



Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools: A Summary

This guidance has been prepared by Vanessa Nice, Head of Halton Behaviour Support Service. It is intended as a summary of the DfE advice updated on 12th November 2018. The full document can be read [here](#). This advice is non-statutory but does set out schools' roles & responsibilities in relation to mental health and behaviour including identification of mental health issues, intervention and involvement of external agencies as well as additional support, audit tools, frameworks and resources available to schools.

Parts in red are elements that schools may need to take action on.

Key points

- Schools play a key role in developing resilience in pupils and supporting them and educating them in maintaining good mental health.
- Schools should have a consistent approach to mental health and wellbeing with clear expectations of behaviour and structures for rewards and sanctions including a graduated response which can be adapted to meet the individual needs of the pupil.
- Schools are not expected to be experts in mental health but should have clear systems in place for identifying and referring pupils to support. This should include clear accountabilities.
- Schools need to be aware of the SEND Code of Practice and the 2010 Equality Act, recognising that some mental health difficulties may fall under the Code of Practice and may afford CYP with the protection of the Equality Act.
- Schools should have a clear understanding of local services available to CYP and should have clear structures in place for early identification & intervention.
- Communication with parents should be timely, appropriate to the age of the CYP and relevant.

Chapter 1 – Schools' responsibilities in relation to mental health

- **Under KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) (2018) schools have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of pupils and to take actions to ensure the best outcomes for them.**
- The school role in supporting & promoting mental health & wellbeing can be summarised;
 - Prevention – through the curriculum, ethos and environment
 - Identification – recognising emerging issues as quickly as possible
 - Early Support – evidence-based early support and intervention
 - Access to Specialist Support – close working relationships with external agencies to provide swift access to specialist support & treatment
- Don't need to have a standalone policy on mental health but do need to consider it in other statutory and recommended policies. This includes including the need to make reasonable adjustments to the behaviour policy. **Published behaviour policies need to be consistent with the legal requirement that treating all pupils the same may not be lawful if their disability affects their behaviour and makes it more difficult for them to comply with the policy than their peers.**
- **Schools should consider whether mental health difficulties may amount to SEN and consider how best to use some of their SEN resources to meet the needs of these pupils. Similarly, schools may consider using some of their Pupil Premium funding to meet the mental health needs of pupils who attract that funding.**
- **If a mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern (poor mental health can sometimes be an indicator of safeguarding concerns), appropriate action must be taken in line with KCSIE 2018.**

Chapter 2 – Creating a whole school culture

- Culture & ethos should pervade all areas of school life and should be tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. This should be both explicit through the curriculum and implicit through the policies, values, attitudes as well as the social & physical environment.
- Calm, dignity and structure should encompass every space and activity in conjunction with early identification and precise, targeted support.
- Clear behaviour expectations and consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy is fundamental to creating the correct culture. This should be underpinned by an effective system of rewards and sanctions and clear accountability that sets expectations for all members of the school community. This should also address bullying and intervention in cases of bullying must be swift and impactful.
- Schools should emphasise the importance of promoting positive mental wellbeing through their curriculum as well as classroom management and the development of social skills.
- CPD for staff should include opportunities to learn about the most common mental health needs and to fully understand the referral processes in place to draw attention to the most vulnerable pupils. This may include opportunities to hear from professionals with mental health specialities.
- Vulnerable groups (SEN, PP, LAC, CiN,) should have provision made to support and promote their positive mental health.

Chapter 3 – Understanding the link between mental health and behaviour

- The same experiences can have different effects on different children depending on other factors in their life. When a problem is particularly severe or persistent over time or where a child experiences a number of difficulties at the same time, this can lead to a child experiencing mental health problems.
- Where children experience a range of emotional or behavioural problems that are outside the normal range for their age, they might be described as having mental health problems or disorders. There are 7 classifications of these;
 - Emotional disorders (phobias, anxiety & depression);
 - Conduct disorders (stealing, defiance, aggression, anti-social behaviour);
 - Hyperkinetic disorders (disturbance of activity & attention);
 - Developmental disorders (delay in developing certain skills such as speech, bladder control or social ability). Usually affects pupils with autism or pervasive developmental disorders;
 - Attachment disorders (extremely abnormal pattern of attachment to caregivers displaying as anxiety and distress);
 - Trauma disorders (PTSD as a result of abuse and/or neglect);
 - Other mental health problems (eating disorders, habit disorders, somatic disorders, psychotic disorders).
- LAC, CiN and children with SEN are more likely to experience the challenge of SEMH than their peers.
- Risk factors (split into 4 categories: in the child, in the family, in the school & in the community) for poor mental health are cumulative so those exposed to multiple risks are more likely to develop behavioural problems.

