for in order to provide intervention, as well as any wellbeing trackers that will be used to identify a risk to wellbeing.

Staff training

In order for your students' wellbeing to be well looked after as well as your staff's, your staff need to be trained on how to spot signs of poor wellbeing and know when to intervene. Therefore, make sure in your policy you include a reference to the type of training your staff will undertake.

Outside support

Include explicit reference to differing third parties you will use either when referring wellbeing issues outside of school or the institutes students and parents can contact to seek help independently or outside of the school.

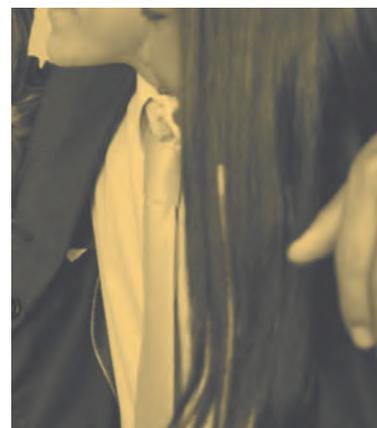
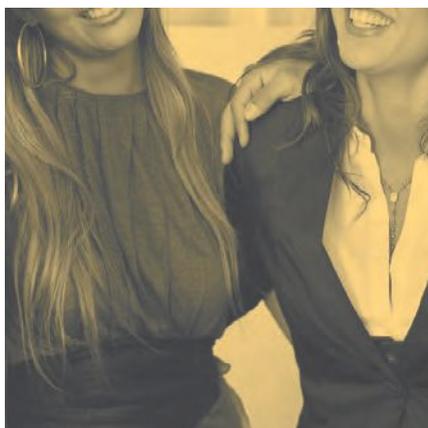
Support for parents

Outline the support you will specifically offer parents if their child is experiencing issues with their wellbeing and mental health. Explain the support available and how you will work with the family to address any concerns.

Training for staff

Perhaps the most critical way in which schools can support students with their wellbeing is by investing in their teachers. If your teachers receive the proper training, they will be able to deal with poor student wellbeing when faced with it, and offer legitimate and credible guidance to parents or students should they need to.

The biggest area of concern in education when it comes to student wellbeing is that teachers aren't in fact equipped to deal with supporting students as not enough training is provided. At present, schools are required to provide teachers with CPD, however there is nothing to state that a part of this time should be allocated to training teachers on how to deal with student wellbeing or mental health concerns. Such training is in high demand with [over half of teachers](#) claiming that training on mental health and wellbeing would be one of the most useful strategies a school could implement to support pupils' mental health.



Considering the amount of time teachers spend with students and the types of problems they encounter throughout their teaching career, it seems logical to include some training around student wellbeing within their CPD policy. This is the general consensus amongst teachers in the UK who recognise the importance of student mental health with [92% of teachers](#) calling for mental health training to be embedded into the teacher training curriculum, and a further 71% claiming they lacked the training to even address mental health concerns with pupils.

In addition to this, when surveyed, [less than 40% of primary head teachers](#) felt confident that their staff would know how to respond if a pupil had a mental health crisis. What's apparent from this, is that there is a lack of training provided to teachers on student mental health and wellbeing despite there being an obvious need for it.

As it isn't currently a requirement to allocate CPD time to training teachers on how to provide mental health and wellbeing support to students, it is instead up to individual schools to make this a priority. By providing your staff with training, you're giving them the skills they need to effectively deal with wellbeing issues should they arise.

Here are some ways you can educate staff on the importance of student wellbeing which can count towards training:

Invest in a wellbeing lead

Having someone dedicated to driving positive changes regarding wellbeing will not only help to raise the profile of wellbeing in your school, it will allow your staff to learn from someone who knows the importance of it. This could include how to act when faced with an issue regarding student mental health, and the correct procedures that need to be followed to ensure the safety of staff and students.

Introduce a wellbeing policy

Having a whole-school wellbeing policy will provide teachers with guidance on how to approach certain situations, and will also point them in the right direction of where they can research more around how to deal with students who may be experiencing poor wellbeing.

Utilise the PSHE Association

PSHE is one of the key areas in which you will have the opportunity to educate students on the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing. The PSHE Association has an abundance of resources that can be used for guidance when teaching about mental health and wellbeing for you to use as a reference.

Start talking about mental health

In order for you and your staff to fully support your students' wellbeing, you first need to be aware of how to look after your own wellbeing. Start discussing mental health and wellbeing openly and encourage your staff to do the same; this will help to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and will prepare you for when you speak to students about their mental health.

