



The Wellbeing Award for Schools Impact, Best Practice and What Works

October 2019



in partnership with



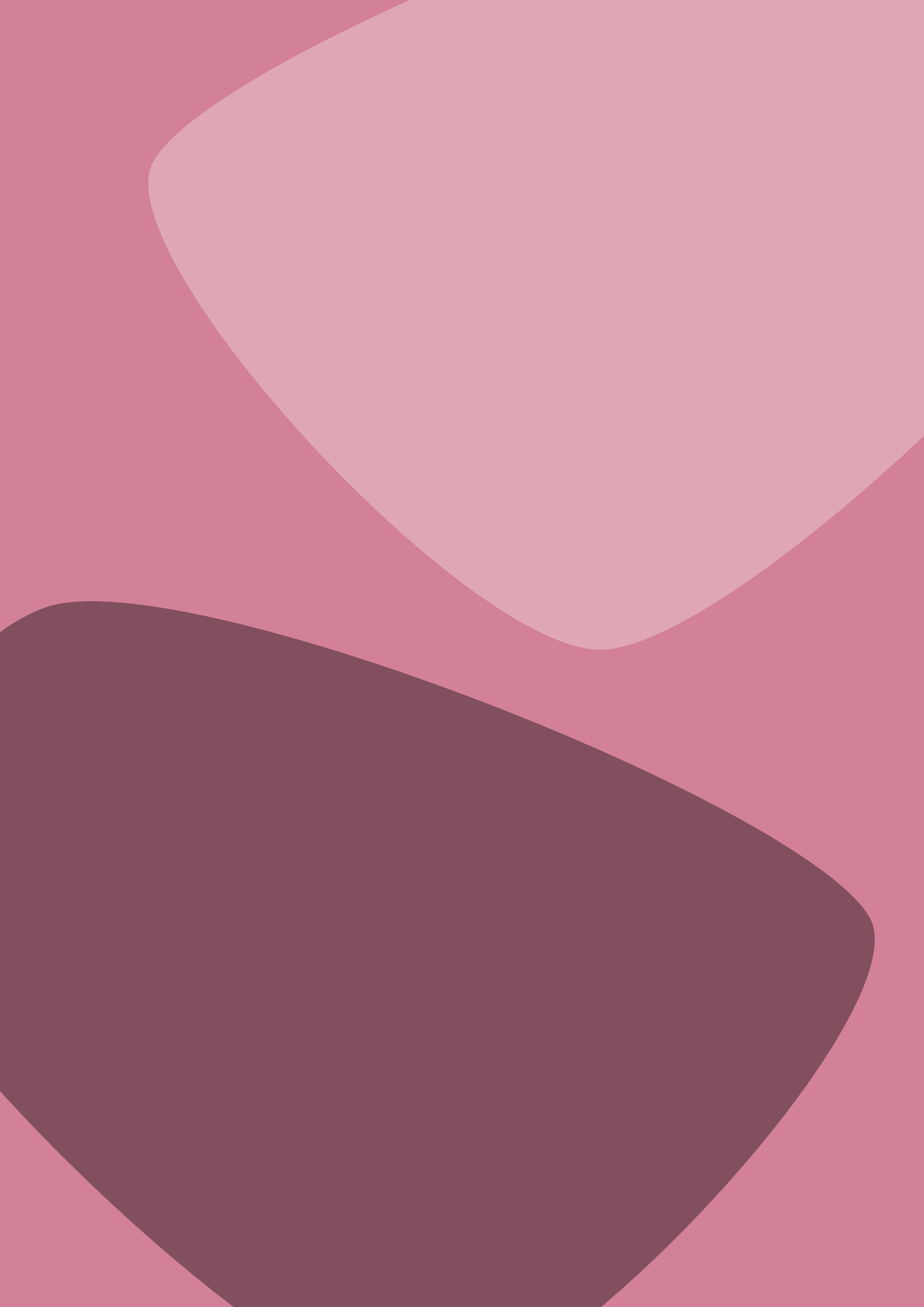


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Executive summary

Developed by Optimus Education in partnership with NCB, the Wellbeing Award for Schools provides formal recognition that a school has met very high standards of provision for emotional wellbeing and mental health.

It provides schools with a rigorous framework for implementing a range of strategies to bring about positive change for the wellbeing and mental health of the whole school.

The impact of the award on schools has been overwhelmingly positive. It has brought about tangible changes for schools who now view wellbeing as an essential and integral part of their culture, embedded into their school DNA.

Our research shows that the **Well-being Award for Schools** has had an impact in six key areas:

Wellbeing has just become embedded in our school now. It's part of everything we do...

1

Reduced stigma

95% of schools agreed that the award had helped reduce the stigma around mental health

“The taboo around mental health is just disintegrating...”

2

Improved pupil behaviour

95% of schools agreed the award had made an impact on pupil's behaviour in some capacity

“The impact on behaviour has been really good....”

3

Improved pupil wellbeing

93% of schools agreed the award had a large or medium impact on pupils

“Pupils are more willing to approach staff or peers if they have a problem...”

4

Improved staff wellbeing

93% of schools agreed the award had a large or medium impact on staff

“We have always had a focus on nurturing the children but the award made us think more about nurturing our staff...”

5

Improved parental wellbeing

93% of schools agreed the award had a large or medium impact on parents

“The award has led to a phenomenal journey for some parents – it's been absolutely brilliant for them...”

6

Improved staff morale

75% of schools agreed the award had an impact either on staff morale, staff retention or staff absence / sickness

“Staff morale has definitely improved...”

Introduction

About Optimus Education

Optimus Education is a leading provider of professional development support and school improvement services for schools, academies and other educational institutions. Since 1997 they have been helping primary and secondary school leadership teams to manage staff development efficiently and effectively, stay compliant and drive whole school improvement. They offer an extensive range of high quality educational support services across all Key Stages, including curriculum development, school improvement, training, conferences, and educational resources.

Their range of non-curricular awards accredit schools for outstanding provision and support them to achieve long-term, sustainable school improvement. It includes:

- Wellbeing Award for Schools
- Leading Parent Partnership Award
- Excellence in Pupil Development Award
- Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award
- SEND Inclusion Award
- Effective School Governance Award

About National Children's Bureau

For over 50 years, National Children's Bureau (NCB) have been at the forefront of campaigning for children and young people's rights to protect the children whose welfare is most at risk. They identify the most serious issues putting children and young people

at risk and bring people and organisations together to drive change in society. Their vision is for every child to be safe, secure and supported and their mission is to build a better childhood for every child.