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genetic influences• Low IQ and learning disabilities• Specific development delay or neuro-diversity• Communication difficulties• Difficult temperament• Physical illness• Academic failure• Low self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Secure attachment experience- Outgoing temperament as an infant- Good communication skills, sociability- Being a planner and having a belief in control- Humour- A positive attitude- Experiences of success and achievement- Faith or spirituality- Capacity to reflect

In the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) - Affection - Clear, consistent discipline - Support for education - Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord
In the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying including online (cyber) • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Deviant peer influences • Peer pressure • Peer on peer abuse • Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear policies on behaviour and bullying - Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct) - 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems - A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health - Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships - Positive classroom management - A sense of belonging - Positive peer influences - Positive friendships - Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies. - An effective early help process - Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working - Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively
In the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation • Other significant life events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wider supportive network - Good housing - High standard of living - High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying - Opportunities for valued social roles - Range of sport/leisure activities

- As social disadvantage and the number of stressful life events accumulate for children, more protective factors are required to act as a counter-balance.
- Schools need to be aware of the protective factors that can help children to become resilient when they encounter problems and challenges. This is particularly important for children who have less supportive home lives and may not have a trusted adult they can talk to.
- Negative experiences and distressing life events can affect mental health and bring about in a child's emotional state. They can be displayed in a variety of ways;

- Emotional state (withdrawn, fearful, low self-esteem)
- Behaviour (aggressive or oppositional; habitual body-rocking)
- Interpersonal behaviours (indiscriminate contact or affection-seeking, coercive or controlling behaviours, excessive clinginess, inability to understand and recognise emotions)
- There are 2 key elements that enable schools to reliably identify children at risk of mental health problems
 - **Effective use of data** (noting and acting on changes in attainment, attendance or behaviour)
 - **Effective pastoral system** so that at least 1 member of staff knows each pupil well and has received training to identify where bad or unusual behaviour may have a root cause that needs addressing. Policies should provide the structure through which staff can escalate concerns and be confident that they are acted upon swiftly. **Children should be provided with a way to seek support in a confidential way.**
- Once a problem has been identified, schools should put into place a graduated response:
 - **Assessment to establish the pupil's needs**
 - **A plan of support**
 - **Regular reviews to ensure impact**

Strength & difficulties questionnaires or a Boxall Profile can support with this process.

- **Schools should consider if action can be taken to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviours before issuing an exclusion. However, this must be balanced with meeting the physical and mental health needs of the community as a whole.**
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can have an impact on pupils
 - Loss or separation (not just through bereavement)
 - Life changes (birth of a sibling, transitions)
 - Traumatic experiences (abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, violence, accidents or injuries)
 - Other traumatic incidents (terrorist attacks, natural disasters)

In circumstances where any of the above occur, schools should ensure that they support all pupils, including those who are not displaying any symptoms in order to protect the welfare of pupils and to reduce the risk of further problems arising. Schools may consider utilising outside agencies to support with this.

- **CiN should receive appropriate support from Social Care and LAC should have the active involvement of the Virtual School. Schools (through their designated teacher) should embrace and encourage this support and should liaise closely with them to ensure that provision for these pupils is of a good standard.**
- Information sharing is key to ensuring the mental health of CiN and Lac pupils.
- **The SENCO should ensure that all adults working in school meet the mental health needs of SEN pupils.**

Chapter 4 – Providing support and collaborative working with other agencies

- Swift intervention is key. Ed psych services are able to provide direct intervention or signpost to appropriate support.
- **For pupils with the most complex needs, schools should consider the following;**
 - **Support for the teacher in helping them to manage the needs of the individual pupil while taking into account the needs of the cohort as a whole;**
 - **Additional educational 1:1 support to help the pupil cope better (utilising SEN funding in the first instance);**
 - **An Individual Healthcare Plan in line with government guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions;**
 - **1:1 therapeutic work delivered by trained mental health professionals;**
 - **Family support and/or therapies.**
- **Schools should make themselves aware of the LA's Local Transformation Plan, the strategic plan which sets out local provision for supporting the mental health needs of children and young people.**