Allocate time for training

In order to provide adequate training on mental health and wellbeing, you need to look at your school's CPD budget and allocate some of this to training teachers on mental health. This will allow you to invest proper time and effort into your teachers' training and help build their confidence.

Take advice from your local community

Use the links your school has with the wider community to educate yourself and your staff on mental health and wellbeing. There will be charities, organisations and institutes who want to educate students on how to look after their mental health and wellbeing and would relish the opportunity to pass on their knowledge to teachers who can help vulnerable young people. This will also help to strengthen ties between your school and these organisations.

Exams

Exam stress is one of the biggest contributors to poor student wellbeing with the consequences of exam stress cited as leading to [mental health problems](#) such as depression and anxiety, panic attacks, low-self esteem, self harm, suicidal thoughts as well as worsening pre-existing mental health conditions.

Exam stress is seemingly on the rise as well, with Childline reporting that the number of counselling sessions being provided to students suffering from exam stress rose by [11% in 2016/2017](#) compared to the previous 2 years, as well as ASCL saying that the new style of GCSE exam is causing more stress with [90% of school leaders](#) surveyed stating that the exams had caused students more stress.

Exams are central to school life and unfortunately are unavoidable. To feel stressed and anxious isn't necessarily a bad thing, in fact it is normal and can be used to students' advantages - it's when this stress escalates that it can become debilitating. So although schools can't put a stop to exam stress by taking away the root cause, what they can do is help to alleviate some of the pressures students may find themselves under during exam periods.

Here are some ways in which schools can help to reduce exam stress:

Pre-empt exam stress

Exams happen every year, and with them comes the associated stress. One of the best ways to help students manage this stress is to teach them mindfulness and breathing techniques throughout the year, so they know how to apply them when the stress hits.

Put an emphasis on exercise

Exercise is a proven stress reliever and as schools, we should help to encourage sports and physical activity during high stress periods, especially those activities which channel breathing and relaxation such as yoga. To help increase the amount of exercise your students are doing during this period, consider putting on after-school sports activities that encourage them to take a break from revision.

Educate parents

During this time make sure you are effectively communicating with parents about exams, the stress they induce, and the signs of stress they should be looking out for in their children. Consider hosting a parents' evening whereby students and parents are educated on the negative side effects of stress, tried and tested revision techniques and proven stress busters.

Avoid whole-school messages

When communicating the importance of exams, try to put more emphasis on the fact that exams are merely a formality and a stepping stone, but they will not shape the rest of the student's life. By focusing on the exciting time of the student's life in general, with support around careers advice and next steps for all exam outcomes, you can help to alleviate some of the more acute pressures on exam day.



Practical ways to address wellbeing in your school

Incorporating student wellbeing into your school's culture is necessary but it is also a work-in-progress - one single PSHE lesson on wellbeing or a training session for staff is not going to address the wellbeing issue. Whole-school strategies and initiatives need to be nurtured over time in order for positive student wellbeing to become ingrained as a part of your school's DNA.

Here are some practical, low budget ways in which you can help to prioritise student wellbeing more in your schools:

Listen to your students

School plays a huge part in a students life with rules, policies and exams all having a direct impact on their wellbeing. Much the same as we encourage listening to your teachers to gauge their wellbeing, you should also do the same with your students. Find out how happy they are at your school, what thoughts and ideas they have to improve wellbeing, and make an effort to address these so they feel a part of the school community.



Check-in

Never underestimate the power of asking your students how they're feeling. Taking the time to show a genuine interest in your students' life can provide them with the invitation they need to open up about something that's weighing on their mind, or simply make them feel cared for.

Invest in your staff

This is arguably the most worthwhile thing you can do for your students' wellbeing. Teachers are in the fortunate position whereby they spend the most time with students, they know their behaviours, personalities and what makes them tick and they have a vested interest in their wellbeing and safety. Unless they know the warning signs of low wellbeing, how to approach children regarding this topic, or risks students may be facing, they are unable to help them. Train your staff on student wellbeing so they can provide the help and support they want to give.

Normalise mental health

As teachers and educators, we're in a position where we can have a positive influence on the lives of so many young people, and one of these positive influences can be helping to make mental health a non-taboo subject. This can be done simply by encouraging conversations around mental health, ensuring your school and classroom have resources regarding wellbeing readily available to students, and information on where to seek support is clearly signposted.

Student wellbeing encompasses so much more than what is covered in this guide as it is such a complex issue. This guide centres mainly around ways in which teachers and leaders can help to support student wellbeing in the classroom and raise the profile of student wellbeing. Most of the ideas and advice outlined in this guide can be implemented with little to no financial strain, so that schools or individuals can put these into practice straightaway to help prioritise student wellbeing.