To deliver effective change, NCB uses evaluation and research to evidence the impact of services and explore how practice can be improved to meet the needs of all children and young people. By establishing a firm evidence base, they help build sector understanding, inform best practice and influence government policy.

The Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools is a national network coordinated by NCB of more than 50 organisations from the education, health and wellbeing, and children's sectors that supports schools and provide services to improve the wellbeing and mental health of all children in education. Their vision is that wellbeing and good mental health is a strategic priority and embedded into the culture and ethos of every school¹.

The Partnership produced 'What Works' guidance for schools in promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health in schools. This guidance was developed by Professor Katherine Weare². This led to a self-assessment and improvement tool for school leaders to support them in implementing a whole school approach for emotional wellbeing and mental health³, which is complemented by a set of resources to support in the application of the tool.⁴

¹ <https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/together-we-deliver-better-childhood/transforming-mental-health-wellbeing/partnership>

² What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools?; National Children's Bureau, 2015

https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Health_wellbeing_docs/ncb_framework_for_promoting_well-being_and_responding_to_mental_health_in_schools.pdf

³ 'A whole school framework for emotional well being and mental health'; National Children's Bureau 2016

https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Tool%20FINAL1_0.pdf

⁴ 'A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health: Supporting resources for school'; National Children's Bureau 2016

https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Policy_docs/Briefings/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Resources%20FINAL.pdf

Development of the Wellbeing Award for Schools

Building on the long-term success of its existing awards, in 2016 Optimus Education commissioned research into a series of new awards, including the Wellbeing Award for Schools. Initial feedback showed that mental health was a growing concern for schools, whilst further research suggested they needed help in improving their support for pupil wellbeing.

At the same time, an NCB survey⁵ showed the rising number of pupils suffering from mental health issues as reported by school leaders:

- 55% said there had been a large increase in anxiety or stress
- Over 40% reported a big increase in the problem of cyberbullying
- 79% reported an increase in self harm or suicidal thoughts amongst students.

Optimus Education and NCB consequently joined in partnership to conceive, design and develop an award that would help promote positive emotional wellbeing and mental health across the whole school. Expanding on the 'What Works' guidance, a robust framework of objectives and KPIs was developed that would help schools plan, implement and evidence best practice in mental health provision.

The Wellbeing Award for Schools officially launched in September 2017.

Achieving the Wellbeing Award for Schools

To achieve the award, schools go through a process of self-evaluation, action planning, portfolio building and finally verification to show they have achieved the necessary standards:

- **Self-evaluation:** Schools evaluate their provision using the award KPIs and identify current strengths and areas for improvement. They gather feedback from key stakeholders (pupils, parents, staff) to ensure a whole-school approach.
- **Action planning:** Schools create an action plan that targets specific areas for improvement and identify the steps needed to achieve all the KPIs. A Change Team is established to help drive through these actions across the school.
- **Portfolio building:** Schools collect evidence that shows they have the evidence to meet the award framework and highlight their successes and achievements.
- **Verification:** Schools are visited by a trained award verifier who collaboratively assesses the evidence. Successful schools are accredited for three years.

The award takes between 12-15 months to complete and for schools who choose the 'Adviser-Led' route, delivery is supported by a national network of highly skilled advisers.

Award framework

The award is built on a robust framework of eight objectives which epitomise best practice. Each of these objectives contain a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), against which schools provide evidence of their achievements. There are 48 KPIs in total.

- **Objective 1:** The school is committed to promoting and protecting positive emotional wellbeing and mental health by achieving the Wellbeing Award for Schools.
- **Objective 2:** The school has a clear vision and strategy for promoting and protecting emotional wellbeing and mental health, which is communicated to all involved with the school.

⁵ 'Keeping young people in mind'; National Children's Bureau and ASCL, 2016 <https://www.ncb.org.uk/news-opinion/news-highlights/school-leaders-voice-concerns-over-childrens-mental-health-care>

- **Objective 3:** The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.
- **Objective 4:** The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- **Objective 5:** The school prioritises professional learning and staff development on emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- **Objective 6:** The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the whole-school community and has systems in place to respond appropriately.
- **Objective 7:** The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- **Objective 8:** The school works in partnerships with other schools, agencies and available specialist services to support emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Achieving accreditation is a rigorous and challenging process, but as this report shows, an exceptionally rewarding process with benefits of immeasurable impact for everyone.

Purpose of the report

Within two years of launch, over 1000 schools have taken part in the Wellbeing Award for Schools, benefitting the lives of thousands of pupils, families and staff across the country.

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1 Highlight the impact that the award has had on schools who have already achieved verification.
- 2 Disseminate the good practice that has been demonstrated by schools undertaking the award.
- 3 Provide a baseline record of impact so we can measure progress over time and highlight new areas for focus as they emerge.

The report includes many practical examples based on evidence of ‘what works’, as well as ideas and strategies for schools to help improve mental health and wellbeing. We hope that the report proves useful not only to schools, their senior leaders and practitioners, but also to academics, government and others involved in promoting effective emotional wellbeing and mental health provision for schools.

Methodology

As of July 2019, 166 schools had achieved the Wellbeing Award for Schools. Named award coordinators across these schools were invited by email to take part in the research, via either a thirty-minute telephone interview or by completing an online survey. The same questions were asked in both the interview and the survey, although the interviewees were able to go into much more detail with their answers. All interviews were recorded with permission. In total, 56 responses were obtained, which equated to a 34% response rate.

Table 1 Respondents by type of school

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special	Independent
Interviews	20	5	3	10	2
Surveys	36	22	10	2	2
Total	56	27	13	12	4

It was just an incredibly positive experience for our school. We thoroughly enjoyed completing the award and are looking forward to going from strength to strength...

IMPACT 1

Reduced stigma around mental health

95%
of schools said the award had helped reduce stigma

Since doing the award, members of staff have come forward and talked about mental health issues that we weren't aware of...

Objective 3 The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.