- Schools can commission services for individual pupils. This provides schools with increased flexibility and an early intervention response. It is imperative that schools check the qualifications and suitability of such people and monitor the impact of the interventions.
- Schools should make themselves aware of the local CAMHS referral process and criteria. This should include being able to speak to CAMHS about possible referrals and seeking their initial advice.
- Schools should work closely with parents and carers and should ensure that parents and carers are made aware of local services that can support with mental health needs.
- Schools should liaise with parents unless the child is considered to be Gillick competent.
- LAs have to make educational provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded and for pupils who, because of illness, would not receive suitable education without such provision.
- Reintegration following a time at an Alternative Provision should be carefully planned with baselines against which to measure progress

Chapter 5 – Where to find out more

- Schools are encouraged to appoint a Designated Senior Leader for Mental Health to provide strategic oversight to the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, including the design of policies such as the behaviour policies, pastoral and curriculum support, how staff are supported with their own mental wellbeing and how both pupils and parents are engaged.
- Designated senior leaders for mental health will be entitled to access some free of charge training.
- Table 2 (below) lists additional sources of information. In the full document, the parts in bold are hyperlinks. They can also be accessed by entering the term in bold into an internet search engine.

Table 2

<p>Creating a whole school culture</p>	<p>Creating a Culture: How school leaders can optimise behaviour Tom Bennett’s independent review on behaviour in schools, which looked at leadership, culture and methods to improve pupil behaviour</p> <p>Promoting children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing – Public Health England’s guidance for head teachers and college principals on the eight principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges</p> <p>A whole school framework for emotional wellbeing and mental health – The National Children’s Bureau’s self-assessment and improvement tool for school leaders, to support them in implementing a whole school approach for emotional wellbeing and mental health.</p> <p>Supporting mental health in schools and colleges: pen portraits of provision – this report presents pen portraits of mental health provision based on case study research in 36 schools, colleges and other educational institutions across England</p> <p>Mentally Healthy Schools – is recommended by NAHT, and brings together quality-assured information, advice and resources to help primary schools understand and promote children’s mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>What works for wellbeing - work with a network of researchers, think tanks, businesses, government departments and non-profits to provide evidence, guidance and discussion papers on a range of subjects, including community wellbeing and measuring wellbeing.</p> <p>Children’s Society – provide a range of research tools to support schools to talk to pupils about wellbeing and mental health.</p> <p>Supporting staff wellbeing in schools – aims to give school staff and senior leadership teams simple guidance and good practical examples where schools have successfully implemented staff wellbeing strategies.</p>
<p>Supporting and promoting positive mental health (including early intervention and supporting children through difficult life events)</p>	<p>Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPSYCH) – Provide specifically tailored information for young people, parents, teachers and carers about mental health through their Parents and Youth Info A-Z.</p> <p>National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) – NICE's role is to improve outcomes for people using the NHS and other public health and social care services, including by producing evidence-based guidance and advice. This can be useful in understanding social, emotional and mental health conditions and their recommended treatments.</p> <p>British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists which is accredited by the Department of Health and Social Care.</p> <p>Young Minds – Young Minds is charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. They undertake campaigns and research, make resources available to professionals (including teachers) and run a helpline for adults worried about the emotional problems, behaviour or mental health of anyone up to the age of 25. They also offer a catalogue of resources for commissioning support services.</p> <p>Nasen SEND Gateway - an online portal offering education professionals free, easy access to high quality information, resources and training for meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including a large number of specific mental health resources.</p> <p>Schools in Mind - a free network for school staff and allied professionals which shares practical, academic and clinical expertise regarding the wellbeing and mental health issues that affect schools.</p> <p>MindEd – provides free e-learning to help adults to identify and understand children and young people with mental health problems. It provides simple, clear guidance on mental health to adults who work with children and young people, to help them support the development of young healthy minds.</p> <p>Counselling MindEd – Counselling MindEd is an online resource within MindEd that provides free evidence-based, e-learning to support the training of school and youth counsellors and supervisors working in a wide variety of settings.</p>

