

Partnership for
Well-being and
Mental Health
in Schools



National Children's
Bureau

A whole school framework for emotional well being and mental health

A self-assessment and improvement tool for school leaders

Sue Stirling and Dr Hilary Emery

Context

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.

Professor Katherine Weare reviewed the research into what works in schools to improve children and young people's well-being and mental health – **What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools? Advice for Schools and Framework Document**ⁱ. She found that a whole school commitment and ethos, rather than piecemeal approaches, are key to making a difference.

Schools have a wide variety of practice in their daily teaching and pastoral care that support social and emotional wellbeing yet they face increasing wellbeing and mental health challenges among students and staff. If existing practices are systematically co-ordinated they can improve wellbeing and help to prevent mental health issues. Where needs and gaps in practice are then identified they can be addressed by careful selection of intervention programmes, staff development and working with external health and social care partners.

Amidst budget constraints, curriculum and examining changes and the relentless focus on standards and performance a focus on wellbeing may be seen as a distraction. However, done well it can enhance attainment, reduce exclusions, re-engage students who have experienced problems, build good relationships, attract and retain staff and raise standards across the school.^{ii, iii}

Why look at social and emotional well-being and mental health now?

Policy – The Departments of Education (DfE) and Health (DH) are committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people:

In order to help their pupils succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy^{iv}

The DH policy *Future in Mind*^v, expects schools to be active partners in local areas through the *Local Transformation Plans*^{vi}.

Ofsted include consideration of wellbeing in the *Personal development, behaviour and welfare* section of the schools' inspection framework.^{xiv}

Research – Supporting children and young people's social and emotional health and well-being contributes to positive academic progress. It helps them to manage their lives

What's the problem? What difference can schools make?

Schools report increasing numbers and complexity of wellbeing and mental health issues among children, young people and staff. Causes include the pressures of examinations and assessments, social media and Ofsted. Public Health England's (PHE) evidence suggests in an average class of thirty 15-year-olds^{ix}:

- three could have a mental disorder
- ten are likely to have witnessed their parents separate
- one could have experienced the death of a parent
- seven are likely to have been bullied
- six may be self-harming.

PHE evidenceⁱⁱ about the impact of supporting wellbeing shows:

- social and emotional competencies are a more significant determinant of academic attainment than IQ;
- pupils who are confident about learning and have a 'growth mindset' persist when faced with challenges;
- pupils who can set goals, manage stress and organise their school work achieve higher grades;
- pupils who use problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles do better academically.

DfE research foundⁱⁱⁱ:

- Children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school, both concurrently and in later years.
- Children with better emotional wellbeing make more progress in primary school and are more engaged in secondary school.

including their physical health, tackle any mental health problems early and develop high level social and emotional, as well as academic, skills^{vii} thereby enhancing future employability. Supporting the wellbeing of teachers and staff contributes to staff retention, whole school ethos and classroom effectiveness^{viii}.

What is happening now?

The social and emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and staff are powerful influences in every school, every day.

Working with schools we identified three barriers to change:

- Mental health has tended to be seen as the domain of experts and as such is outside schools' remit;
- Issues that arise hit schools at different levels and ways meaning connections between them that relate to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and groups may be hard to spot;
- Wellbeing and mental health support are not high profile or seen as core business for everyone in schools.

How can this resource help

The tool signposts evidence from research and practice. It offers prompts for debate and activity bringing everyone together and building on existing practice, identifying new programmes and interventions, setting priorities and implementing and evaluating change.

This tool aims to help you:

- Build a common language, understanding the evidence about what works, getting a shared understanding of what is happening in schools now, identifying the gaps and opportunities in current practice and developing a whole school ethos and culture.
- Involve students and staff in planning, and developing practice, including early identification and intervention using existing practice supported by new initiatives where needs arise.
- Work with families and other services to promote wellbeing, prevent and reduce mental health problems and intervene early when these arise with effective support and services.
- Implement a systematic and strategic approach across the school and evaluate progress for individual children, young people and the whole school; embedding and sustaining effective practices.