- To achieve the award, schools implement positive ways of talking about, and removing the stigma around, mental health.
- Schools run campaigns to create an awareness of the importance of positive emotional wellbeing and make it acceptable to talk about mental health problems.
- Schools involve the whole school community (pupils, staff, parents) in putting together a wellbeing strategy to ensure everyone understands their role in promoting and protecting emotional wellbeing and mental health.

IMPACT

The biggest impact of the award on schools was the incredible reduction in the stigma attached to mental health. Many schools reported a big improvement in the attitude of pupils towards mental health, with staff feeling much more comfortable talking about any stress or mental health difficulties they are having. This was a big change from previously when staff may have preferred to mask their difficulties citing a physical illness. Likewise, parents felt they weren't being judged if they talked about their own problems within school.

What schools did

Schools were able to reduce stigma by:

- Talking about mental health
- Setting up staff training programmes to increase knowledge and awareness
- Running wellbeing events to get everyone talking about mental health
- Increasing communications to parents to raise the profile of mental health

Parents feel they are able to come and be emotional and talk about their problems because we don't stigmatise...

Staff are happier to say if they are struggling and need support...

Staff are now much more confident in saying when they are not ok...

Students certainly have the vocabulary to talk about how they are feeling now...

It's not seen as a negative for children to say they want support with their wellbeing...

Parents have no problem saying how they are feeling...

Talking about mental health

Objective 3 The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.

- To achieve the award, schools raise awareness across the whole school community of the importance of emotional wellbeing and mental health.

IMPACT

Undoubtedly the main impact the award had on pupils, staff and parents was raising the profile of wellbeing and getting people talking about mental health issues across the whole school. By committing to the award, schools identified that wellbeing was important to them and helped them bring the issue to the forefront of everyone's mind.

In primary and secondary schools, pupils were much more able to express themselves and talk more confidently and openly about mental health and their feelings. In secondary schools, they were more likely to ask for help.

Ideas to try in your school

Get your school talking about positive wellbeing and what it means through:

- Regular assemblies
- Tutor programmes
- Form activities
- External speakers



We've just talked about wellbeing more and there's a lot more awareness. We've allowed children to know it's ok not to have a healthy mind all the time...



Running wellbeing events

Objective 3 The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.

- To achieve the award, schools raise awareness across the whole school community of the importance of emotional wellbeing and mental health.

IMPACT

Many schools launched the award and raised awareness around mental health with some kind of wellbeing event. Pupils and families engaged well with these events, learning about wellbeing and strategies to promote it. Finding a partner like Mind to sponsor the event often helped.

Ideas to try in your school



Raise awareness in your school by organising events that promote wellbeing to the whole school:

- Kick start the award with a 'wellbeing week' – time away from the normal timetable for pupils to experience a range of wellbeing activities and events.
- Introduce a wellbeing day – 'Mindful Monday', 'Wellbeing Wednesday' or 'Thoughtful Thursday' - where every week you run activities that benefit pupil wellbeing. Try dog therapy, mindfulness, relaxation or healthy eating sessions.
- Establish an annual wellbeing event where families can come and learn more about mental health. Give out lots of information and prizes promoting positive wellbeing and mental health.

Best practice

We ran a 'wellbeing festival' with lots of stalls promoting mental health.

It was sponsored by the Kaleidoscope mental health charity and we had over 20 mental health organisations involved – promoting things like mindfulness, yoga, counselling, sports for kids, awareness of FGM.

Our families came and enjoyed it – it really opened up the conversation about mental health...

Ella Savell-Boss, Director of Safeguarding
Shireland Collegiate Academy



One of our biggest achievements was the 'wellbeing afternoon' – we had really good feedback...

Increasing communications to parents

Objective 7 The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools work in partnership with parents/carers to respond to their views and needs.

IMPACT

Signposting resources and information on where parents could find help had a big impact for most schools. A significant amount of time was spent by schools improving their communication strategy with parents and setting up better and more frequent channels of communication.

We are now seeking as many different platforms and opportunities as possible to engage with parents about mental health issues so that they are being talked about and then normalised...

Ideas to try in your school

Engage parents about mental health in your school:

Create a new mental health and wellbeing page on your school website, highlighting:

- Information about the award
- Activities that the school are doing to promote wellbeing and mental health
- Information about the pastoral team
- Signposts to places for help
- Signposts to free local wellbeing activities
- Relevant blogs, articles and news items.

Launch on social media:

- Set up the school on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to promote the school's involvement with wellbeing and the award.

Send out information leaflets:

- Use leaflets and booklets from established organisation like the Anna Freud Society, or get pupils designing their own
- Include information on spotting the signs of mental health problems and how to support children experiencing difficulties.

Set up a newsletter:

- Introduce a specific termly wellbeing newsletter for parents, highlighting the importance of emotional wellbeing and positive mental health
- Include a clear understanding of how your school supports pupil mental health
- Signpost to further events, resources and helpful contacts
- If you can't have a specific wellbeing newsletter, make sure you include wellbeing as a standing item in your weekly newsletter.



IMPACT 2

Improved pupil behaviour

One child's behaviour changed beyond all recognition...

95%
of schools said the award had helped improve pupil behaviour

Objective 2 The school has a clear vision and strategy for promoting and protecting emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools review their policies to ensure they connect with their work on emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Schools review their behaviour policy and take a more therapeutic and relationship-based approach to supporting children with behavioural issues.
- Schools introduce wellbeing interventions that can stop issues escalating and that reduce behaviour incidents.

IMPACT

How pupils behave can often stem from how they are feeling about themselves emotionally. Schools noted the award specifically helped improve pupil behaviour in the following ways:

Better self-regulation

Schools reported that pupils now have the skills to self-regulate, leading to reduced anger incidents and frustrated behaviour.

Children are just much more able to self-manage. They've now got the strategies...

Children are more able to self regulate their emotions...

Improved emotional literacy

A notable impact in primary and secondary schools was how pupils have much more empathy, awareness and understanding of other children's feelings.

In addition, schools reported:

- Fewer exclusions (particularly in primary schools)
- Fewer behaviour incidents (particularly in special and secondary schools)
- Less anxiety and reduced panic attacks (particularly relating to exam stress)
- A generally calmer environment

What schools did

Schools were able to improve behaviour by:

- Introducing mindfulness
- Providing nurture groups and emotion coaching

INTRODUCING MINDFULNESS

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools provide a range of interventions for pupils appropriate to their needs.

