



Response to the Estyn thematic review
‘Healthy and happy:
School impact on pupils’ health and Wellbeing’

Report title:

'Healthy and happy: school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing'

Report details

The report was commissioned by the Welsh Government's Education Directorate to ascertain how well primary and secondary schools in Wales support the health and wellbeing of pupils.

The report reviews whether and how well schools apply a whole school approach in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils in schools across Wales. It also includes case studies of notable and innovative practice observed by inspectors.

Summary of Main Findings

Around two-thirds of primary schools and a third of secondary schools in Wales have an inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing. These schools aim to make sure that the everyday school experience of pupils is consistent with messages given about health and wellbeing in lessons, assemblies and in school policies. They develop pupils as healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society – one of the four purposes of the emerging new curriculum for Wales.

Most other schools have several strong aspects to their support for pupils' health and wellbeing, despite their approach not being fully whole-school. Discrepancy between the messages given and the lived experience of pupils is a key reason why secondary schools are less successful than primary schools in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing. The changes that come with adolescence also make it more challenging for secondary schools to support pupils' health and wellbeing.

Leaders are responsible for promoting staff wellbeing, protecting staff from excessive workload and ensuring that they are safe in work. Schools where pupil wellbeing is supported effectively tend also to provide strong support for staff wellbeing.

Involving pupils meaningfully in the evaluation and development of a school's work to support their health and wellbeing is a key factor for success. Pupils' sense of belonging and value is often rooted in the extent to which they feel that staff care about them, take time to get to know them, and listen to their views.

The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and in peer relationships between pupils is a critical factor in whether or not pupils thrive in school. Pupils report that simple actions like teachers smiling and greeting them by name, and engaging in positive conversation at the start of the school day, help them settle and feel cared for, whereas the few teachers who shout at pupils, embarrass them, or treat them unfairly, harm their sense of wellbeing. In a few schools, leaders devolve responsibility for health and wellbeing too

much to one member of staff, or a small team of staff. These schools lose the sense that health and wellbeing is everyone's business, and leave pupils with a perception that not everyone cares.

All schools provide learning experiences relating to health and wellbeing, including physical education (PE) and personal and social education (PSE). Primary schools tend to provide better quality experiences in PSE, whereas secondary schools tend to provide better quality experiences in PE. However, primary schools generally do not teach sex and relationships education well, and secondary schools do not give enough time to PE as pupils get older. All primary and secondary schools use a range of strategies to support pupils who have specific needs relating to their health and wellbeing. The effectiveness of these strategies is heavily dependent on the quality of the relationship between the staff and pupils involved.

In addition to their own work, all schools work with staff from various external agencies, such as counsellors, nurses, police officers, social workers and youth workers. This multi-agency work is most effective in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing when each party trusts each other and understands how best to work together in the pupils' best interests. Schools' work with parents similarly works well when schools have built trust and communicate effectively.

Pupils are critical of school toilets that are not accessible, clean or safe. Pupils in around half of the schools surveyed – mainly secondary schools – expressed concern about toilets. Concerns raised included general uncleanliness, closed facilities, locks on cubicle doors that are missing or do not work, a lack of sanitary disposal facilities, no hot water or handwash, and unsuitable arrangements for transgender pupils.

Few teachers enter the profession with substantial background training in child or adolescent development, or how best to support children's health and wellbeing. Only a minority of staff in schools think that the training or guidance they have received initially or in-service has helped them to support pupils with their wellbeing and mental health.

Overall comment

The Welsh Government concurs with the findings of this review which supports the development of a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing. This is in line with the announcement in September 2018 that the Minister for Education and Minister for Health and Social Services would jointly convene a Task and Finish Group to advise them on how best to improve emotional and mental wellbeing in schools by fostering a whole school approach. This places the school at the heart of the community with students, teachers and other school staff, together with statutory service providers, parents/carers and the wider community, working together to meet the emotional and mental health needs of young people.

In relation to the individual recommendations:

The Welsh Government should:

R9 - Ensure that pupils' health and wellbeing is valued in accountability approaches used in the education system.

Welsh Government response:

Accept: The Welsh Government accepts the findings of the Estyn report.

Part of the work of the joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group is the development of national guidance and a template (developed in conjunction with schools to be ready for consultation at the end of 2019) to help schools devise their own wellbeing plans. We will expect their plans to include information on approaches in place that ensure regular self-assessment and accountability.

The new continuous improvement resources for schools. (Self-Evaluation Toolkit) includes a strand on wellbeing. The draft accountability framework, will require schools to use a far wider set of data to assess all their work including wellbeing, with less of a focus on a narrow set of indicators, which in turn should have a beneficial effect on the wellbeing of both staff and pupils.

Initial teacher education providers should:

R8 - Ensure that new teachers are trained to understand child and adolescent development and prepared to support pupils' health and wellbeing

Welsh Government comment:

In line with delivery of the new curriculum, wellbeing will form part of the new syllabus from September 2019. The curriculum for ITE under the terms of the new accreditation is being developed by universities in readiness for delivery from September 2019. At this time it is too late to develop meaningful new course content and have it available for delivery to students from September 2019. However, we are working through the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) Cymru to develop materials which support enrichment. This proposal is still at its early stages but we envisage that materials will be ready for use from September 2020.

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R6 - Support schools to develop a whole-school approach to health and wellbeing

R7 - Support effective working between schools and other agencies in the best interests of children and young people and their families

Schools should:

R1 - Develop a coherent whole-school approach that supports all pupils' health and wellbeing

R2 - Strengthen relationships between staff and pupils and peer relationships between pupils

R3 - Improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences on health and wellbeing, within a broad a balanced curriculum

R4 - Take better account of pupils' views and academic research in developing their approaches to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing

R5 - Ensure that the school's environment and services support pupils' health and wellbeing

Welsh Government comment:

The Education Directorate's Support for Learners Division will write to local authorities and regional consortia drawing their attention to the recommendations placed on them and on schools by this report. We will also ensure activity is accounted for as part of the reporting arrangements for the Ministerial Task and Finish Group.

Publication details

The report will be published on 13 June 2019 and can be found on Estyn's website: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales>



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