Drawing on Professor Weare's evidence review of what works the tool is intended to help school leaders to identify and address the rapidly changing and demanding pressures and expectations they face. School leaders need to decide both how to respond systematically to individual mental health problems and build resilience, influence attitudes and behaviours and create a culture that promotes and protects wellbeing across the school and with families and partners.

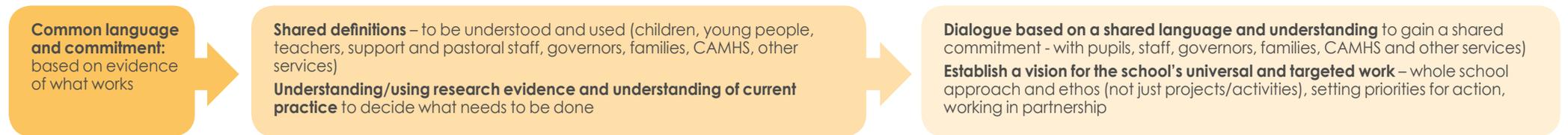
We have compiled a compendium of additional tools^x and resources to support this approach (see <http://www.ncb.org.uk/partnership-well-being-and-mental-health-schools>).

A four stage approach to wellbeing and mental health

Stage one: Deciding to act and identifying what is in place already



Stage two: Getting a shared understanding and commitment to change and development



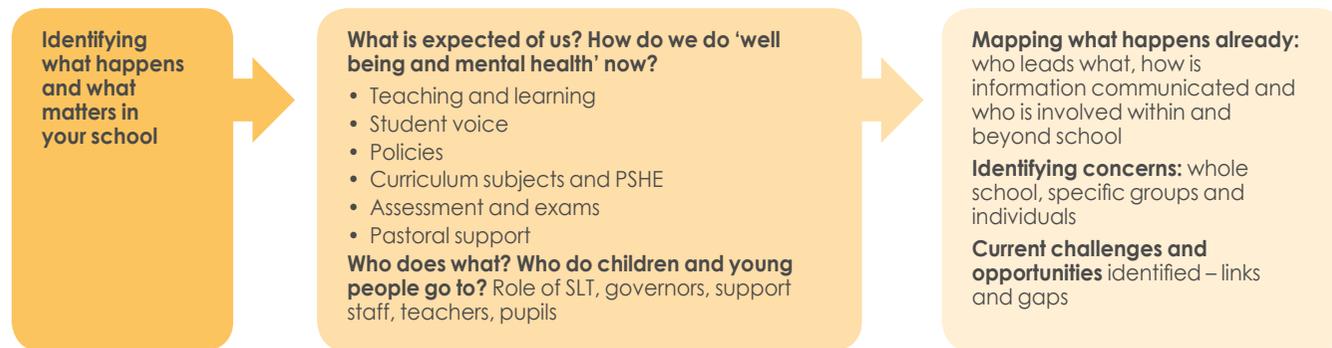
Stage three: Building relationships and developing practices



Stage four: Implementation and evaluation



Stage one: Deciding to act and identifying what is in place already



What is the DfE advice on schools' responsibilities?

The DfE advice^{iv} sets out what schools should offer to help pupils succeed. In summary these are:

Prevention

- playing a role in supporting them all to be resilient and mentally healthy
- drawing on resources and guidance to help staff support good mental health and emotional wellbeing (from both local and national sources) including provision of school counselling services

Early Intervention/identification

- understanding how to intervene early and strengthen resilience for: all pupils, those with emerging problems and families exposed to several risk factors
- using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to flag possible diagnosable mental health problems for individual pupils causing concern

Access to specialist support

- ensuring pupils and families participate as fully as possible in decisions
- expecting those with severe problems to get wider support as well;
- influencing commissioning of health services through local Health and Wellbeing Boards

Discussions with head teachers identified other issues to consider include:

- financial constraints and their implications for how a whole school ethos can be established and sustained;
- starting from a whole curriculum perspective for developing a universal approach that extends across all subjects within which targeted interventions to social and emotional wellbeing and mental health are fitted according to need;
- developing children and young people's metacognition skills to help them reflect upon their learning and development;
- links to discussions of the development of character, British values and safeguarding

- links to developing a growth mind-set as part of schools' teaching and learning policies
- building links with services that provide specialist expertise
- taking a coherent approach across phases.