IMPACT

According to schools, mindfulness was a 'very effective' technique for promoting calm and better behaviour in children, which in turn helped improve pupil progress.

Ideas to try in your school

Embed mindfulness into your curriculum:

- Introduce mindfulness classes on a weekly or even daily basis
- Try basic mind-quietening and breathing strategies in whole-school assemblies
- Invite expert speakers to come in to talk about mindfulness
- Train your own teachers in mindfulness so regular sessions can be run.



Best practice

We now have a whole-school mile walk every Friday, with specific time afterwards for relaxing, talking and being calm.

It's been really well received and has helped everybody's wellbeing...

Amy Cooper, Head Teacher
Crestwood Park Primary School



All our classes have up to an hour of mindfulness, relaxation or yoga each week...

Providing nurture groups and emotion coaching

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- As part of the award, schools provide a range of interventions for pupils appropriate to their needs.

IMPACT

Nurture groups and emotion coaching helped pupils to be able to identify their moods and emotions better. It also gave them strategies to move out of negative moods and into more positive and calmer states of mind.

These sessions were rated as highly successful, resulting in noticeable and positive differences in pupils and the overall school day. All participating schools planned to continue this type of coaching.

Ideas to try in your school

Work with mental health organisations, like Mind and the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, to bring in therapists to run group nurture sessions or emotion coaching, specific to the needs of your pupils.



We are giving pupils the coping strategies they need to manage themselves...



IMPACT 3

Improved pupil wellbeing

Life is just calmer – pupils know teachers are listening to them and that they do care for them...

93%
of schools said the award had a large or medium impact on pupils

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools gather information about the effectiveness of the support available for pupils' emotional and mental health needs and follow up appropriately.
- Schools undertake a review of their current provision for pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health and devise a customised strategy to address gaps or weaknesses.
- Schools prioritise identification of signs of emotional distress and have a clear pathway for referrals and interventions to support any identified needs.

IMPACT

Many schools who achieved the award already believed their provision for pupil's mental health to be of a good standard. Yet a massive 96% of primary schools agreed the award had a large or medium impact on pupil wellbeing.

What schools did

Schools were able to improve pupil wellbeing by:

- Training staff on mental health issues
- Reorganising the curriculum
- Identifying 'Wellbeing Champions'
- Offering counselling
- Signposting support
- Providing a calm space
- Listening to pupil voice

Impact on pupils

Type of school	Small impact	Medium impact	Large impact	Large + medium impact
Primary	4%	33%	63%	96%
Secondary	8%	38%	54%	92%
Special	8%	33%	58%	92%
Independent	25%	25%	50%	75%

Training staff on mental health issues

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools ensure all staff can identify and respond appropriately to signs of emotional or mental distress in pupils and each other.

IMPACT

The introduction of training on wellbeing and mental health for all staff as part of the award had a massive impact on schools. Previously staff felt ill-equipped and unable to support pupils with mental health difficulties effectively. Training gave staff the confidence and strategies to support pupils with emotional distress on a daily basis. The award also provided the impetus for more regular, extensive and customised training for staff on wellbeing.

Pupils have benefitted drastically from the whole-school training that we've now completed on mental health and wellbeing...

Ideas to try in your school



Give your staff confidence to identify and support pupils with mental health difficulties:

- Run a whole INSET day focusing on mental health
- Involve everyone in the school in training – not just teaching staff
- Bring in external organisations to run training sessions on:
 - Mental health first aid
 - Managing stress
 - Secondary trauma
 - Mindfulness
 - Positive psychology
 - Emotion coaching
 - Attachment
 - Self-harm
 - De-escalation
 - Complex emotional issues

Reorganising the curriculum

Objective 2 The school has a clear vision and strategy for promoting and protecting emotional wellbeing and mental health, which is communicated to all involved with the school.

- To achieve the award, schools review their provision and understand how they currently support emotional wellbeing and mental health, and where strengths, gaps or weaknesses in provision exist.

IMPACT

Evaluating and re-developing the PSHEE curriculum had a major impact on schools and pupil wellbeing. Schools took the opportunity to include more topics and diverse activities that support wellbeing and mental health like:

- Self-care
- Having a positive mindset
- Healthy eating
- The importance of exercise
- Coping strategies
- Body image
- Mindfulness / yoga
- Managing exam stress

Ideas to try in your school

Ensure your curriculum has a balance of positive wellbeing activities:

- Audit your school day – does it have enough exercise and outdoor activities in it?
- Review your PSHEE curriculum – are there any gaps?
- Listen to pupils – what are they anxious or concerned about? Get your pupils involved in establishing the school's wellbeing values and revamp your curriculum accordingly
- Add a 'wellbeing' day or afternoon to the timetable

Best practice

The award allowed us to really look at our curriculum and reinvent it.

We redesigned our day – we now start every day with exercise time. We offer a variety of options - parachute games, yoga, walk the mile, team games – and children choose what they want to do.

We feel it's a really positive start to the day. Children come into the classroom in a much better frame of mind, ready to learn...

Claire Traynor, Head Teacher
Hall Cliffe Primary School

We really thought about what our children need – and incorporated a lot of wellbeing and mental health objectives into the curriculum as a result...

Identifying Wellbeing Champions

Objective 7 The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools identify 'Wellbeing Champions' from across the whole-school community.

IMPACT

Schools described the Wellbeing Champions as a 'really effective' form of pupil leadership that makes a 'huge difference to individuals'.

Wellbeing Champions are the epitome of the concept that 'emotional wellbeing and mental health is the responsibility of all'. Pupils were chosen to provide another level of support for their peers and learnt new skills of conflict resolution, kindness and caring for others.

The role of the Wellbeing Champions in many schools was to:

- Keep an eye out for problems with other children in their class (i.e. bullying)
- Try and resolve any minor problems (i.e. playground arguments)
- Meet regularly with the school wellbeing coordinator to talk about wellbeing issues

Ideas to try in your school



Create new opportunities for pupil leadership in your school:

- Choose Wellbeing Champions from each year group or class
- Advertise the job of Wellbeing Champion and ask pupils to apply for the role
- Train your Wellbeing Champions as 'mental health first aiders'
- Invite your Wellbeing Champions to act as 'associate governors' for wellbeing
- Make a display of who your Wellbeing Champions are so pupils know who to talk to

Best practice



We love the Wellbeing Champions – the concept has worked really, really well!

