Improving mental health in schools

The following advice is intended to support schools in providing and accessing the best support for young people experiencing mental health problems. The following advice should not be viewed as a tick list of support that must be provided but rather a menu of potential options that may suit a particular pupil.

It must be stated that this advice is intended to be used where school leaders feel in a position to support a young person's mental health within the school using existing school and home relationships. Where a young person's mental health presents as worrying to school leaders, schools must continue to act quickly to engage social services, the BANES mental health support team, link educational psychologists or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Common Issues identified through pupil voice collection

The primary causes of anxiety and mental health problems for school age children are as follows. Schools will need to consider how they educate pupils in each of these areas.

- Absenteeism
- Abuse
- Academic stress
- Alcohol / drugs
- Behaviour
- Bullying
- Domestic abuse
- Friendships
- Loneliness / isolation
- SEND
- Sleep
- Stigma
- Parental anxiety
- Parental mental health
- Parenting styles
- Physical health
- Poverty
- Transition

Whole school approach

It may be helpful for schools to view mental health through the following lenses. Schools may wish to consider specific actions or interventions that specifically target each of the items listed below. Schools should refer to the List of specialist referral agencies for support as well as considering the general SEMH advice guidance for peer reviewed interventions targeting various aspects of mental health.

Self-Awareness

• Identifying emotions • Accurate self-perception • Recognising strengths • Self-confidence • Self-efficacy

Self-Management

• Impulse control • Stress management • Self-discipline • Self-motivation • Goal setting • Organisational skills

Social Awareness

• Understanding emotions • Empathy/sympathy • Appreciating diversity • Respect for others

Relationship Skills

• Communication • Social engagement • Relationship building • Teamwork

Responsible decision making

• Identifying problems • Analysing solutions • Solving problems • Evaluating • Reflecting • Ethical responsibility

The government intends for every school to have a mental health lead by the year 2025. School leaders should refer to the following guidance when planning their whole school approach to supporting the mental health of young people.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-in-schools-and-colleges

Ideas for supporting mental health in schools

- Schools could complete the BANES school mental health audit to help discovers areas of strength and need within the school regarding the mental health of young people.
- Public_health@bathnes.gov.uk BANES professional support group giving advice on whole school mental health approach.
- Ensure there is a named mental health lead in the school. All schools will need to have a mental health lead by 2025. The BANES mental health support team will provide training to school mental health leaders.
- Ensure mental health is promoted through the school website, curriculum, assemblies and on displays around the school.
- Schools should promote the pastoral pathways open to young people to disclose concerns they may have regarding their own or others mental health. Some schools choose to use online confidential disclosure systems like "whisper" to remove barriers to disclosure.

- Have a school governor with oversight of promoting and monitoring mental health within the school.
- Refer to the BANES early help app or mental health lead guidance for links and signposting to relevant agencies and support groups.
- BANES Educational psychology team team offer a free 1-hour conversation to offer guidance to school leaders where there are concerns about a young person's mental health.
- Include the school's pupil leadership team in promoting and monitoring mental health. Schools have reported that having a regular agenda item of mental health at student leadership groups has increased awareness across the school.
- Equalities, friendship, and mental health clubs can be effective in promoting positive mental health.
- Provide parents with information about mental health and support services available.
- Keep open dialogue with parents so they feel comfortable reporting concerns around mental health to school. Ensure that key contacts are regularly published and made easily contactable.
- https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/ Anna Freud produces a range of excellent guidance and resources for mental health leads to use. The range of activities is extensive.
- Anna Freud "education for wellbeing program". Reviewing the best practice and interventions targeted at wellbeing in over 400 schools. This is worthwhile reading for all school mental health leads. Anna Freud also operates a small outreach team that are able to support schools and young people directly.
- Schools can support pupils through a joint "self-care plan". Templates are available on the Anna Freud website.
- View positive mental health as a teachable and assessable skill. Schools should consider their curriculums and find opportunities to explicitly teach young people about mental health and coping strategies. This may be through PSHE, citizenship or RSE lesson or more widely through subject specific lessons.
- Utilise a trauma informed approached to managing behaviour. Using a sanction-based system with young people with mental health problems can be highly counterproductive and can compound the problem in some cases.
- Programs like skills builder can be useful in tracking personal development, rather than academic attainment, as a section of mental health.
- Use of local mental health support team for guidance. This provision is for young people who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS but would benefit from mental health support.
- Give pupils the opportunity to review their own mental health via conversations or questionnaires on a regular basis. Provide training to young people to be able to support or identify peers struggling with poor mental health.
- YOGA, Pilates, meditation or mindfulness training have all proven to be successful interventions for pupils delivered by schools.
- Ensure the mental health of staff through regular supervision and training. Organisations like NAOS offer this service.
- Some schools offer expression of concerns forms for pupils/staff to complete for other pupils/staff. All stakeholders should be taught explicitly how to use complete these.
- Follow the BANES emotionally based school avoidance guidance for pupils whose anxiety is preventing them from attending.