	<p>PSHE Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing - Has been produced by the PSHE Association. It provides guidance for schools on teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing as part of PSHE and signposts to organisations that can provide support for specific mental health conditions.</p> <p>Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges – departmental advice which amongst other things includes detailed guidance on supporting victims of peer on peer sexual violence.</p> <p>Bullying and mental health: Guidance for teachers and other professionals - Free resource produced by the Anti-Bullying Alliance to help schools, teachers and other professionals understand the issues around bullying and mental health for children and young people.</p> <p>ChildLine – A confidential service, provided by the NSPCC, offering free support for children and young people up to the age of nineteen on a wide variety of problems.</p> <p>Place2Be – Place2Be is a charity working in schools providing early intervention mental health support to children aged 4-14 in England, Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>Play Therapy UK (PTUK) - is a not-for-profit professional organisation with registrants located all over the UK, many working in primary schools, alleviating social, emotional, behaviour and mental health problems. The Register managed by PTUK is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority, providing an assurance of the quality of the Registrant’s work.</p> <p>Relate – Relate offers advice, relationship counselling, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face, by phone and through their website. This includes counselling for any child or young person who is having problems.</p> <p>Women’s Aid – is the national domestic violence charity that works to end violence against women and children and supports domestic and sexual violence services across the country. They provide services to support abused women and children such as The HideOut, a website to help children and young people.</p> <p>Nurture UK – is dedicated to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and removing barriers to education by promoting nurture in education.</p> <p>Trauma Informed Schools UK – provides training for schools, communities and organisations to become trauma informed and mentally healthy places for all.</p> <p>Early Intervention Foundation guidebook – on trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy.</p> <p>Beat Eating Disorders UK – provides information on what to do if you’re worried about a friend, family member or pupil, along with how to support someone with an eating disorder.</p> <p>Child Bereavement UK – provides information and resources to support bereaved pupils, schools and staff.</p> <p>Young Minds – Young Carers – information about how to spot if young carers need support, and how to get help.</p>
<p>Information about mental health conditions, identification and measurement</p>	<p>MindEd – provides free online teaching to help adults to identify and understand children and young people with mental health problems. It provides simple, clear guidance on mental health to adults who work with children and young people, to help them support the development of young healthy minds.</p> <p>Health A-Z - Conditions and treatments by subject - Mental health disorders – information from the NHS on mental health disorders.</p> <p>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – the SDQ can assist schools in taking an overview and making a judgement about whether a pupil is likely to be suffering from a mental health problem.</p> <p>Boxall Profile – an online assessment tool for social emotional and behavioural difficulties for children and young people.</p> <p>Education Endowment Foundation – The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit is an accessible summary of educational research which provides guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of all pupils and especially disadvantaged pupils.</p>

	<p>CORC outcome and experience measurements – provides easily accessible resources for individuals looking for information on how to measure children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Good Childhood Wellbeing Index - is an easy and free to run simple assessment of children’s well-being in the classroom.</p> <p>Measuring and monitoring children and young people's mental wellbeing: a toolkit for schools and colleges – this toolkit aims to raise awareness amongst school and college staff of the range of validated tools that are available to help measure subjective mental wellbeing amongst the pupil population.</p>
Commissioning services directly	<p>Youth Wellbeing Directory - provides a list of local and national organisations for anyone up to the age of 25 (including teachers helping pupils to find support), along with additional important information and support.</p> <p>BOND: Learning from Practice Review – This report from BOND sets out the findings of an evidence based practice review, exploring the nature of the relationship between the voluntary & community sector and commissioners (Schools, NHS, LA), with a focus on the delivery of early intervention mental health services for children and young people).</p> <p>School nursing public health services – guidance produced by the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England. This guidance supports effective commissioning of school nursing services to provide public health for school aged children.</p> <p>Supporting public health: children, young people and families - documents to support local authorities</p>
Working with parents	<p>The strongest evidence supports working with parents/carers in a structured way to address behavioural issues through education and training programmes such as:</p> <p>Triple P – which gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children’s behavior and prevent problems developing.</p> <p>The Incredible Years – a series of interlocking, evidence-based programs for parents, children, and teachers, supported by over 30 years of research, which aims to prevent and treat young children's behavior problems and promote their social, emotional, and academic competence.</p> <p>MindEd for Families – advice and information from trusted experts to help improve understanding of mental health problems, and how parents and carers can best support their families.</p>
Supporting children with medical conditions	<p>HeadMeds – website developed by the charity YoungMinds providing general information about common medications that may be prescribed for children and young people with mental health conditions.</p> <p>Health Conditions in Schools Alliance – this website offers guidance and tools to schools who are looking after children with health conditions. This includes a template medical conditions policy; a sample individual healthcare plan and advice on what it should contain; and a process</p>