Each classroom has two Wellbeing Champions who identify any issues there might be in the class, and then refer them to the class teacher or pastoral team.

We have a display of who the Champions are at the front of the school. They play an important role in identifying children who are unhappy, upset or sad.

The Champions buddy up with these children and will even try and reintegrate the upset child back into playtime or lunchtime...

Yogita Patel, Assistant Head Teacher
Westminster Primary School

We've seen a huge increase in children reaching out to our Wellbeing Champions with really successful outcomes...

Offering counselling

Objective 8 The school works in partnerships with other schools, agencies and available specialist services to support emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools identify and maintain links with appropriate local health, social care and voluntary and community sector services.

IMPACT

Secondary and special schools specifically introduced counselling services and group wellbeing sessions to help pupils with specific problems. The impact on pupils in many schools was large because the skills they developed from these sessions helped them maintain better emotional wellbeing.

Ideas to try in your school

Introduce a range of counselling services that fit with your pupils' needs:

- Art therapy
- Music / drama therapy
- Animal therapy
- Counselling via an anonymous phone line
- 'Time to talk' sessions with a school counsellor
- A 'wellbeing hub' staffed by trained practitioners where pupils can go to talk to somebody
- A wellbeing email address for pupils or parents who want to raise an issue



Best practice

Twelve of our support staff received counselling training to address pupils with low mood.

The benefit was the counsellors have allocated time to support pupils in school, leaving our teachers free for their other responsibilities...

Karen Pickles, Deputy Head
Mowbray School



We offer a listening service for children who need to talk...

Signposting support

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools provide signposts for pupils on appropriate information, services and support.

IMPACT

Following campaigns to raise awareness of mental health issues, schools signposted the various support routes that were available to pupils and the places they could go for help. Such signposting had a major impact for pupils.

Ideas to try in your school



Highlight who and where pupils can go to if they need support:

- Put up wellbeing noticeboards and emotional literacy displays in classrooms to promote wellbeing items and information
- Run competitions for pupils to design their own wellbeing posters, highlighting who to contact for support, and display them in every classroom
- Add stickers in pupil planners highlighting trusted adults
- Include help and wellbeing pages in student planners
- Organise a pastoral 'team tour' – where your pastoral team goes around the school reminding pupils of who they are and where pupils can find them if they need help

You could also introduce a 'worry box' – a way for pupils to share anything that is worrying them. Ask pupils to post cards into the box, check it daily and get the teacher or pastoral team to speak to the pupil individually. Lots of home and friendship issues can be discovered this way.

Best practice



We introduced a 'worry box' – it has been great for pupils who think they can't talk about their problems.

It's helped them get things off their chest and is another way for them to express what they are feeling.

We make it really clear that it's really important to talk about your feelings and what's worrying you – and that if you can't get the words out, then write it down...

Hannah Hesk, Teacher
Brownlow Fold Primary School

One of the key impact areas for us was pointing out to pupils the areas of support which were available to them...

Providing a calm space

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools provide a range of interventions for pupils appropriate to their needs.

IMPACT

Many secondary schools introduced a wellbeing room or hub – a calm place where pupils can drop in to talk to somebody in a non-judgemental space. In special schools, it was used more specifically as a place for pupils to go to self-regulate when they were in ‘melt-down mode’. The rooms are extremely popular with pupils who need time to calm down or speak with someone.

The Wellbeing Hub is a lovely supportive environment. Children know there are a multitude of reasons to go to the Hub so there isn't any issue with being there...

Ideas to try in your school



Ensure pupils have opportunities for calm by providing a wellbeing room:

- A dedicated space where pupils can visit if they need someone to talk to or some quiet time
- Put a trained counsellor or mentor on hand in the room at all times
- Offer calming activities like mindfulness, art therapy or lego building
- Situate the room in the main body of the school so that it's normal to visit and there's no stigma attached from dropping in.

Listening to pupil voice

Objective 7 The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have in place pupil voice mechanisms that are used regularly.

IMPACT

A noticeable impact of the award was the wider inclusion of pupil voice in deciding how to promote wellbeing across schools.

By listening to pupil voice, schools were able to implement changes that really mattered to pupils – such as redesigning outdoor spaces or choosing new resources.

Without the award we probably would not have got the children so involved...

Ideas to try in your school



Make sure you're listening to the pupils in your school:

- Use the Pupil Evaluation Forms to capture pupils' feedback on your school's provision
- Get pupils involved in the award Change Team (the whole-school group responsible for implementing cultural change as part of achieving the award)
- Recruit 'Wellbeing Champions' to act as mental health ambassadors for the school
- Start a 'pupil wellbeing working party' that allows pupils to say what's important to them
- Invite pupils to review and re-write school policies (e.g. the anti-bullying policy)
- Make mental health a standing item of the agenda on student forum meetings

IMPACT 4

Improved staff wellbeing

93%
of schools said the award had a large or medium impact on staff

Staff now feel that their wellbeing is considered important by the school leaders; they know mental health is a priority...

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools include staff emotional wellbeing and mental health specifically in their strategy and have a budget / resources to support this strategy.
- Schools use the Staff Evaluation Forms to gather feedback about their wellbeing and what provision they would like to see put in place to support them better.
- Schools publicly commit to promoting and funding staff wellbeing as part of their mental health strategy.



The award had an unprecedented impact on staff wellbeing, with an unprecedented 100% of primary schools reporting it had a large or medium impact on staff. The measures introduced by schools as part of the award had significant impact on a personal and whole-school level.

What schools did

Schools were able to improve staff wellbeing by:

- Training staff on the importance of wellbeing and positive mental health
- Organising wellbeing activities for staff
- Signposting support services
- Offering counselling
- Reducing staff workload

Impact on staff

Type of school	Small impact	Medium impact	Large impact	Large + medium impact
Primary	0%	52%	48%	100%
Secondary	8%	62%	31%	92%
Special	8%	33%	58%	92%
Independent	50%	25%	25%	50%

Training staff on the importance of wellbeing and positive mental health

Objective 5 The school prioritises professional learning and staff development on emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- As part of the award, schools have a programme of mental health awareness training that is available to all staff.

