



Leadership Briefing is a weekly online summary of all that's new and relevant to education, linked to original source documents that can be downloaded or viewed on screen, and available to everyone in your school leadership team. The briefings here give a sample of what's on offer.

What works in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and responding to mental health in schools?

This report by The National Children's Bureau (NCB) provides advice for schools to better support pupils with mental health issues and to promote wellbeing as part of school life.

Challenges to schools include the misuse of social media and cyberbullying, which are identified as major causes in the rise in emotional disorders. Many of these problems can remain undetected and untreated if schools do not take an active role.

The report identifies the triggers that can lead to mental health issues – such as lack of trust, communication and relationship breakdowns, and the possible lack of extended family ties – and provides a framework outlining effective approaches to support positive mental health. The emphasis here is on developing a school and classroom climate which builds a sense of connectedness and purpose so that all children can thrive. It also highlights the need to promote staff wellbeing and address stress levels.

The framework demonstrates how to engage the whole school community, so pupils feel their voice is heard, and parents, carers and families – particularly those of pupils in difficulties who could feel stigmatised – feel they genuinely participate.

The challenge for schools

- One in ten children and young people have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and/or emotional and behaviour problems (often the same children) and around one in seven have less severe problems that interfere with their development and learning.
- Anti-social behaviour and conduct disorder affect over five per cent of children, particularly boys, while anxiety and depression affect four per cent.
- Suicide is one of the three most common causes of death in youth and is now rising – in 2014, there was a 43 per cent rise in the number of young people who admitted attempting suicide.
- Self-harm and eating disorders are also increasing, with one in 12 children and young people said to self-harm.

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Strategies that work

The framework advocates a range of evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes in mental health and wellbeing.

Adopt whole-school thinking:

- Use a 'whole school approach', which ensures that all parts of the school organisation work coherently together.
- Provide a solid base of positive universal work to promote wellbeing and help prevent problems.
- Develop a supportive school and classroom climate and ethos, which builds a sense of connectedness, focus and purpose, the acceptance of emotion, respect, warm, relationships and communication, and the celebration of difference.
- Start early with skills-based programmes, preventive work, the identification of difficulties and targeted interventions.
- Work intensively, coherently, and carry on for the long term.
- Promote staff wellbeing, and particularly address staff stress levels.

Prioritise professional learning and staff development:

- Understand the risk factors to wellbeing, and help pupils develop the resilience to overcome adverse circumstances.
- Raise staff awareness about mental health problems and the school's role in intervening early.
- Base responses on a sound understanding of child and adolescent development.
- Help all pupils cope with predictable changes and transitions, and keep abreast of new challenges posed by technology.

Develop supportive policy:

- Ensure that there are robust policies and practice in areas such as behaviour, anti-bullying and diversity, including tackling prejudice and stigma around mental health.

Implement targeted programmes and interventions:

- Ensure high-quality implementation of specific programmes and interventions.
- Explicitly teach social and emotional skills, attitudes and values, using well-trained and enthusiastic teachers and positive, experiential and interactive methods.
- Integrate this learning into the mainstream processes of school life.

Implement targeted responses and identify specialist pathways:

- Provide more intense work on social and emotional skills development for pupils in difficulties, including one to-one and group work.
- Use specialist staff to initiate innovative and specialist programmes to ensure they are implemented authentically. Then, whenever possible, transfer responsibility to mainstream staff to ensure sustainability and integration.
- Where pupils experience difficulties, provide clear plans and pathways for help and referral, using a coherent teamwork approach, including in the involvement of outside agencies such as CAMHS.

Connect appropriately with approaches to behaviour management:

- Respond wisely to 'difficult' behaviour – actively, with clear consequences, but also understanding its deeper roots, taking opportunities to model and teach positive alternatives.

Why promote positive mental health?

It can be tempting for schools under pressure to see work to promote wellbeing and address mental health problems as a luxury or optional extra. This, however, runs contrary to the strong evidence on the links between wellbeing, learning and school improvement, brought together by Public Health England.