What you do already

Schools provide substantial support for wellbeing already but often this is not fully recognised, coordinated or used to address the needs that arise. Sharing and recognising how teachers and other staff currently support emotional health and wellbeing across the school builds confidence and forms a foundation on which to develop.

School leaders can foster links between existing practices to build a systematic, integrated approach across the school making individual activities more effective. Similarly sharing information can identify children and young people who may not be thriving and offer targeted assistance/early intervention to avoid problems escalating.

What bothers you? What you would like to change and why? What's missing?

Sharing and understanding concerns that teachers, other staff, students and families have about the pressures that children and young people experience and seeing how these impact on their social and emotional well-being, behaviour and progress provides valuable insights. Drawing these together can indicate patterns of need, identify gaps in support and provision and inform priorities for action.

These priorities may be addressed through more systematic use of existing practice and/or selection of more targeted, specific interventions. PHE^x and DfE^{iv} have compiled lists of proven interventions matched to specific needs. To be most effective programmes benefit from involvement of external specialists at the initiation stage, providing training and evaluation to ensure correct delivery and evaluate impact.

Development questions and activities

How do we manage wellbeing and mental health now? Who does what?

Brainstorm what is done now and why. Collect and group these practices and consider whether activities reinforce one another, conflict, duplicate. Are there any common messages about why practices are undertaken?

What bothers or concerns you and your staff? What would you and your staff like to change and why? What's missing? What are your children and young people's concerns? Teachers, support staff, pupils, parents and governors as well as external partners all have a role to play in listing concerns and identifying opportunities for change. Collate these to identify patterns and priorities for action.

Developing an audit for priorities and action planning

Low risk High capacity	High risk High capacity
Low risk Low capacity	High risk Low capacity

Taking **capacity** and **risk** as the axes map areas for action and priorities for your school. These actions and priorities might include consideration of the **DfE advice**, and issues such as:

- school values, ethos and environment
- student voice, participation and community action
- governance, leadership and management
- school policies including behaviour, bullying; teaching, learning, assessment, recording and reporting
- embedding across the curriculum including PSHE
- specific interventions and programmes
- pastoral and other support services (including careers)
- links to other services including CAMHS^{xi}, families, community
- development/training including early identification of needs

Stage two: Getting a shared understanding and commitment to change and development



Getting a shared definition of social and emotional wellbeing and mental health

A shared understanding of the language you use in your school about social and emotional well-being and mental health problems helps clear and consistent conversations internally with staff and students and with external services, parents and carers. The NCB guidance defines them as:

- **'social and emotional well-being'** refers to a state of positive mental health and wellness. It involves a sense of optimism, confidence, happiness, clarity, vitality, self-worth, achievement, having a meaning and purpose, engagement, having supportive and satisfying relationships with others and understanding oneself, and responding effectively to one's own emotions.
- **'mental health problems'** refers to the wide range of mental health, emotional and social challenges, difficulties, conditions and illnesses that can beset both pupils and staff, including stress and burnout, anxiety, depression, attachment difficulties and behavioural problems.

Understanding the Framing Principles and evidence for a whole school vision

NCB's analysis of research uses seven framing principles to organise the evidence of what works in schools. Together these can support schools to embed wellbeing into their ethos, culture and practice.

The key elements of an evidence based approach relate to:

- school climate and ethos
- staff capacity and whole school approaches
- enabling pupil and parent/carer engagement

in order to develop social and emotional skills and provide targeted help with mental health difficulties.

What sort of provision do you need?

- (i) universal:** proactively promoting positive social and emotional wellbeing for staff and students; and
- (ii) targeted:** identifying actions to prevent, identify and respond effectively to mental health problems of staff and students.

Framing principlesⁱ

Adopt whole-school thinking

- Take a whole school approach and implement it carefully
- Start with a positive and universal focus on well-being
- Develop a supportive school and classroom climate and ethos
- Identify difficulties and intervene early
- Take a long term approach
- Promote the well-being of staff and tackle staff stress

Engage the whole community

- Promote pupil voice and peer learning
- Involve parents, carers and families

Prioritise professional learning and staff development

- Understand risk and resilience
- Respond actively to problems and difficulties
- Understanding child and adolescent development
- Help all pupils with predictable change and transition

Implement targeted programmes and interventions (including curriculum)

- Use a range of leaders for specific programmes
- Teach social and emotional skills

Develop supportive policy

- Provide clear boundaries and robust policies

Connect appropriately with approaches to behaviour management

- Understand the causes of behaviour and respond wisely

Implement targeted responses and identify specialist pathways

- Provide more intense work on social and emotional skills development for those with difficulties
- Use specialist staff to initiate innovative and specialist programmes
- Provide clear pathways of help and referral including CAMHS
- Anchor help in the school environment

Development questions and activities

Dialogue based on shared language

What is your definition of 'social and emotional well-being'? Is this consistently used and understood? What specific terms do you use e.g. self worth? Are they shared and understood?

Review what you do now in relation to the Framing Principles. It may be useful to sort it into categories e.g. we do this now; we want to do this; we don't want/understand this. Explore:

- where different views arise: are they about interpretation?
- where ideas are agreed, consider if any action is needed.
- where elements are not accepted/understood decide why they are not relevant in your school or at this time.

Learning from the evidence

Consider how the evidence of what works might be relevant in your school and sort those aspects you want to adopt into the **three key elements of an evidence based approach**

Developing the vision for universal and targeted approaches

What universal and targeted approaches do you provide now? What works and what is causing concern?

What mental health needs do children and young people in your school have? Are there aspects you avoid, perhaps for fear of making things worse or not being able to meet the need?

Deciding to act

Who will lead, who will hold to account? Who will do the work? What will change? What will be done first? When/how engage with external services? Is this led by an individual or a team? Led within one school or across a group?

Partnership, collaboration and priorities for action

What are the key priorities for implementing the vision?

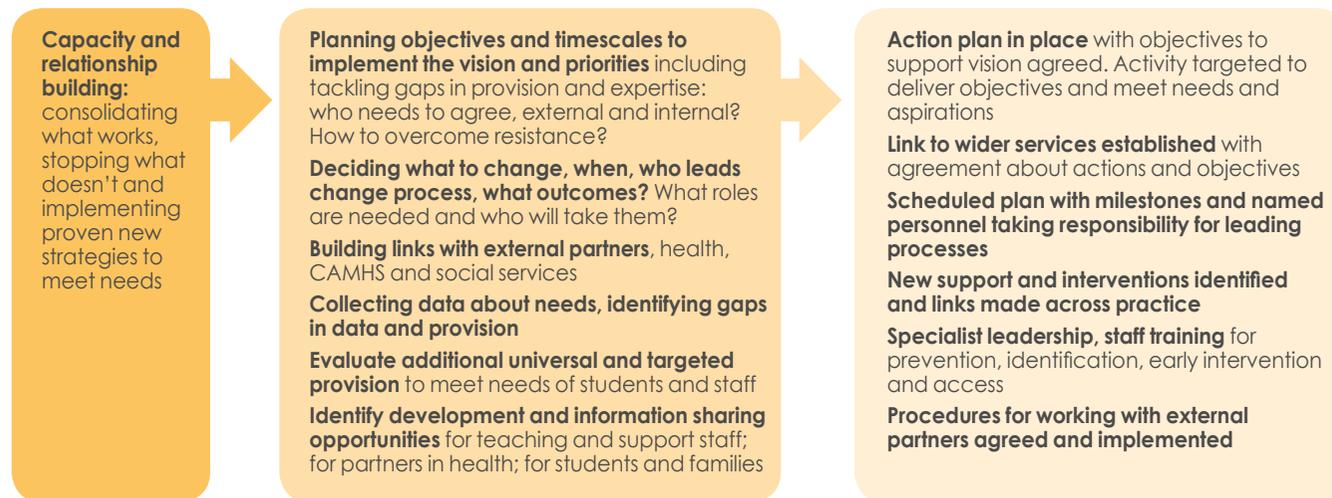
How are children and young people involved in forming the vision and deciding priorities for action?

How are external partners in health and social care involved in the emerging vision and priorities?

How are parents involved in ways that help them to support its delivery?

Decide how to share the vision and priorities for action.

Stage three: Building relationships and developing practices



Making it happen – taking a strategic and a practical approach

School leaders know how to bring about change. Taking a holistic approach to wellbeing and mental health offers the chance to develop new ways of relating for teachers, support staff, children and young people as well with families and health services, to foster wellbeing. Building on existing school improvement plans this is an opportunity to develop a vision of a whole school approach with short, medium and long terms goals.

In the case study schools leaders focused on raising awareness and confidence, enhancing the roles of teachers and other school staff. They did NOT try to become specialists or counsellors in every classroom. Five areas of change emerged:

- **Commitment:** to leading a whole school campaign and programme to capture, address and manage the emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges in their school.

- **Creating a climate:** to foster a physical and cultural environment which conveys the significance of emotional wellbeing and mental health and challenges negative perceptions and behaviours e.g. stigma, acceptability^{xii}.
- **Creating confidence and capacity:** to understand what we know about the positive aspects of what can be done in school, including research evidence, and identify support to develop practice and learn to be more effective.
- **Connecting across and outside the school:** to unveil where and what is already available. Where there are marginal gains and what will give greater impact. Building links beyond the school to draw on external capability and capacity.
- **Continuing long term investment in capacity:** to look ahead and continue to learn from and embed emerging best practice, create resilience and wellbeing support and become influential with families and communities.

Planning for targeted and specialist support

DfE provides guidance^{iv} on interventions for primary and secondary school pupils and on the main types of mental health needs in schools. They define them as:

Anxiety
Eating disorders

Attachment disorders
Hyperkinetic disorders

Conduct disorders
Post-traumatic stress

Deliberate self-harm
Substance misuse

Depression

Development questions and activities

Prompts for action planning

Building on the shared language and understanding of current provision school leaders, working with students, staff and external partners as appropriate, decide:

- if additional interventions and support are needed?
 - what needs are these to address, are these well understood or is more analysis needed?
 - what level of support is needed: universal and/or targeted levels?
 - what sorts of programmes are suitable, available and what are the cost implications?
 - how and by whom will these be identified, led and implemented?
- what training and development is needed for staff (teachers and support staff); students, school leaders and other partners?
 - to ensure understanding of the whole school approach and commitment
 - to enable identification of needs and provide support
 - to implement new programmes
 - who will provide and lead any training?

Using your shared language, whole school ethos and vision, areas for development establish your action plan:

- **Who knows:** Across your leadership and staff teams, student groups and external partners who holds the information about each student's emotional wellbeing and resilience? How is this information collated and used? Who can act on signs of early problems? Who has permission to act?
- **What is known:** What indicators and measures are used within the school? Who carries out reviews against the national indicators? How are student and staff views used to create individual strategies? Where will decisions be made and what options on intervention are available? Has your finance department assessed this as a specific area?
- **What can be done:** What in-school supports are available? Which staff regularly refer students? What areas of school life offer students emotional or relational support? Where in the curriculum does EWB and mental health appear? What external agencies are known of and what relationships and agreements do you have?
- **What is available:** There is a broad range of non-clinical and accessible forms of interventions that can be employed to deliver your strategy. These include coaching, resilience training, a wide range of PHSE programmes, integrated counselling, group work and programmes targeted on specific problems such as anxiety, depression, self harm (see^{iv} and^{ix})

Stage four: Implementation and evaluation



To embed the changes and ensure they are working schools need to measure and evaluate progress throughout the development at both the whole school and individual level. By increasing the wellbeing of all children, young people and staff, schools will prevent many problems arising and identify changing needs and opportunities. Where and when problems arise everyone needs to feel secure about raising concerns and feel confident of a supportive response where the school intervenes quickly and effectively working with parents and health services.

What does getting it right look like?