IMPACT

As a direct response of staff learning how to support the mental health of pupils, they also learnt how better to care for their own wellbeing. Many schools felt staff had benefitted enormously from learning how to promote their own wellbeing and mental health.

Ideas to try in your school

Arrange for all staff to be trained as Mental Health First Aiders



Our staff are now much more resilient and have a better understanding of self-care and what they need to do to look after their own wellbeing...



Organising wellbeing activities for staff

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have stress management and positive wellbeing activities in place for staff.

IMPACT

As part of the award, many schools introduced a range of wellbeing activities for their staff that improved their physical and emotional wellbeing.

There were lots of fitness and wellbeing sessions run after school, but regular mindfulness and yoga sessions were the most popular and seemed to have the most impact – with many staff reporting how it helped them both personally and also in their practice in the classroom.

The mindfulness course was brilliant! Staff absolutely loved it and asked for more of it...

Ideas to try in your school



Introduce these activities to maximise the physical and emotional wellbeing of your staff:

- Wellbeing activities like yoga, mindfulness, pilates or tai chi for calming exercise
- Fitness classes like Zumba, circuit training, trampolining for high impact
- Group exercise clubs like 'Friday football', 'Tuesday netball', or lunchtime walking / running clubs
- Free access to your sports and swimming facilities
- Don't forget less vigorous activities - like gardening, sewing, cookery classes and book clubs - can have a positive impact on wellbeing too!

Signposting support services

Objective 6 The school understands the different types of emotional and mental health needs across the school and has systems in place to respond appropriately.

- To achieve the award, schools provide signposts to appropriate information, services and support.

IMPACT

As a result of taking part in the award, schools were able to signpost staff to external services for support with their mental health and wellbeing. They highlighted what school resources were available to support mental health and wellbeing and they increased staff awareness of where to get help and support when needed.

The atmosphere has changed - staff are a lot happier, they feel they can be a lot more open, they feel like they will be listened to. This wasn't how it was before...

Ideas to try in your school



Make sure your staff know how to access support through clear signposting:

- Add 'help' pages to staff planners / intranet
- Put up a staff wellbeing noticeboard for preventative information and advice
- Create wellbeing staff booklets, newsletters or directory of the support services and benefits you offer
 - Private medical insurance
 - Employee Assistance Programme
 - Free gym memberships



Reducing staff workload

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools gather feedback from staff about the quality of support in place for their emotional wellbeing and mental health and follow up appropriately.

IMPACT

As a result of asking for more staff feedback, some schools identified staff workload as an issue and started to implement new ideas about how to reduce workload.

One school visited a nearby 'outstanding' school to see how they dealt with workload and have since completely changed their whole marking policy, now giving whole-class feedback rather than individual book marking. Another school simply changed the time of their staff meetings to great effect.

Ideas to try in your school

Show your staff you are committed to reducing their workload:

- Change the school day on a Friday so staff can finish earlier
- Review your assessment procedures to get rid of any duplication
- Revisit your communications policy to manage parent's expectations about email responses
- Reduce unnecessary meetings
- Provide more PPA time
- Restructure the timetable
- Change staff bus times



Best practice

We looked at reducing workload by moving staff professional development meetings from the end of the day to a Wednesday morning.

Staff are more engaged with the training now because they have their CPD at the start of the day and not at the end. It shows the value we put on both staff training and wellbeing.

By moving the training, we had a massive impact on staff wellbeing...

Alison Forrest, Deputy Head
Charford First School



The award has helped with staff absence. Before they would have just gone off sick - now they ask for help to support them and they continue coming to work...

Offering counselling

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have stress management and positive wellbeing activities in place for staff.

IMPACT

A popular initiative to help staff cope with difficult situations in their work and home life was the establishment of free counselling and debriefing services. Schools offered staff outlets for sharing difficult situations, reflecting on their practice and exploring the impact of stressful situations on their own wellbeing.

Ideas to try in your school

Give your staff the opportunity to talk about any of their problems via free counselling services such as:

- A dedicated telephone line
- A drop-in clinic during lunchtimes
- Staff debriefings or clinical supervisions following challenging days or incidents
- A termly 'Time for Talk' informal chat about mental health



Best practice

We introduced 'ER sessions' where staff can sign up for a session after school to debrief and talk about any issues or how they have done things.

It's an opportunity to have somebody facilitate professional development in a safe environment.

It's a very short structured meeting for how to improve your practice...

Georgina Ellis, Head Teacher
Churchill Special Free School



Staff now have outlets to talk about and share difficult days and to find solutions. This has worked really effectively...

IMPACT 5

Improved parental wellbeing

93%
of schools said the award had a large or medium impact on parents

We've had an unbelievable response from parents who were really struggling emotionally. Following some training, they are now back on their feet and it really helped...

Objective 7 The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools work in partnership with parents/carers to respond to their views and needs.
- Schools use the Parent Evaluation Forms to listen to parent/carers and gather information about their views and needs in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Schools consider the best type of communication to connect with parents/carers and include them in the school's vision for wellbeing.



Many schools found that engaging with parents the most challenging part of the award and were continuing their work to reach out to more disinterested or vulnerable parents. However, their hard work to improve channels of communication with parents paid off with many new initiatives and success stories to show. The impact on special schools was particularly high with 100% claiming a large or medium impact on parents.

What schools did

Schools were able to improve parent wellbeing by:

- Offering free training
- Providing parental support
- Encouraging parent voice

Impact on parents

Type of school	Small impact	Medium impact	Large impact	Large + medium impact
Primary	15%	59%	26%	85%
Secondary	15%	77%	8%	85%
Special	0%	67%	33%	100%
Independent	0%	100%	0%	100%

Offering free training

Objective 3 The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.

- To achieve the award, schools create an awareness across the whole school community of the importance of emotional wellbeing and mental health.

IMPACT

Across the board, schools ran a number of parental training, workshops and classes that helped parents understand their own child's mental health better – as well as their own. By offering information about positive wellbeing and mental health, as well signposting to any helpful services available, the sessions had a positive impact on both parents and pupils.

Ideas to try in your school



Increase parental awareness of mental health difficulties:

- Offer a Mental Health First Aid training course for parents
- Think about what sort of training would benefit your parents most:
 - Primary schools: mindfulness, healthy eating
 - Special schools: emotion coaching, self-regulation
 - Secondary schools: fuelling the teenage brain, anxiety, drug abuse
 - All parents: divorce, loss, bereavement
- Organise a coffee morning to engage parents with information and support
- Invite external agencies, local services and guest speakers along to offer further support
- Run a short wellbeing presentation during parents' evening when you have a captive audience

Best practice



We ran a wellbeing course for parents about recognising the importance of their own wellbeing, so that they could then support their children better.

We had incredible feedback – they hadn't thought about their own wellbeing being important, but they now felt valued themselves...

Alison Forrest, Deputy Head
Charford First School

We had fabulous feedback on our emotional first aid workshop for parents, with really high benefits for parents taking part...

Providing parental support

Objective 3 The school has a positive culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as the responsibility of all.

- To achieve the award, schools implement positive ways of talking about, and removing the stigma around, mental health.

IMPACT

As part of the award, many primary and special schools introduced 'drop in sessions' and support groups that helped parents open up and talk more about their own mental health.

Parents see us as someone they can come and talk to about their own home issues and we've been able to help them...

Ideas to try in your school

Improve parental wellbeing by offering:

- Parental relaxation classes
- Access to the school nurse
- Emotional support phone calls
- Art therapy
- CAMHS drop in sessions
- Signposts to free local activities – gardening clubs, aerobics, healthy eating courses



Encouraging parent voice

Objective 7 The school actively seeks the ongoing participation of the whole-school community in its approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools work in partnership with parents/carers to respond to their views and needs.

IMPACT

Most schools used the award as a platform for inviting more parental feedback, organising surveys and meetings to allow parents share their views. Introduced predominantly in special and secondary schools, some schools found parent forums a really successful way of communicating with parents.

Ideas to try in your school

Engage with parents and capture what is important to them regarding mental health:

- Use the Parent Evaluation Forms to capture parental feedback about wellbeing in your school
- Introduce a termly or half-termly forum for parents to suggest what better support could be put in place for themselves and their children, specifically for wellbeing.
- Ask parent governors or parent volunteers to lead the discussion rather than someone from the Senior Leadership Team – this will give parents the opportunity to speak freely.
- Provide a wellbeing email address for parents who want to raise any issues



Best practice

We started a parent forum once a term which has been really successful...

It's a chance for parents to tell the Senior Leadership Team what they need help on and to discuss what's going well and not so well. It also allows parents who often feel isolated and alone to build a network with each other.

At the end of the meeting, the staff leave the room so parents can voice any concerns they might feel uncomfortable talking about in front of staff.

This has been a really successful platform...

Larissa Shokar, Strategic Lead for Staff Emotional Wellbeing, Bladon House School



Parents are encouraged to be more open to ensure their voice is heard...

IMPACT 6

Improved staff morale

75%
of schools said the award had improved staff morale

The award has helped with staff absence. Before they would have just gone off sick – now they ask for help to support them and they continue coming to work...

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools specifically include staff emotional wellbeing and mental health in their strategy.
- Schools use the Staff Evaluation Forms to gather feedback about their wellbeing and what provision they would like to see put in place to support them better.
- Schools provide a range of wellbeing activities, interventions and rewards to keep staff feeling healthy and motivated.

IMPACT

Three quarters of schools reported that because of the award, they had seen an improvement on either staff morale, staff retention or staff absence / sickness, with the main reason being staff feeling more supported and valued.

As a consequence of the award, many schools reported that the award had helped to create a more positive working environment, where staff believed their wellbeing was considered a priority by school leaders. For the first time, many schools put aside a dedicated budget for staff wellbeing and just as importantly, asked staff what they wanted to do with it!

What schools did

Schools were able to improve staff morale by:

- Organising social events
- Listening to staff views
- Showing staff appreciation
- Offering wellbeing gestures
- Creating a pleasant working environment
- Including wellbeing in appraisals

Organising social events

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have budget and resources allocated for staff emotional wellbeing and mental health to fund positive wellbeing activities.

Ideas to try in your school



Raise morale and wellbeing in your school through organising social events:

- Go for a regular meal out (e.g. 'Curry Friday')
- Organise a special activity night out (e.g. bowling)
- Try a group cookery course

The impact on staff has been large – in fact, larger than large! The award has been absolutely brilliant for staff, and they've really, really enjoyed it!



Listening to staff views

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools gather feedback from staff about the quality of support in place for their emotional wellbeing and mental health and follow-up appropriately.

Ideas to try in your school



Make sure you listen to staff about what affects their mental health:

- Use the Staff Evaluation Forms to get feedback from your staff about what is important to them
- Hold discussion groups to see what things cause staff the most worry and stress and find out what things that really want help with
- Set up a staff forum or wellbeing group (possibly without the involvement of senior leaders) to give staff the opportunity to talk about their needs and concerns
- Introduce a suggestion box so staff can contribute their ideas for wellbeing.

Best practice



We introduced a Staff Voice Forum which takes place once every half-term.

It is attended by someone from every class and is a forum for being able to talk about wellbeing and mental health issues. Things like stress management, what would help the staff to do their job better given the right training etc.

It's had a big difference...

Larissa Shokar, Strategic Lead for Staff Emotional Wellbeing, Bladon House School

The atmosphere has changed - staff are a lot happier, they feel they can be a lot more open, they feel like they will be listened to. This wasn't how it was a couple of years ago...

Showing staff appreciation

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have budget and resources allocated for staff emotional wellbeing and mental health to fund positive wellbeing activities.

Ideas to try in your school



Raise morale by showing staff how much you appreciate their hard work and efforts:

- Introduce a staff 'shout out' board for any kind of praise, thanks or good practice
- Try a 'staff applause' system whereby staff are nominated and publicly praised for their hard work and commitment
- Send appreciation cards
- Nominate a 'star of the term' or start an 'attendance' award
- Include staff thank yous in the weekly bulletin

Staff have seen the most change - it's important to work in an environment where you feel like your views, your wellbeing and your mental health matter...



Offering wellbeing gestures

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools have budget and resources allocated for staff emotional wellbeing and mental health to fund positive wellbeing activities and reward systems.

Ideas to try in your school

Show your staff how much they are appreciated through 'wellbeing gestures'

- Introduce 'wellbeing days' so staff can take a day off to attend their own wellbeing
- Organise wellbeing goodies as weekly or end of term treats (e.g. 'Treat Tuesday')
- Arrange meetings with wellbeing breakfasts for a healthy start to the day
- Set up a dedicated staff wellbeing room (maybe even put in a massage chair!)
- Offer pamper packages (e.g. different kinds of therapies / massages)
- Organise 'wellbeing buddies' – pair staff up anonymously and ask them to monitor and improve their buddy's wellbeing throughout the week

- Introduce staff perks – coupons, vouchers, cinema tickets, free gym membership
- Consider a 'Golden Ticket' day – where staff get a day off work for long service.

Help your staff take time out from the hectic school day and find a quiet, safe space:

- Redecorate the toilets and provide small items like hand cream and nice towels
- Enhance your staffroom with a TV, fridge, microwave and comfortable chairs
- Offer free tea, coffee, toast, biscuits and fruit in the staff room



We put a budget aside for wellbeing and we now choose what we want to do with that money...

Including wellbeing in appraisals

Objective 4 The school actively promotes staff emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, school's staff appraisal systems ensure emotional wellbeing and mental health is recognised and monitored.

IMPACT

Changing their appraisal processes helped some schools really embed wellbeing into their culture, showing more sceptical staff that they were serious about mental health and that the award was not just a fad.

Performance management has become more of a coaching relationship which is more supportive and collaborative and less judgmental...

Ideas to try in your school



Integrate wellbeing into staff performance management:

- Make the promotion of pupil wellbeing a key element of staff self-evaluation
- Introduce a 'how are you feeling?' question at the start of the appraisal so the process doesn't solely focus on targets
- Stop formal observations as a form of performance management
- Include a space on lesson plans about the type of 'weather' the teacher has brought into the room – a formal acknowledgement of how the teacher makes the pupils feel
- Have a 'wellbeing check-in' at the start of each staff meeting
- Hold staff meetings that focus specifically on wellbeing

Other findings

Vision and focus

Objective 2 The school has a clear vision and strategy for promoting and protecting emotional wellbeing and mental health, which is communicated to all involved with the school.

- To achieve the award, schools develop a vision statement that puts emotional wellbeing and mental health at the heart of the school's aspirations.

IMPACT

A notable impact of the award was the clear direction and focus that the award provided. The process of self-evaluation and action planning highlighted the key areas of development, made schools consider carefully what they needed to do next and proved an 'invaluable tool' for helping schools move forward with their vision for wellbeing.

It has given us a clearer vision for the future...



Sharing best practice

Objective 8 The school works in partnerships with other schools, agencies and available specialist services to support emotional wellbeing and mental health.

- To achieve the award, schools work with other schools to share best practice and new learning, establishing networks where appropriate.

IMPACT

As a result of completing the award, many schools became a beacon of good practice and performed some great work in sharing their experiences and ideas with other schools. It was clear that schools preferred learning from other schools who have achieved the award (rather than external consultants) as this demonstrated that the award was manageable, achievable and could have a genuine impact on practice.

Ideas to try in your school

Create new partnerships to promote mental health:

- Visit other schools in your area to see what initiatives they have introduced
- Offer training and support to other schools on your journey and what you have learnt
- Get involved at local authority level by presenting at a county hall event
- If you're in a Trust, launch a wellbeing group for all of your schools to share good practice and introduce new initiatives



Best practice

The one area where we really struggled at the start with was partnerships and local / national collaboration.

As a result, we interacted with lots of other organisations – we linked up with a local school who were well ahead with wellbeing, we started making more links with our CCGs and CAMHS, we connected with our local heritage foundation, we got involved with Nuffield Health and other research institutes.

By the end of the award, the area that we GREW the most was our collaborations locally and nationally.

Without the award, we would have just done our own thing in our own little bubble...

Sarah Waseem, Assistant Head Teacher
The Highfield School

One of our strategic plans is to become a case study for wellbeing in schools...

Embedding wellbeing

IMPACT

The majority of schools interviewed outlined their plans to continue promoting wellbeing across the school. After working so hard to achieve the award, embedding and extending the changes implemented was considered a priority for most schools.

Although we've achieved the award, that doesn't mean the job is done... we can't stop now!

Ideas to try in your school



Embed wellbeing into your school DNA:

- Re-run any annual events for pupils and parents – like Wellbeing Weeks
- Train any new staff on Mental Health First Aid
- Continue with staff training on more specific mental health topics
- Create a long-term wellbeing action plan and review it regularly
- Ensure budgets for wellbeing and mental health stay in place
- Nominate members of staff to be responsible for introducing new wellbeing projects





Helpful organisations and resources

Anna Freud Society

Delivers pioneering mental health care for children and families.

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

Boxall Profile

Assessment of children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development.

<https://www.nurtureuk.org/introducing-nurture/boxall-profile>

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

Provides training and resources to help young people look after their mental wellbeing.

<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/>

Compass Buzz

Provides prevention and promotion training for the whole school workforce.

<https://www.compass-uk.org/buzz-training/>

Education Guru

Provides consultancy and training for pupil and staff wellbeing.

<http://www.educationguru.co.uk/>

Emotion Coaching UK

Provides training and consultancy for schools on emotion coaching for pupils.

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

Kaleidoscope

Promotes and supports positive health and wellbeing throughout the Midlands.

<https://www.kaleidoscopeplus.org.uk/>

Inner Armour

Provides positive psychology training for those on the front line.

<https://innerarmour.org/>

Mental Health First Aid

Provides Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.

<https://mhfaengland.org/>

Mind

Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Peacemakers

Provides training and resources for adults and children to promote conflict resolution, peaceful behaviour and peaceful environments.

<https://peacemakers.org.uk/>

Talking Mats

Provides communication tools to help people increase their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them.

<https://www.talkingmats.com/>

Thrive Online

Provides online resources to help better understand children's behaviour and what it signals about their emotional development.

<https://www.thriveapproach.com/>

Wellbeing Schools Forum

An online forum for schools to share best practice around mental health and emotional wellbeing for pupils, hosted by the Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools. Apply to join the forum:

<https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/together-we-deliver-better-childhood/transforming-mental-health-wellbeing/partnership>

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