Shaping the future of CPD

Some indicative evidence from this report confirms:

- Children with greater wellbeing, lower levels of mental health problems and greater emotional attachment to school achieve higher grade scores, better examination results, better attendance and drop out less often.
- Social and emotional skills are a more significant determinant of academic attainment than IQ.
- There is a strong correlation between the quality of PSHE in a school and the school's overall effectiveness.

Schools can therefore be confident that a focus on wellbeing and mental health not only enables them to provide healthy and happy school environments for pupils and staff, but also directly supports their more immediate mission – the promotion of effective learning.

This report by IRIS Connect explores professional learning and outlines recommendations for schools, national policy and inter-school collaboration. The themes include the importance of enabling trust, capacity, collaboration and teacher-led approaches to research, evidence and CPD, as well as the potential of technology to act as a powerful lever in the future of CPD.

The report explores:

- the need to build trust at all levels of the education system
- ways to create capacity to focus on the important, yet not always perceived urgent, issue of CPD
- establishing routes to meaningful collaboration between schools and with universities
- developing formative approaches to evidence and the evaluation of CPD
- utilising technology as a powerful lever to release potential in schools.

Key recommendations

Nationally:

- Maintain a tight focus on the importance of evidence-based professional learning opportunities.
- Reassure the profession that a College of Teaching will be truly independent.
- Ensure that Ofsted becomes a part of the fabric of school improvement and does not drive the urgent at the expense of the important.
- Develop a system of accreditation that validates and acknowledges the impact and value of ongoing, school-based professional learning activities.
- Review and clarify the position of the 'lead' school in a teaching school alliance and the consequences if it does not remain 'outstanding'.

Regarding inter-school collaboration:

- Ensure there is a focus on the skills of the whole group or alliance, rather than just within the lead school so that knowledge becomes 'co-creation' across all the schools.
- Develop common understandings around language processes, and be clear about what great teaching looks like.
- Invest in technology that enables iterative collaboration between and across schools.
- Develop clear processes for collaborative enquiry within inter-school alliances.
- Keep the end in mind when developing learning opportunities and ensure these translate into the need of pupils attending schools with different identities, challenges and opportunities.

For schools:

- Ensure that there is clarity on the purpose of lesson observations, so formative development remains distinct from the accountability framework.
- Form a knowledge-creating school through peer reflection groups, lesson study and research processes, combined with activities to inform these with specialist expertise.
- Embed professional learning as an on-going process within the school timetable.
- Enable sharing of practice in a non-judgemental culture, which also acknowledges the importance of informed risk-taking.
- Develop and exploit the opportunities of technology as a collaborative tool within agreed protocols to help ensure teacher control and authorisation.

The power of reading: How the next government can unlock every child's potential through reading

Read On. Get On. is a national campaign to get every child in the UK reading well by the age of 11. An inability to read well risks a life of poverty and struggle for too many of today's children. The mission of the campaign is to ensure every child is able to read well when they leave primary school by the year 2025.

This report, published by Save The Children on behalf of the Read On. Get On. campaign, sets out key recommendations for the next government regarding reading in the two crucial domains where national government has influence – nurseries and primary schools.

The problem

An inability to read well risks a life of poverty and struggle. Poorer children who fall behind in reading at an early age earn around 20 per cent an hour less in later life, which says poor-quality nursery provision is letting the most disadvantaged children down.

Campaigners say the quality of private nurseries – which make up 75 per cent of England's provision – is too variable and weakest in the most disadvantaged areas. Half of England's privately run nurseries do not employ a single graduate teacher, according to research by the group. This report warns that this is contributing to literacy problems among children, which manifest themselves at primary school – a fifth of all children in England, and close to a third of the poorest children, are unable to read well when they leave Key Stage 2. This is a crucial contributing factor towards the persistent educational divide in England, which sees thousands of children from low-income families significantly underperform at school each year.

Furthermore, among poorer children, those who were the best readers at age ten go on to earn 20 per cent more per hour on average at age 40 than those with the weakest reading skills. This could be equivalent to an extra day's wages each week. A 20 per cent increase in hourly pay for those on the lowest incomes would make the difference between earning the minimum wage and the living wage.

The solution

The report calls on politicians to ensure that by 2020, all nurseries, especially those serving disadvantaged children, have at least one graduate trained in the early years. It estimates that this would require 11,000 more graduates. At the moment, just 13 per cent of staff in independent nurseries have a relevant degree.

The report suggests offering nurseries that employ an early-years teacher an increased early-years Pupil Premium of £1,300 for three- and four-year-olds.

Key policy priorities for the next government:

- Early education in every nursery in England to be led by an early years graduate by 2020, with government support initially focused on nurseries serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Every nursery in England to have at least one non-graduate member of staff with an intermediate level qualification in young children's speech, language and communication.
- The creation of a cross-departmental early years minister to coordinate Whitehall strategy and delivery on early years services across health, education and local government.
- A new strategy for improving the teaching of reading comprehension, especially for older primary school children.
- Working with schools to develop a new generation of school leaders for literacy, focusing on primary schools serving disadvantaged children.
- Focusing school accountability on children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are falling behind, by exploring reforms to the pupil premium.

**Young adults
and politics
today:
Disengaged
and
disaffected or
engaged and
enraged?**

Eighty per cent of young adults say they have little or no trust in politicians – but this doesn't mean they aren't interested in politics, says new research from the UCL Institute of Education (IOE).

This report shows that young adults with lower levels of education are substantially less likely to vote and to be politically engaged than those with university degrees or A-levels. By age 23, less than a third (31 per cent) of those who left school at 16 definitely plan to vote in future, compared with nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of young people with degrees.

This 12-year study has followed the first cohort to have had statutory citizenship education in schools, starting at age 11.

The study shows that all young people get more interested in politics from their mid-teens onwards. By the time they are in their mid-20s, almost 50 per cent surveyed say that 'it is every adult's duty to vote in elections'. The data showed that students who reported receiving a lot of citizenship education at school were more likely to hold positive attitudes to civic and social participation. In addition, they were more likely to feel that they could effect change in their communities and in politics generally.

This underlines the importance of strengthening citizenship education throughout schooling, and the need to ensure it is continued in post-16 education and training, say the researchers.

Key findings:

- Eighty per cent of young adults report very low levels of trust in politicians, but this does not mean that they are not interested in politics nor that they think that voting is unimportant.
- Voting remains the most frequently reported political activity, and there is potential to increase turnout in the 2015 general election – 50 per cent of young adults reported that they are 'very likely' to vote in May and a further 25 per cent said that they are 'fairly likely' to do so.
- When asked 'what is the single most important issue facing the country at the present time?' the most common responses from the young adults were:
 - immigration (18.3 per cent)
 - unemployment (18.1 per cent)
 - the state of the economy (11.8 per cent).
- The young adults who are concerned about unemployment were more likely to have low qualifications, and to be looking for better qualifications and improved routes into work.

- Housing was also a widespread concern for young adults – almost 80 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that ‘the government should make landlords do the repairs and charge fair rents’.
- Many young adults are using social media for political discussions, but only a small proportion are involved in non-institutional forms of political engagement such as boycotts or starting campaigns.
- Some young adults are more likely to vote and to be politically engaged than others – intragenerational differences in political engagement can be just as important as intergenerational differences.
- The engagement gap in political interest and engagement is already apparent at a young age and tends to increase as young people progress through the education system.
- Young people get more interested in politics and in voting as they progress through adolescence and into early adulthood, particularly between ages 16 and 20. This suggests a crucial role for strengthening citizenship education in post-16 education and training settings.
- Can citizenship education help boost youth political engagement? Yes, education for citizenship in schools (inside and outside the classroom) can increase positive attitudes towards voting and other political activities. However, the challenges must not be underestimated and other social groups (families, NGOs, political parties) also have a role to play.

Policy recommendations:

- Strengthen citizenship education in schools, and ensure that it is continued in post-16 education and training settings.
- Continue to support opportunities for learning about citizenship through ‘real life’ practice and ‘active citizenship’, including through school councils.

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