What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools?

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Advice for schools and framework document

My ‘evidence base’

- Teacher
- Academic
- Wellbeing, mental health, social and emotional learning
- Programme development, research and evidence reviews
- Mindfulness
- Parent
Promoting emotional and social wellbeing

Targeting problems
Why might schools be interested in all this? Or maybe not interested?
Some common objections

- “What has this got to do with education?”
- “Too many other initiatives”
- What’s the point? our results are good- why do we need it?
- “Job of someone else- not us”
- Too stressed
- Lack of skills
- Threatened
Possible positive outcomes

Train attention, focus, calm
Improve performance
Reduce mental health problems
Inclusion, early intervention
SEL – skills for success in life
Kindness, compassion
Values, ethics, happiness
Interconnectedness
Summary of results of 207 SEL programmes in US:

- 11% improvement in achievement tests
- 25% improvement in social and emotional skills
- 10% decrease in classroom misbehaviour, anxiety and depression (10% in each)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and student benefits

The link between health and wellbeing and attainment

A briefing for head teachers, school governors and teachers

Higher SEL skills correlate with
• Academic achievement
• Health, wellbeing
• “Success” in life – greater impact than IQ scores

• 50+ reviews
• Control trials, meta-analyses
• Evaluations of programmes
• Good practice and experience
• Neuroscience
Many balances
Use whatever language works

Resilience/ grit

emotional intelligence

Character

mental health

wellbeing

PSHE

social and emotional learning

emotional literacy

Non cognitive
Address risk and build resilience
Neuroscience
Negative emotions block learning

- Chronic emotional problems make learning difficult
- Stress and trauma makes it impossible
- Attachment – foundation of motivation and brain development
Positive emotions enable learning

- Ready to learn when we feel safe, valued
- We think about/process what matters to us emotionally e.g. we feel good about.
- Learn better when alert but relaxed, focused, sense of ‘flow’
Use a whole school approach
But well implemented

Getting from here…

…to here
What kind of school environments promote mental wellbeing?
Focus on ethos
connectedness and clarity
http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/1213164/the_connected_school_final_for_web.pdf
* don't be rude
* happy kindness
* don't laugh at other people.
* LISTEN !! TALK
* RESPECT
* helpfull
* one person at the time
* encourage. and include everybody
* PEACE
Look behind the behaviour
• What undermines your mental health and wellbeing at work?

• What helps?
Promote staff wellbeing and tackle staff stress
Identify and explicitly teach and model core skills (and attitudes and values)
Teach it well!
Staff Leadership Modelling

Wellbeing
SEL/PSHE CPD

Across mainstream curriculum

Everyday opportunities

Special needs/ targeted
What works in involving parents

• Beware stigma
• Curiosity and empathy
• Shared goals
• Authentic involvement
• Emphasise the positive
• Normalise
• Parenting programmes – offered to all
• Intensive but sensitive outreach for problem families
Raise awareness and address mental health problems
Balance universal and targeted
Because...

• Avoids stigma
• Problems on continuum, connected
• ‘More’ not ‘different’
• ‘Critical mass’
• But universal alone not enough
STAND UP TO STIGMA
Let's talk about MENTAL HEALTH
Start early and keep going
Clear pathways for help
Joined up working

CAMHS
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services
Schools and specific mental health issues

- **Behaviour** – can respond to short term interventions
- **Anxiety, stress** - medium term interventions – e.g. mindfulness, relaxation, CBT, body work
- **Depression** – tough and complicated, some interventions can make it worse, long term best. Mindfulness, CBT/Social Skills
- **Self esteem** – tough to influence. Focused on it directly
- **Suicide, self harm** – one to one only
- One offs - no
- Short term - prevents mild problems and improves behaviour
- Difficult and complex problems - longer and carefully targeted interventions
Some effective targeted approaches
Right method for intervention and aims

Clear and limited aims
Simple – less is more

Involve people – informants, funders, research experts, young people, parents

Allow time

Range of qualitative and quantitative methods

Beware the premature RCT!
Implementation – bottom up v top down

• US – top down, manualized ‘programmes’ (easy to evaluate but don’t stick)

• European – educated teachers, bottom up, principles, whole school (attractive and empowering but can be vague, no change, don’t pass RCT)

• UK in the middle - need a balance
Promoting emotional and social wellbeing

Targeting mental health problems
Thank you!