Working with children, young people, teachers and other staff, governors, families and external services schools need to track progress and evaluate the impact, costs and benefits (including time and financial) of their support. Examples of what good practice looks like include:

- 'Teachers are able to interact in responsive ways with students without feeling vulnerable to the demands of the work.'^{xiii}

Tim Brighouse

The Ofsted Common Inspection Framework explains that Inspectors' judgement of the personal development, behaviour and welfare of children and learners evaluate how 'provision is successfully promoting and supporting children's and other learners' knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically, including through exercising and healthy eating'^{xiv}.

The Ofsted School Inspection Framework criteria describes good personal development, behaviour and welfare practice where pupils:

'enjoy learning about how to stay healthy and about emotional and mental health, safe and positive relationships and how to prevent misuse of technology'.

While in schools that are inadequate, practice is described as:

'a significant minority of pupils do not understand how and why to live healthy, positive lives both physically and emotionally'^{xv}.

Hackney Learning Trust are taking a cross service approach to emotional health and wellbeing working with schools and other services to develop outcome indicators.

'We will know that we are on the right path when we are able to provide evidence that:

- Pupil attainment is maintained or improved
- Pupils feel safe in school
- Pupils report increased personal and social wellbeing in school
- Staff report increased personal and social wellbeing in work
- School staff feel competent and confident in promoting children's wellbeing
- Schools are confident in responding to responding to their pupils' needs
- Pupil behaviour is improved and there is a reduction in 'risky' behaviour
- Fewer pupils are excluded from our schools
- Preventative mental health measures are in place and there is a reduction of concerns in addressing mental health issues
- Children and families report productive engagement with the appropriate services'^{xvi}

What sort of records are needed?

Tracking the wellbeing of all children, young people and staff can be done at a high level. However, schools need to establish systems to log and share when concerns about individuals arise.

Knowing what to look for

Staff, children and young people all need to be aware of the indicators of possible concerns for others and for themselves. They need to know how and with whom these should be raised.

Developing indicators of progress

Understanding the importance of keeping healthy

Do the leadership team and staff have a good knowledge of the **importance of keeping healthy** and is this embedded into the DNA of the school, so that every pupil understands this and it's relevance to academic attainment and a successful future? Are they all taught how to keep well across many dimensions?

Understanding the signs of needing help

Do staff and children understand the **signs of being emotionally and/or mentally unwell** and when they need help? Link this to the self-help skills learnt to keep well, as well as having the confidence to ask for help from friends and staff, when needed.

Providing In-house support

Do all staff have the skills to support children who need help? For example are they trained in Emotional First Aid?^{xvii}

Does the school provide **in-house or outsourced counselling support**? DfE have published guidance for primary and secondary schools on school based counselling service^{xviii}.

Establishing links with external professional support

Is there a **referral system** for children with more serious problems, supported by close links with local GPs, CAHMS and the health services.

Working with other services in planned ways schools need to be able to monitor concerns and judge needs (e.g. DfE recommend the SDQ questionnaires^{iv}), identify and provide support and track individuals' progress.

How do we know if we are improving? What does good look like?

To develop a sense of what a whole school approach means in practice schools may find it helpful to track their progress towards a mature whole school strategy using the framing principles, key evidence and maturity indices^x descriptors.

Schools have also found sharing experience with others is helpful. *Time to Change* has produced a guide to networking that provides practical tools^{xix}.

Are we making effective progress?

This tool provides a starting point in developing your practice. To be effective Professor Weare suggested two areas must be addressed in the development work

- identifying actions schools can take to prevent, identify and respond effectively to the mental health problems of their staff and students through a 'targeted' approach; and
- proactively promoting positive social and emotional wellbeing for staff and students through a 'universal' approach.

A set of resources have been identified to accompany the use of this tool^{xx} and are available at <http://www.ncb.org.uk/partnership-well-being-and-mental-health-schools>.

About the authors

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- See x.

The Partnership for Well-being and Mental Health in Schools is a national network of 50 organisations convened by the National Children's Bureau. Partners share a vision for an education system where good emotional wellbeing and mental health are at the heart of the culture and ethos of all schools, so that children and young people, supported by their teachers, can build resilience and flourish.

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