- PSHE teaching guidance – preparing to teach mental health. Advice for teachers delivering lessons in mental health is an extremely useful document. https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/guidance-on-preparing-to-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing/#:~:text=Building%20teaching%20about%20mental%20health,emotional%20wellbeing%20safely%20and%20confidently
- Penn resilience program – 18 lesson curriculum to support pupils with mental wellbeing and emotional intelligence has proven to be a useful preprepared tool for schools to use with young people with mental health concerns.
- Healthy minds curriculum – scheme of lessons endorsed by EEF and led by Bounce Forward to support pupils' well-being is a peer reviewed program that many schools are using to support positive mental health.
- Better health every mind matters – online tool for teachers to support their own mental well-being.
- Mental health apps – approved by NHS. Chill panda, Thrive, Think ninja, stress and anxiety companion, blue ice, EQuoo, Happiness pulse. These apps provide an additional layer of support for young people struggling with mental health problems.

Ideas for assessments

Schools may wish to use one of the many online assessment tools to measure pupils' mental health. A selection of assessments is included below. Prior to any assessment or questionnaire schools must train pupils to understand what wellbeing means and what good wellbeing looks and feels like.

Schools may wish to train all pupils about the types of mental health conditions and types of traumas that exist. Schools should consider the effect this new understanding may have on young people and should have formulated plans for supporting pupils who may be newly aware of their own mental health difficulties or experience of trauma.

Schools may choose to screen the whole school population using a simple assessment delivered through tutor time or may choose to assess only pupils highlighted as potentially needing further mental health support. Schools may choose to ask young people to complete these assessments anonymously as a barometer for mental health in the school or make the assessment identifiable to highlight young people where further detailed investigation is needed or interventions should be started.

PRP   Peer Relationships or Popularity
CMPF Combined Measure of Protective Factors
H   Health
W   Wellbeing
CC   Coping / Control
      Happiness or Positive Outlook
SA   View of self or appearance
T   Time or money use or future plans
HE   Home Environment
SE   School Environment or Feelings toward School
L   Attidues toward learning
SS   Measures View on Service Support

Name of measure (click on measure to go to page)	FR	PRP	CMPF	ESS	H	W	CC	LSPO	SA	T	HE	NE	SE	L	SS
Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale			✔												
The Boxall Profile				✔			✔						✔	✔	
Child and Youth Resilience Measure	✔		✔												
(Child) Outcome Rating Scale (CORS/ORS)			✔												
Coping Strategies Inventory							✔								
Emotional Literacy: Assessment and Intervention				✔			✔		✔						
Generic Children's Quality of Life Measure								✔							
Good Childhood Index	✔	✔			✔				✔	✔	✔		✔		
KidCOPE							✔								
Kids Coping Scale							✔								
Kiddy-KINDL	✔	✔			✔	✔			✔	✔					
KIDSCREEN	✔	✔			✔	✔			✔		✔		✔		
Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS)	✔	✔							✔			✔	✔		
ONS Personal Wellbeing Domain for Children & Young People – ONS4			✔												
Outcomes Star	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Pictured Child's Quality of Life Self Questionnaire	✔	✔			✔	✔							✔		
Piers-Harris 2		✔							✔				✔		
Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)									✔				✔	✔	
Quality of Life Profile Adolescent Version		✔			✔	✔		✔	✔			✔			
Resilience Doughnut	✔	✔		✔					✔	✔	✔		✔		
Resilience Scale for Adolescents							✔	✔							
Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)									✔			✔			
Schools and Students Health Education Unit (SHEU) survey		✔			✔	✔		✔	✔	✔			✔		
Stirling Children's wellbeing Scale (SCWBS)								✔							
Student Resilience Survey (SRS)	✔	✔							✔	✔		✔	✔		
The World Health Organisation-Five Well-Being						✔									
Understanding Society (USoc)			✔												
Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)						✔									
Youth Empowerment Scale - Mental Health									✔						✔
Youth Quality of Life Instrument	✔	✔			✔	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔		