Learner resilience
- building resilience in primary schools, secondary schools and pupil referral units

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- ⅄ secondary schools
- ⅄ special schools
- ⅄ pupil referral units
- ⅄ all-age schools
- ⅄ independent schools
- ⅄ further education
- ⅄ independent specialist colleges
- ⅄ adult community learning
- ⅄ local authority education services for children and young people
- ⅄ teacher education and training
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- ⅄ work-based learning
- ⅄ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ⅄ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others
- ⅄ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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Foreword

The last three months have emphasised the vital role of schools in supporting the mental health and in building the resilience of pupils, and I would like to thank staff across all our education settings and their partner services for their work in supporting pupils' learning and wellbeing during this difficult time.

The pandemic experience may well affect people's mental wellbeing, particularly vulnerable groups (Holmes *et al.*, 2020). Pupils of all ages have had to face new situations and new sets of worries. Some will have suffered family bereavements. The absence of peer groups, friendships and opportunities for face-to-face social interaction can be challenging. Many will worry about returning to school, moving onto the next stage in their learning, or have concerns about their future prospects. For a few, the loss of regular contact with a trusted adult and a safe space to go will be more significant due to particular home circumstances.

Learners are having to adapt to learning at home and to overcoming challenges such as:

- having their day organised by parents or carers rather than teachers
- finding an appropriate quiet area to concentrate on their work
- self-motivation
- not being able to access the usual support offered in the classroom
- worrying about falling behind their peers
- gaining access to the technology required to complete tasks

Educational professionals across Wales have adapted to these challenges and the wellbeing of pupils has been at the forefront of their work. 'Hubs' were established to provide a safe space for vulnerable pupils and for the children of key workers. Schools have communicated with parents and provided learning tasks for pupils to carry out at home. The Welsh Government recognised these challenges and has provided additional funding, for example to expand school-based counselling to support the wellbeing of pupils, as well as online resources to support the mental health of young people.

Although the fieldwork for this report was carried out prior to the emergence of the pandemic, I hope that the effective practice outlined in this report and also in Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences (Estyn, 2020b) and Healthy and Happy (Estyn, 2019) will help school leaders and staff to support their pupils' resilience in these difficult times.

Meilyr Rowlands HMCI

Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2019-2020. The report is intended for the Welsh Government, schools, local authorities and regional consortia, and may also be of interest to other public services such as the police, health services and social services.

The report identifies effective approaches to supporting pupils' resilience in primary and secondary schools and pupil referral units in Wales. The examples are drawn from schools and pupil referral units visited as part of the survey and from our wider inspection evidence base (appendix 1). We have not identified the provider in a few examples in this report because of the sensitive nature of the case concerned. This report is part of a series of reports looking at how schools develop pupils' health and wellbeing and builds on the Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences (Estyn, 2020b) and Healthy and Happy (Estyn, 2019).

The field work for this report was carried out prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. This report may help education providers to consider relevant approaches to further support their pupils' mental health and resilience during the remaining stages of the pandemic and the transitional period of returning to normal schooling.

Background

Schools' work to develop pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing has never been more important. An essential part of this work is to promote the resilience of all pupils to be able to cope with the challenges facing them in their school and home contexts. Schools also need to identify and support pupils who may be at greater risk of developing poor mental health. This report highlights how effective providers:

- support all pupils to develop their resilience
- identify pupils at risk of poor mental health and support them through specific interventions to strengthen resilience
- plan for transitions in pupils' lives that may test resilience

The 'Mind Over Matter' report commissioned by the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee (2018) states that levels of stress and anxiety among pupils are rising. In addition, a recent report by the OECD indicates that, overall, pupils' mental wellbeing is not as strong in Wales as the OECD average (Sizmur *et al.*, 2019). It highlights that the majority of pupils (63%) in Wales sometimes or always feel worried, which is around 30% higher than the OECD average (49%). Just over half of pupils in Wales (54%) say that they sometimes or always feel miserable. This is around 40% higher than the OECD average (38%) (Sizmur *et al.*, 2019). More detail from the OECD report can be found in appendix 2.

In the most recent School Health Research Network (SHRN) report (2019), over 80% of adolescents rate their life satisfaction as 6 or over on a scale from 0 to 10. This is strongly related to age, with the number decreasing with age. The decline in life satisfaction with age is more pronounced for females than males and is mirrored across a number of questions. When reporting on their mental wellbeing, adolescents' average mental wellbeing scores decrease slightly as students get older. Females have lower wellbeing scores than males and this difference is more apparent among older year groups. Students are asked to rate how much pressure they feel at school. Over 80% of adolescents report that they feel at least a little degree of pressure from their school work with nearly one quarter (24%) reporting 'a lot' of pressure. Again, this is strongly related to age. The proportion of adolescents reporting 'some' or 'a lot' of pressure more than doubles from Year 7 to Year 11 with the proportion of females increasing year by year resulting in a substantial gender gap by Years 10 and 11.

When asked about having support for issues that affect them, nearly one-third (31%) of students strongly agree and a further 37% agree that there is at least one staff member they can talk to about things that worry them. Seven per cent say they strongly disagree. The proportion of adolescents who agree that there is a member of staff they can confide in declines from 80% in Year 7 to 65% in Year 9 and from then on there is a plateau. Nearly three-quarters of adolescents strongly agree or agree that there is support for students who feel unhappy, worried or unable to cope. Only 3% of adolescents strongly disagree with the statement and a further 6% disagree with it. There is a decrease in the proportion agreeing with the statement across year groups 7 to 11. Overall, 67% of adolescents agree that they can count on their friends when things go wrong. There is a small decrease in the proportion agreeing as age increases, but very little difference by gender.

Banerjee et al. (2016) note that the concept of 'resilience' has attracted particular attention within the fields of both mental health and education. In the school context, it is a key focus in terms of both academic functioning (e.g. coping with failure on a challenging task) and emotional health and wellbeing (e.g. finding a way through adversity).

Being resilient does not mean that pupils do not face challenges. It means that due to a number of factors they are better able to cope with particular challenges at a particular time. The factors that support resilience are generally found to relate to:

- self-esteem and self-confidence
- belief in your own ability to cope
- a range of approaches to help you cope
- good relationships with others who you can rely upon to help

A literature review by Cahill et al. (2014, p.14) noted that the term resilience has been widely adopted to signify the **capacity to cope, learn and thrive in the face of change, challenge or adversity.** This is the definition of resilience used in this report. The review cites authors who describe resilience as the ability to 'bounce back', recover or rebound from adversity, or as the ongoing and dynamic process of coping (Cahill et al., 2014, p.14).

The literature review adds that there are many strategies that schools can use to enhance resilience. These include whole-school approaches to providing a safe and supportive learning environment, promoting positive teacher-student and peer relationships, creating a positive learning environment through effective classroom management and teaching methods, providing explicit social and emotional skills programmes, providing tailored support for those with additional needs, and involving students and families in decision-making. The Welsh Assembly Government (2010) has produced helpful guidance, Thinking positively – emotional health and wellbeing in schools and early years settings, which signposts a range of guidance, assessment tools and intervention programmes. This report refers to examples of how effective providers are implementing many of these approaches.

A report by Public Health England (2014) concludes that schools have an opportunity to ensure that children and young people are supported and enabled to build resilience. Local authorities can encourage and help schools achieve this aim. There is good evidence on what works to promote wellbeing in schools, and some evidence specifically on building resilience. This evidence, including impact of interventions, suggests that schools can build resilience by improving achievement, supporting transitions, promoting healthy behaviours, and working with parents to improve family relationships and support, as well as encouraging support from teachers and peers. Additionally, resilience can also be built by schools acting as a community hub, working with the local community, and adopting a whole-school approach. Where interventions are successful, they may help local areas to improve the lives of children, their families, and the community.

The report by Public Health England (2014) describes measuring resilience as complex. The report quotes Windle, Bennett and Noyes (2011 in Public Health England, 2014, p.11) stating that a methodological review of resilience measurement scales found 15 measures of resilience, but no 'gold standard'. This report has found that it is easier for schools to measure and track the impact of low resilience. They will often look for patterns in attendance and behaviour as an indication of pupil resilience. The most successful schools identify quickly what causes individual pupils to behave inappropriately and consider strategies to help address these concerns and look for ways to strengthen their pupils' resilience. Schools use a range of assessments to monitor and track pupils to measure the relative success of the interventions.

Our report 'Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences' (Estyn, 2020b) found that most primary schools and the majority of secondary schools make use of a range of suitable assessment materials to identify pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs and support their pupils to become more resilient, independent and capable learners.

It goes on to note that a majority of secondary schools use surveys such as the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) to identify issues around self-esteem and social confidence. In most cases, reports are produced that identify areas of weakness in particular groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs (SEN), year groups or the whole school. This provides leaders with data to plan strategies and interventions. The majority of primary schools use bespoke tools to assess pupils'

social and emotional strengths, such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire[1] (SDQ) or the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale'[2]. In addition, schools often use assessments and social intervention programmes endorsed by their local authority education psychology service.

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[1] The Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. It exists in several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists.

[2] Spence Anxiety Scale (developed by Spence in1998) is a psychological questionnaire designed to assess the severity of anxiety symptoms in children.

Main findings

1   Resilience is the capacity to cope, learn and thrive in the face of change, challenge or adversity (Cahill *et al.*, 2014). It is closely related to wellbeing and mental health, and we cannot easily develop resilience when we are unhappy or emotionally unwell. It also requires a degree of self-esteem and confidence, of emotional understanding, and the ability to establish trusting relationships and benefit from support.

2   Schools that are good at building the resilience of their learners are those that promote the emotional wellbeing and support the mental health of all their learners. As well as having a whole-school approach to wellbeing[3], these schools also provide specific interventions for learners who are particularly in need of support. In many instances, new whole-school approaches are adopted following the successful implementation of a particular strategy on a smaller scale.

3   Inspection outcomes for providers inspected under the new common inspection framework (2017-2019) suggest that there is strong practice in schools in supporting pupils' wellbeing. The standard of care, support and guidance for pupils is good or better in most primary schools and a majority of secondary schools.

4   Schools that are successful in building pupils' resilience have leaders that have developed a strong vision, supported by core values around promoting the wellbeing of all pupils. The vision is shared by all of the schools' stakeholders. They provide interventions for those pupils that need them the most as well as implementing successful strategies for whole-class situations when appropriate. These schools also place a strong emphasis on the wellbeing of their staff.

5   School leaders rarely talk of building resilience as a main aim or objective. Resilience is often strengthened as a consequence of implementing strategies to target pupils' other needs. Schools recognise that there is no easy way to building resilience in pupils. They understand that it is a process that takes considerable investment in time, energy and resources.

6   A common feature of nearly all schools that are successful in building resilience in pupils is that there are very few, if any, fixed term exclusions over a long period. They have a strong inclusive ethos. They strive to understand and get to the root cause of particular challenges facing pupils and are willing to try different approaches to address the issues.

7   Good schools share information between the relevant professionals and adults involved with particular pupils effectively and in a timely manner. They know that the earlier they can identify and support pupils who are struggling with their self-esteem and resilience, the more effective the intervention will be. They have processes for

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[3] Estyn (2019) *Healthy and happy-school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing*. Cardiff: Estyn; Estyn (2020) *Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences (ACES)*. Cardiff: Estyn; Estyn (2020) *Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils – case studies of good practice*. Cardiff: Estyn.

ensuring that all the relevant adults within the school are made aware of any concerns quickly and accurately.

8   The most successful schools understand that building resilience is a continual process that begins with developing good relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves. They understand that pupils' emotional wellbeing is the responsibility of all staff and that every interaction and engagement with pupils has an impact on their sense of worth. Staff know that all their words, actions and attitudes affect pupils' wellbeing. Where pupils feel a sense of belonging and connection, they are more likely to be feel secure, safe and emotionally resilient.

9   It is important that pupils have regular opportunities to express their emotions and share their feelings at school. Good schools have clear approaches for listening to and addressing pupils' concerns in a timely manner. They are alert to how pupils are feeling during the day, and work with pupils to identify particular staff members to whom they can to turn if needed.

10   Working closely with the home by providing enrichment activities and additional information can help to consolidate the school's work in helping to build the resilience of vulnerable pupils. Effective schools often work closely to support families of vulnerable pupils. Where the culture of the school is open and engaging, the families themselves may approach the school for support.

11   Good schools use the expertise of relevant external agencies to supplement their work. External agencies can bring skills and expert knowledge that are not always available within schools and, when the relationship between all parties is strong, they work together in the pupils' best interest, strengthening their resilience and improving their lives.

12   Nurturing approaches can be very successful in helping to build resilience in pupils who are struggling to cope with their current circumstances. Trained staff can help pupils develop their personal and social skills and lay the foundations for building positive relationships with adults and peers. They equip pupils with the tools to help them become more resilient in the face of different challenges.

13   Transitions, such as moving school, are periods where children can suffer emotional distress, or a decline in progress and commitment to learning, all of which can also undermine resilience. All schools aim to ease the transition process for pupils, particularly at key transition points. Good schools also have clear strategies for supporting pupils moving mid-term, especially when receiving pupils who may have struggled at their previous settings. They get to know the new pupils quickly, ensuring that support is available from the outset.

Building resilience for all pupils – universal provision

Successful whole-school approaches

14   Schools provide learning experiences for pupils to explore their personal attitudes and values and acquire the appropriate knowledge and understanding to develop their personal and social development and wellbeing. This is done mainly through the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum. The 'Health and Emotional Wellbeing' theme within the PSE curriculum recognises that understanding and managing emotions improves mental health by increasing learners' ability to cope with conflict, stress, loss and change.

15   The new Curriculum for Wales sets out four purposes, that all children and young people will be:

- ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Welsh Government, 2020a)

16   Also, one of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) is 'Health and Emotional Wellbeing'. Within this AoLE is the 'What Matters' statements "How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being" (Welsh Government, 2020b). This area is designed to allow teachers to help pupils to explore the connections between their experiences, mental health and emotional wellbeing. By teaching pupils about feelings and emotions, the aim is to support them to develop strategies that will help to regulate their emotions and contribute towards good mental health and emotional wellbeing.

17   Schools that are successful in building resilience in pupils usually have a strong ethos of promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing. They place an emphasis on supporting pupils' mental health and provide a safe and secure learning environment for their pupils and staff. Leaders provide clarity in terms of establishing school priorities, vision and practices through discussion with stakeholders.

18   This clarity is also evident in how these schools interact with pupils. They have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes, behaviours and interactions with others. They acknowledge that different pupils have different needs, and that some will need additional support to succeed, both academically and in terms of achieving emotional wellbeing. They also understand that some pupils will need time to adjust their attitudes and behaviours to meet those high expectations.

19   Successful schools base their approaches to building resilience on evidence-based research. They put these approaches into practice and monitor their impact over time. As practitioners become more experienced in using specific approaches, they adapt them to respond to the needs of individual pupils. Schools find that

approaches that work for one pupil will not always work for another, and that approaches that were effective for one pupil one week will not always be effective for the same pupil another time. The most successful schools reflect on their practice and review their approaches to address the wellbeing of their pupils and to help them become more resilient.

20   In order to build resilience, pupils need to know that they can learn from mistakes to help them adjust their actions in future. When used well, conflict resolution approaches can help pupils to learn from past lapses and to react proportionally and reasonably when they come across similar challenges the next time. They understand that the school will deal with issues fairly and that there will be a chance to make amends.

21   There are very few, if any, exclusions over a long period in schools that are successful in building resilience in pupils. These schools also tend to be willing to take in pupils who are either excluded or in danger of being excluded from other schools because of the work they do to improve their behaviour and attitudes. They are able to cope well with pupils who are experiencing particular challenges, and are ready to receive pupils on managed moves from other schools. It is important that these admissions are handled carefully, as coping with a disproportionate number of challenging pupils can put an added strain on resources, pupils and staff.

A primary school admitted two pupils who had been excluded from two other primary schools during term time. Both pupils displayed behaviours that were difficult to control and were potentially a risk to themselves and others, even in a small nurture class environment. The school decided to pause their nurture class provision for their current pupils, supporting them in the mainstream environment temporarily while the two new pupils settled. For two weeks, the new pupils received all their education within the nurture class. Staff took time to build positive relationships and trust with the pupils and their families. Following this initial period, the nurture class resumed. The two pupils integrated well with their peers in the nurture class and developed their social and emotional skills to do well at school.

22   In many instances, a whole-school approach to building resilience has been adopted as a result of successful implementation of a particular strategy on a smaller scale. The school identifies a need, researches an approach or intervention, and implements the approach with the relevant pupils. It recognises the value and impact that the particular strategies introduced could have on all pupils. It assesses and monitors the success of its actions and adopts them as part of the school's universal provision when appropriate.

23   The importance of sharing information about vulnerable pupils between relevant adults clearly and in a timely manner is a key feature of effective schools. They know that the earlier they can identify pupils emerging concerns, the more effective their intervention will be. Increasingly, schools use electronic tracking tools well and enable any member of staff to log even minor incidents or small pieces of information about a pupil. This in turn allows senior staff to monitor vulnerable pupils or alerts them to an emerging issue with a pupil whom staff did not previously consider as vulnerable.

24   Successful schools use information received from various partners well. A good example of this is 'Operation Encompass', which is a police and education early information sharing partnership. Police forces that are part of Operation Encompass send information to schools prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident involving one of their pupils. This enables schools to offer immediate support for vulnerable children and young people, before the school day begins.

25   Schools that are successful in building pupils' resilience often adapt the fabric of the building to support their pupils' particular needs. Preparing areas for nurture provision involves careful budgetary considerations including purchasing additional resources. Smaller adaptations to the building can also be effective, and schools often modify spaces well to help address the needs of individual pupils when it is possible for them to do so. For example, in Ysgol Maes Yr Haul, staff identified the need for areas where pupils could feel at ease and work closely with trained staff on improving their wellbeing in a relaxed and homely environment. They decided to convert small rooms that were used for more traditional academic interventions into wellbeing rooms. By purchasing resources such as drapes, lights, beanbags and mirrors, two rooms have been transformed into a 'Cosy' and a 'Cwtsh' to provide a space for pupils to receive the bespoke emotional interventions needed in an appropriate welcoming atmosphere.

26   Many schools provide safe zones or quiet areas within their classrooms for those pupils that need them. As part of a graduated response, pupils can take themselves away to this space if they feel they need to self-regulate their emotions. The teacher will have discussed the conditions for using the area with the pupils beforehand. Often the areas have multi-sensory resources to help calm the pupils, for example visual reminders of different emotions and how to control them, and their personal behaviour targets. They may even have familiar objects for the pupils from within the school or from home that prove successful in calming the pupils. When used well these spaces have a positive effect on pupils, gradually reducing their dependency and the time they need to settle and return to their tasks.

27   Schools that build pupils' resilience successfully, and put the wellbeing of their pupils at the forefront of what they do, also consider the wellbeing of their staff to be a matter of great importance. As reported in 'Healthy and Happy' (Estyn, 2019) leaders are responsible for promoting staff wellbeing, protecting staff from excessive workload and ensuring that they are safe in work. Schools do this in various ways depending on the needs of the staff. An increasing number of schools provide professional supervision sessions for their staff to support their wellbeing. Schools are acknowledging the need to provide a reflective space for practitioners to deal with the often stressful, uncomfortable and sometimes painful experiences of working with the challenges facing particular children, young people, their families and the systems around them. When it is not possible to employ a counsellor for this specific purpose, leaders in good schools provide opportunities for staff to discuss issues with them or their colleagues. Sharing experiences and discussing their feelings and emotions allow leaders to identify areas where additional support is needed, or are a valuable exercise for staff members to deal with their own wellbeing. This focus on staff emotional wellbeing and resilience can help create a whole school culture, which includes building resilience for pupils too.

28   As reported in 'Healthy and Happy' (Estyn, 2019), in a few schools, leaders delegate responsibility for health and wellbeing too much to one member of staff or to a small team of staff. In such schools, teaching and non-teaching staff too readily seek to refer pupils on as soon as they mention an issue relating to health and wellbeing. These schools lose the sense that health and wellbeing are everyone's business, and leave pupils with a perception that not everyone cares. They miss opportunities to ensure that strategies to develop resilience are consistently applied by all staff.

Building positive relationships

29   Teacher support and guidance play a key role in the development of a child's wellbeing and resilience. Positive teacher-student relationships enhance students' academic and social development and are linked to 'an increase in cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement in learning' (University of Greenwich, 2016, p.18).

30   Successful schools often place a high priority on supporting each member of staff, including non-teaching staff, to work with pupils in a nurturing way. They understand that all their words and deeds affect pupils' mental wellbeing and that positive relationships between adults and pupils are a key factor in helping to build resilience over time, as pupils lacking resilience often feel let down by adults in the past. These schools understand that building relationships is long-term process and that time is needed for different strategies and interventions to work.

> During a school visit, one pupil talked about how her life changed following a parental bereavement and how the school recognised a change in her behaviour, supported her and built her resilience to cope with life within and outside school. Initially, her coping mechanism was to act disruptively, to abscond from classes and to hide from staff. Through patiently working with her, providing access to a nurturing provision within the school and referring to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who supported the pupil, her situation gradually improved. The pupil appreciates the way she was treated by the staff and their relationship with her. Staff that took time to talk to her in structured and unstructured sessions. Staff helped her to cope and to understand her emotions and feelings, and to develop strategies for how to deal with them. The reintegration process to mainstream classes was facilitated sensitively by staff she trusted, and the period of reintegration was increased gradually as appropriate.

31   Particularly vulnerable pupils can find it difficult to build a bond with adults and to feel secure in the school environment. This can be the case even in schools where there are strong teacher-student relationships and auxiliary staff who have bought into the school ethos of being caring and friendly. In order to build pupils' resilience and to support them in accessing education, schools identify a particular member of staff to whom these pupils would prefer to turn when needed. They ensure that the 'trusted adult' is at hand to meet the pupil when the need arises. For some pupils this can often be when arriving at the school in the morning. The trusted adult provides a welcome face and helps with the process of settling in at the start of the school day. To avoid over-dependency, this approach is reduced over time as the pupil's resilience strengthens. As a contingency in the case of staff absence, there will often be more than one trusted adult.

In one school, a Year 13 pupil from the onsite specialist setting was not attending school due to heightened anxiety and stress. Her behaviour at home was becoming increasingly difficult, especially on a Sunday with the thought of school the next day. The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo), teacher in charge of the setting, educational child psychologist and parents held a meeting to discuss how to best support her. One of the pupil's strengths was her empathy and caring nature, and therefore it was arranged that she could attend the mainstream nurture group as an 'Assistant', to help the younger pupils in this class. This was arranged for a Monday to alleviate the stress of Sunday night. The Year 13 pupil enjoys art, and was given the role of sitting with a group working on art projects. This became such a positive experience for the pupil that she now attends the mainstream nurture class a few days a week. She has benefited from her extra responsibility and the pupils have enjoyed her calm and caring personality in the class. This arrangement has succeeded in building the resilience of this pupil.

32   Peer mentoring is widely used to help build the resilience of pupils who may be struggling with the workload in secondary schools. Older pupils are trained to mentor younger pupils, sharing tips and techniques to cope with their stresses and struggles and providing space for younger pupils to talk about anything that's bothering them. They feel listened to as they share their concerns and worries. Pupils being mentored will often be more willing to persevere with a task with the support of a mentor than they would do otherwise. When successful, mentoring schemes help build the confidence of the mentor as well as the mentee, deepening their understanding of the subject or area of learning.

Bishopston Comprehensive School's mentoring system involves nearly all staff and designated pupils. Every pupil is entitled to personal mentoring sessions with their form tutor. They meet to discuss pupils' strengths and individual needs. Each tutor mentors around 44 pupils and receives a reduced timetable in order to do so. The leadership team provides mentoring for groups of pupils including, for example, those who underachieve academically but are talented at sport and those who are overwhelmed during examination periods. Peer mentors support younger pupils with subject matter they find more difficult. The pupils appreciate the premise that they will remain with the same form tutor throughout their time at school. They feel able to share what they are worried about and set and review targets.

33   Our 'Knowing your children' report (Estyn, 2020b) found that nearly all schools have trained members of staff who are experienced in listening to vulnerable pupils. They know how to respond to sensitive situations and how best to support these pupils. In secondary schools, it is often teaching assistants, learning mentors or pastoral staff who undertake this role. In the stronger schools, pupils speak positively about how they can trust and approach their headteachers, teachers and support staff when they have difficulties. In primary schools, most pupils feel comfortable approaching and talking to a wide range of staff.

34   Good schools recognise building the importance of being alert to how their pupils are feeling during the day. Schools use many ways of gauging their pupils' feelings in order to put measures in place to help pupils who may be struggling. Many schools

encourage pupils to show the teacher quickly and easily how they are feeling. In the best examples, staff soon notice if there are concerns that need addressing and have procedures in place to do so, usually involving teaching assistants that are trained especially for this role. The best schools take into account the possible embarrassment for a pupil of having peers notice if they are not feeling positive, and provide subtle alternative ways for the pupils to communicate their feelings. For example, schools provide boxes for pupils to leave notes for staff. These boxes are checked regularly throughout the day and issues are addressed in a timely manner. Schools also allow pupils to signal discreetly to staff indicating that they would appreciate time with an adult away from their peers. Other schools provide drop-in sessions for pupils with trained staff, where worries and problems can be discussed and addressed.

35   Many of the schools that are successful in building resilience in pupils adopt trauma-informed practice. Trauma informed practice is practice that has been identified as successful in helping pupils who suffer with trauma or mental health problems and whose troubled behaviour acts as a barrier to learning. They ensure that pupils feel emotionally safe in school. Pupils and adults build a bond of trust, with school staff adjusting expectations and practices around vulnerable pupils to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress and loss.

36   The best schools ensure that key staff members meet regularly to discuss vulnerable pupils, or those causing concern. Often, staff meet on a daily basis to discuss key events during the day and any development, positive or negative, in response to strategies put in place for the pupils. Schools ensure that there are processes in place to ensure that any information is communicated to any relevant staff members not present.

The importance of pupils understanding their own emotions

37   Pupils with low resilience often exhibit challenging behaviours. Rather than accepting a perceived negative situation such as struggling to complete a task, losing a game or being refused permission as a challenge or an opportunity, they often become frustrated with themselves and others. This can lead to inappropriate behaviours. The best schools work well to provide all pupils with the capacity and vocabulary to express their emotions.

38   In such cases, staff teach pupils to recognise and talk about their emotions from an early age. They explain and discuss emotions with pupils, often using characters to personify each emotion. As pupils get older, a greater range of emotions are explored to help pupils understand their feelings and to learn to articulate their hopes, feelings and anxieties. This allows staff opportunities to intervene and employ routines to help pupils regain their composure should the need arise.

Gladstone Primary School uses the language of 'zones of regulation' with its pupils, which helps pupils to refer to their moods and emotions in terms of colours. Pupils in their nurturing provision use this as a common language and can articulate what 'colour they are' and if they are moving to another zone. They learn to recognise their emotions through their feelings, and that it is not a problem to be angry. They are taught different ways of dealing with their anger. Over time, pupils in the nurturing provision build their resilience by learning to control their emotions and reacting to setbacks in acceptable ways.

39   Schools that build resilience in pupils reinforce positive language as well as behaviours. Staff ensure that positive messages are displayed around the school, often demonstrating how negative thoughts or words can be turned into a positive way of thinking. Teachers and teaching assistants refer to these throughout the day to support pupils.

40   Many schools provide activities beyond the classroom to help build pupils' resilience. By taking pupils out of their comfort zones, pupils get to experience success in tasks that take time and commitment to master. For example, attempting to traverse climbing walls, completing obstacle courses or participating in team-building exercises provide learning opportunities for pupils, challenging them to overcome anxieties, to develop resilience and to solve problems.

41   Metacognition is the awareness and analysis of one's own thought process. The Education Endowment Foundation guidance report (2018) highlighted metacognition as one of the most cost-effective strategies to help students improve their learning, and schools have widely adopted this approach to help pupils to think about their own learning. Teachers provide pupils with strategies to respond to given learning task. For example, the term 'learning pit' (coined by James Nottingham in 2007) provides pupils with a terminology to think and talk about learning. Teachers draw attention to the idea that learning is a struggle, intentionally showing thoughts of confusion and frustration. Teachers create an environment where it is alright to fail and acknowledge mistakes as part of the learning process. This approach helps to build pupils' resilience and to strengthen their belief in their own abilities.

Building resilience for pupils at risk of poor mental health – specialist intervention

Widely-used approaches

42   Where particular pupils find it difficult to cope with aspects of school life, schools provide interventions that usually involve periods away from their usual class. A key feature of schools who do this well is that the interventions are delivered by skilled and committed staff who believe whole-heartedly in what they are doing. Our 'Healthy and Happy' report (Estyn, 2019) refers to a research study (Humphrey *et al.,* 2010 in Estyn, 2019) on the use of SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), a toolkit widely used in schools. It found that differences in implementation at classroom level (superficial implementation, whether it was part of a whole-school approach, and the 'will' and 'skill' of teachers) affected success.

43   Skilled and committed leaders, teachers and support staff provide a range of interventions and understand which ones are most appropriate for each circumstance. They often attend professional learning courses to familiarise themselves with the specific interventions prior to implementing them in their schools. The early implementation usually follows the guidance very closely, but staff adapt the resources to meet their pupils' specific needs and context as they become more confident in using them over time. They track the progress of pupils during the intervention and have clear entry and exit criteria.

44   The ALNCo or special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is usually the staff member who has the most knowledge of the range available interventions and their suitability. Good schools prepare well for the absence of key members of staff through careful succession planning. They share information effectively with staff who can deputise when necessary. These arrangements, when carried out well, minimise the disruption to support for pupils. The schools also develop strong networks with other schools where good practice is shared on a regular basis.

Bishopston Comprehensive School runs a 'Resilience Group' intervention. This small group is run by one trained member of support staff who creates activities that provide opportunities for the pupils selected to learn more about themselves. The pupils decide on targets, such as improving teamwork, and work towards achieving. They are given opportunities to cope with failure, independent working, listening, solving problems and playing games. Pupils recognise that at the end of the eight-week period they will not be completely ready to show resilience and overcome anxiety in every situation, but that they do have enhanced skills and can apply a positive attitude to their school life. Pupils who have previously attended the group report that it gives them greater confidence to step out of their comfort zone and join different groups in the school and meet new people, all of which they would have found difficult to manage previously. This in turn puts them in situations where they can apply their talents and for these to be celebrated.

45   There are several programmes used in schools to promote better mental wellbeing. These programmes aim to give young people skills and resources to manage their own mental health. They identify gaps in children's emotional and social development so that the adults around them can help them to progress and engage with education and with life. When used well, they contribute to strengthening pupils' resilience.

46   ELSAs are teaching assistants who have received specific training from educational psychologists who also provide post-training supervision and advice. Their role is to support children and young people in school to understand and regulate their own emotions while also respecting the feelings of those around them. The ELSA approach is well established across schools in Wales. These approaches, when implemented fully, can contribute to strengthening pupils' resilience.

47   An increasing number of schools have a member of staff trained as a Mental Health First Aider. Pupils may self-refer or be referred via a member of staff for additional help and support. These pupils are given a regular time to meet with the Mental Health First Aider who shares strategies and coping mechanisms with them to manage their anxieties, depression and feelings. Schools who have members of staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders report that this resource is beneficial for pupils and helps to build their resilience over time.

> Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân is part of a two-year pilot programme funded by the Welsh Government for in-school mental health support programme aimed at preventing more serious problems from occurring later in life across parts of Wales. The In-Reach to Schools programme ensures that dedicated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) practitioners work directly with school staff to strengthen the specialist support that teachers and pupils receive. Practitioners provide teachers with training, help and advice. These trained teachers can provide early help for pupils experiencing difficulties such as anxiety, low mood, and trauma or conduct disorders. The pilot programme is working with Year 6 pupils. It forms part of wider multi-agency efforts to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young adults in the context of the continued high number of referrals to CAMHS services across Wales. The programme trains teachers in 'Youth Mental Health First Aid' so they can react appropriately to pupils who are experiencing mental health problems. In addition, the schools are supported to develop mental wellbeing strategies aimed at teachers, pupils and families.
>
> Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân is already seeing the benefit by using teachers' newfound expertise to work with pupils. The number of pupils referred to CAMHS has reduced, with pupils accessing the appropriate in-school support .

A nurturing approach

48   Nurture groups are school-based, teacher-led psycho-social interventions focused on supporting the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) of children and young people. They involve classes of between six and 12 children or young people, run by two members of staff trained in nurture interventions. Primary and secondary

schools increasingly use nurture groups as a key part of their interventions. They are developed around the six principles of nurture:

- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The classroom offers a safe base
- The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
- Language is a vital means of communication
- All behaviour is communication
- The importance of transition in children's lives (NurtureUK, 2018)

49   Schools that adopt the nurturing approach can help to build positive relationships between adults and pupils as well as among the pupils. They can also help pupils to develop their personal and social skills and increase their emotional resilience. Some schools have succeeded in helping with pupils who had not attended school for a considerable length of time. By using the nurturing approach and building pupils' resilience, these pupils now access mainstream provision, knowing that they can always find a safe haven in the nurture group if needed.

50   A common source of anxiety for pupils who would benefit from nurture provision is the unknown or the unexpected, such as supply teachers covering a class on a temporary basis. As pupils strengthen their resilience, they become better equipped to deal with these situations. Nurture intervention is time-limited to avoid over-dependency for the pupils involved, but benefits can dissipate quickly unless there is a careful plan for re-integration into mainstream classes.

51   The financial implications of running nurture groups are significant, but schools prioritise these resources and feel that losing them would have negative consequences, not only for the pupils but also for the wider school. Strengthening the resilience of pupils through nurture groups means that they are often able to access mainstream education successfully and are less in need of behavioural interventions. Where nurture work is successful, it is likely that there will be less need for expensive support and intervention services later in a pupil's education.

Ysgol Gynradd Maesincla needed to respond to the increasing number of pupils who struggle to cope in the mainstream environment due to their emotional, social and behavioural needs. The school set up a number of nurture groups based on the six principles of nurture. In total, the school runs four nurture groups, two in the foundation phase, and two in key stage 2. Each group has up to 12 pupils that spend about half their time in these groups. All nurture group staff have received training from 'Nurture Group UK'.

Staff consider a wide range of information in order to identify pupils for the provision, including Boxall assessments (see glossary), pupil questionnaires, wellbeing assessments and the teacher's knowledge of each individual.

The timetable is central to the success of each session and familiar daily routines reinforce pupils' sense of belonging and develop their communication, collaboration and interpersonal skills. Pupils develop their social skills well when preparing, serving and eating healthy snacks together. The nurture class provides good opportunities for pupils to integrate life skills and social skills with more traditional

curricular aspects such as literacy and numeracy. They learn to recognise, describe and respond appropriately to a variety of emotions. They improve their concentration, communication, analysis and problem solving skills. Careful attention is paid to the development of pupils' self-confidence and self-image, and to their resilience to everyday setbacks. All activities are geared to the main aim of ensuring that each pupil makes a successful transition back to mainstream school classes.

Opportunities are taken to engage parents in class activities as often as possible. Among the best examples are the 'stay and play' sessions, which are good opportunities for parents to observe, work together and emulate the teaching staff. Parents are also invited to join the classes to celebrate achievements and special occasions.

The most successful aspects of the nurture groups have been incorporated in classes throughout the school. Examples include the use of a daily and weekly visual timetables, opportunities for each child to express and discuss feelings, and a consistent use of a range of approaches to help pupils cope in the mainstream. There are quiet areas in each class for pupils to withdraw to if they need, and short and purposeful thinking sessions are included in the class timetable following each lunchtime. Staff at Ysgol Maesincla have seen an improvement in the resilience, attitudes to school, and in the behaviour of nearly all pupils in the nurture classes.

52   The use of animals as part of therapeutic interventions for children has increased over recent years with dogs, guinea pigs, rabbits, horses, and farm animals included within educational settings. Research suggests that having animals in school settings can benefit pupils' wellbeing (Brelsford *et al., 2017*; Cahill *et al.*, 2017) and help to reduce pupil stress, anxiety and, in some instances, improve school attendance. Giving pupils the responsibility for feeding and ensuring a clean living area for the animals can help to develop sympathy and kindness and give pupils a sense of purpose. The calming influence of animals can benefit vulnerable pupils especially.

In one secondary school, staff in an intervention class were finding difficulty in engaging with two key stage 3 pupils. Both pupils had traumatic upbringings and, even within the nurturing provision, their attitude and behaviour prohibited them from accessing the help on offer from the school. During one conversation, a member of staff detected an affinity to animals by the pupils, prompting the school to purchase two guinea pigs along with appropriate housing and care products. Allowing the two pupils to care for the animals on a strict timetable, associated with punctuality, behaviour and a commitment to the school curriculum, has had a dramatic effect. Over time, both pupils have improved their attendance and behaviour. Their relationship with their peers and adults has improved and they are now accessing mainstream classes.

External agencies

53   Most schools work extensively with staff from external agencies, such as counsellors, nurses, police officers, social workers and youth workers. This multi-agency work is

most effective in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing when there is mutual trust and understanding across agencies about how best to work together. School partnership with parents similarly works well when schools have built a culture of trust and communicate effectively.

54   Many studies attest to the impact of counselling in helping children to become more confident, better at their learning, improve their relationships, self-esteem and resilience, and in reducing incidents of peer problems. For example, Banerjee *et al.* (2016, p.20) found that many studies conclude that counselling helps them to feel happier and safer at school.

55   Play therapy is a form of child counselling for children from ages 4 to 12. The play therapist enters a child's world of play to communicate with them and to help them understand and resolve any psychological and psychosocial challenges, for example trauma, separation of parents or loss of a loved one. In play therapy, pupils are able to express their experiences and feelings through a natural, self-guided and self-healing process. Evidence suggests that play therapy can help pupils towards healthier and better social integration, growth and development. The benefits of play therapy for vulnerable pupils include:

- providing pupils with a safe place in which to express their thoughts and feelings
- facilitating the development of improved self-esteem, problem-solving and coping skills (Homeyer and Morrison, 2008)
- supporting emotional healing and growth
- assisting pupils in making decisions and accepting responsibility for those decisions

56   Identifying pupils that self-harm or who harbour thoughts of ending their own lives can be very challenging for schools. Schools have clear protocols for staff to report any concerns through their safeguarding procedures. Schools make good use of online resources from charities such as Mind or Meddwl.org. The charity 'Papyrus' works with schools to train staff to address the stigma around suicide and to equip young people and their communities with the skills to recognise and respond to suicidal behaviour. The Welsh Government (2019) has also produced helpful guidance for schools and others working with young people to provide advice on how to manage self-harm and suicidal thoughts in young people.

57   Many schools employ staff to work closely with pupils' families, often in conjunction with other schools. When these arrangements are effective, family liaison officers work in partnership with parents, pupils, school office staff, the education welfare officer and social services successfully to ensure that children's emotional needs are being met. They often conduct home visits and welfare checks. When done well, this impacts positively on attendance and helps to build positive relationships with families in need of support.

Mary Immaculate High School has developed 'The Bridge' facility to deliver a range of tailored intervention strategies. The Bridge works as an overarching intermediary between home and school. It provides a safe and structured environment situated in a quiet area of the school where staff deliver a range of creative activities to meet pupils' needs. They include therapy to improve social contact, anger management support, and sessions to help develop social and emotional communication skills. They also deliver bespoke programmes to meet the needs of pupils. For example, they adapt a speech and language package to develop pupils' social skills. Their impact is monitored and reviewed appropriately to ensure that each programme addresses the needs of each learner.

The Bridge facility works in partnerships with outside agencies, such as the educational psychology service, mental health services, school nurse teams, social services and police community liaison officers. A Mental Health Nurse works with a group of anxious pupils. The facility also works closely with 'Invisible Walls', supporting pupils with parents that are serving prison sentences. They have formed good relationships with the Cardiff Youth Offending Service, who provide advice and courses for individuals on their premises. They have a Youth Mentor that works directly with pupils from within The Bridge, which helps with communication and multi-agency working.

These partnerships help pupils in different ways to face challenges and overcome adversities in their lives, building their resilience. The progress of pupils receiving intervention is closely monitored and reviewed and demonstrates that the facility and approaches have had a significant impact on their social development, attendance, exclusion levels and outcomes.

Building resilience at key transition points

58   Transitions (including from home to school, between schools, and from secondary school to further education, training or employment) are periods where resilience is tested and children are at a higher risk of emotional distress. Sharing information prior to transition points and working across organisational boundaries are particularly important, so that schools understand the background and circumstances of each child and can prepare them for the change.

One pupil, who was struggling with the transition to Year 1 would regularly abscond, run away from adults, refuse to follow instructions, refuse to join in with class activities and regularly hurt others. The pupil regularly displayed angry outbursts.

The school put a range of measures in place to aid the pupil's wellbeing, beginning with alternative morning and afternoon break times spent with the class teacher. This provision was used to build strong relationships and to spend quality time with an emotionally available adult, completing a variety of activities that would address the needs highlighted in her assessment. The school also arranged for the pupil to spend alternative lunchtimes with a variety of staff. Alternative lunch arrangements provide a 1:4 adult to child ratio with structured activities. During alternative lunch, the pupil was able to receive more attention from adults and form meaningful relationships with other peers accessing the provision. The smaller structure enabled the pupil to build and sustain relationships with adults and peers. The pupil receives personal and social development (PSD) activities and games and emotional literacy stories in a small group environment.

These measures, although time consuming, had a gradual positive effect on her resilience. By the end of Year 1 she no longer absconded. The pupil participated fully in all learning activities. The progress meant that the pupil was able to engage with the learning in class. There would be occasional displays of anger and frustration, but this was self-regulated using a number of taught strategies. The pupil built strong relationships over the year and was able to build friendships and sustain them. Excellent progress was made against targets on her wellbeing plan.

Transition to Year 2 and the summer holidays was an anxious time with the pupil showing strong anxiety behaviours towards the end of term. Numerous strategies were put in place for both the summer holidays and the transition into Year 2. The pupil was given resources to take home over the summer that helped with the her attachment issue. A 'transition' teddy bear helped in the initial stages of forming attachments and trusting relationships with the adults in the Year 2 team. It is also used as a tool for alleviating anxious thoughts or worries. The pupil coped extremely well with the transition to Year 2, showing great resilience when dealing with new experiences and challenges. She is regularly happy and interacting with others and, when challenging situations arise, she is able to use a variety of strategies to self-regulate.

59   Nearly all primary schools have well-established transition arrangements with their feeder nurseries. In some instances, primary schools arrange 'stay and play' sessions for the upcoming cohort, along with their parents. Children visit on more than one occasion to prepare for the transition and key staff members from the primary school visit the nurseries to introduce themselves and get to know the children. A few children find difficulty in settling to a new routine during the first few days, but a good relationship and clear communication between the school and home help build their resilience.

60   Pupils can find the transition from primary to secondary school particularly stressful. The school experience and routines, especially in terms of moving from having one teacher for most of the week in Year 6 to having several teachers in Year 7, can be daunting. Some secondary schools have adapted their arrangements for Year 7 pupils to reduce the number of teachers they have, and pupils in these schools are positive about this change. Other factors that can affect pupils' wellbeing adversely during the transition to Year 7 are the change in school size, orientation around a large site, toilet and lunch arrangements, travel arrangements and the loss of a breakfast club.

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr and its partner primary schools use their LAC PDG[4] to employ a play therapist to work with pupils to help support vulnerable pupils' mental health and wellbeing up to Year 7. They recognise that the transition period is an ideal opportunity to make a difference to the school's most vulnerable pupils. Pupils access at least six sessions during a school term. The therapy uses a combination of play and the creative arts, symbols, therapeutic storytelling and metaphors to help pupils explore their thoughts and feelings.

61   The closure of a school and transferring to a new school can be an emotional and stressful time for pupils. Losing what has become a familiar and comfortable experience for them, and potentially losing friends and staff that they know well and trust, can be very challenging. Good school reorganisation plans consider the anxieties that face the pupils and prepare them for the change in geography, routines and relationships as much as possible before hand. These plans also allow time for the leaders to create a sense of identify and feeling of belonging within the new school. They are given space to engage all stakeholders in developing the vision and ethos of the school, share their values and listen to the views of the school community. They engender a feeling of pride that makes all stakeholders feel that they have ownership and are important members of the school.

62   PRUs find that transition processes are particularly important when dealing with new pupils who are moving to a PRU for the first time. The pupils are likely to have emotional as well as behavioural difficulties, with low resilience when dealing with new situations or challenges. The most successful PRUs have clear lines of communication with the mainstream school. The pupil is made fully aware of what to

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[4] In 2012, the Welsh Government introduced the Pupil Deprivation Grant, PDG, (now renamed the Pupil Development Grant), to provide additional funding to schools based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) or who are looked after children (LAC). The grant aims to help overcome the additional barriers that prevent pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.

expect and with whom he/she will be working with through meeting key staff during pre-visits. In the most effective practice, a strong partnership is established between the PRU and the pupil's family in advance.

63   When PRU staff support pupils back in the mainstream schools, the best arrangements occur when the mainstream school implements the strategies proposed by the PRU as fully as possible. The pupils are not singled out in the classroom and they engage in the same activities as their peers. PRU staff often provide training for teachers in mainstream settings, sharing good practice in how to strengthen resilience in particular pupils. With the best PRUs, reintegration to the mainstream setting is nearly always successful due to range of support strategies used.

64   In the best PRUs, the input from all adults working with the pupils is valued. For example, taxi drivers are considered part of the PRU's behaviour management approach. If there are issues during the journey, the drivers report this to staff. Pupils will reflect upon their attitudes and behaviour after the journey. Knowing this encourages pupils to respond differently to triggers during the journey to school. This strengthens their resilience and, as a result, behaviour has improved and pupils arrive at school in a better frame of mind.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

The evidence base for this report includes:

- findings from schools visited during the survey
- findings from recent school inspections
- findings from thematic surveys
- relevant data, as referred to in the report
- relevant research findings, as referred to in the report

Estyn would like to thank the following schools that supported this thematic review:

- Bishopston Comprehensive School, Swansea
- Denbighshire PRU, Denbighshire
- Garnteg Primary School, Torfaen
- George Street Primary School, Torfaen
- Gladstone Primary School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Maes yr Haul Primary, Bridgend
- Mary Immaculate High School, Cardiff
- New Inn Primary School, Torfaen
- Pillgwenlly Primary School, Newport
- Romilly Primary School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Tai Education Centre PRU, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Trinant Primary School, Caerphilly
- Ynysowen Community Primary School, Merthyr Tydfil
- Ysgol Bro Teifi, Ceredigion
- Ysgol Bryn Coch, Flintshire
- Ysgol Ffordd Dyffryn, Conwy
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern, Cardiff
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr, Cardiff
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg, Vale of Glamorgan
- Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân, Torfaen
- Ysgol Gynradd Bethel, Gwynedd
- Ysgol Gynradd Maesincla, Gwynedd
- Ysgol Llwyn-yr-Eos, Ceredigion
- Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Carmarthenshire

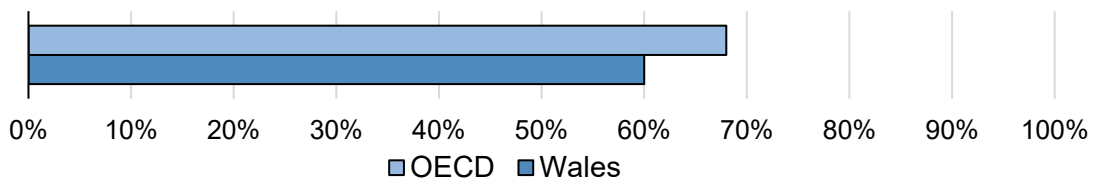## Appendix 2: OECD report 2019: wellbeing of pupils in Wales

Most pupils in Wales report that they are happy sometimes or always, which is in line with the OECD average[5]. However, a lower proportion of pupils in Wales say that they are always happy. Overall, pupils' mental wellbeing is not as strong in Wales as the OCED average. The Welsh Government concludes: '*It should be expected that pupils have concerns and worries about their lives, but pupils' responses in Wales about the extent to which their lives have meaning and how often they experience negative feelings raise concerns when compared with pupils across the OECD'* (Sizmur *et al.*, 2019, p.78).

Figure 1: Pupils who sometimes or always feel miserable or worried:
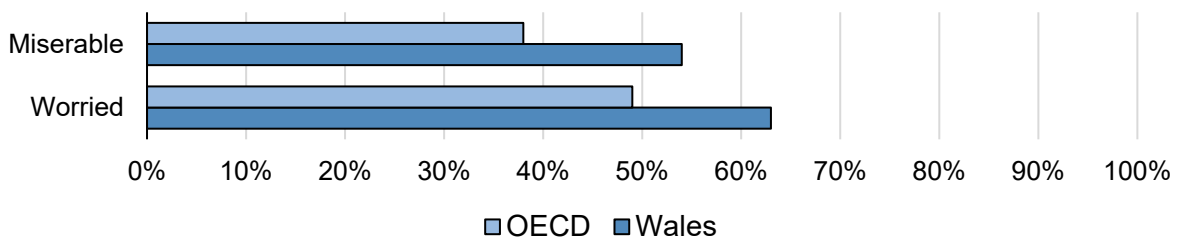
Fewer pupils in Wales (60%) agree or strongly agree that their life has a clear purpose or meaning, compared to the OECD average (68%).

Figure 2: Pupils who agree that their life has a clear purpose or meaning

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[5] All figures in this section are taken from Sizmur *et al.* (2019).

Glossary

Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo)	A staff member responsible for co-ordinating additional learning provision for pupils or students with additional learning needs
Adverse childhood experience	Stressful or traumatic events, including abuse or neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders, mental illness or are incarcerated.
Boxall Profile	The Boxall Profile was developed as a part of the Nurture movement. The Boxall Profile is a two-part assessment tool designed to track the progress of cognitive development and behavioural traits of children and young people through their education. It can be used to help as an Assessment for Early Identification; with Target Setting and intervention; in Tracking progress and; with the Whole-class dynamic. Website: https://www.nurtureuk.org/
Conflict resolution approaches	Approaches to dealing with peer to peer conflict through listening, mediating and resolving incidents through repairing harm and providing strategies for avoiding future conflict
Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)	ELSAs are Teaching Assistants who have been trained to provide support to children who have difficulties understanding and regulating their own emotions and behaviours. They are trained and supervised by Educational Psychologists and there is a national network covering Wales and England. Further details, resources and additional links available at: https://www.elsanetwork.org/
Interventions	Actions taken to improve pupils' wellbeing or standards
National Behaviour and Attendance Review Project	A project designed to help the local authorities in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan to develop a comprehensive approach to the behavioural, social and emotional development of children and young people.

Nurturing Approach

The nurturing approach aims to identify missing early nurturing experiences and give children and young people the social and emotional skills that can help them improve peer relationships, develop resilience and increase confidence.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a charitable organisation set up in 2011 to support children who experience Domestic Abuse. It provides an efficient, confidential channel of communication between police forces and Key Adults within schools to enable the immediate and discrete recognition of the child's situation by the Key Adult, ensuring that a secure and sympathetic environment is provided and the broader effects of abuse are addressed.

Website: https://www.operationencompass.org/

Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)

A short self-evaluation survey that may be used to gain insight into attitudes that could be hindering achievement. It can capture feelings about school and teachers, and help to detect possible barriers to learning, including issues around confidence, resilience, motivation, concentration, disaffection and alienation.

Resilience

The capacity to cope, learn and thrive in the face of change, challenge or adversity

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

Originally started as a pilot by the Department for Education and Skills, SEAL has been developed to provide curriculum resources for class-based work and for smaller targeted groups to help children between the ages of 3-16 years old learn and develop personal and social skills.

Website: http://www.sealcommunity.org/

Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)

A psychological questionnaire designed to identify symptoms of various anxiety disorders in children and adolescents

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

A brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. The tool can capture the perspective of children and young people, their parents and teachers.

Trauma informed practice

Trauma informed practice is practice that has been identified as successful in helping pupils who suffer with trauma or mental health problems and whose troubled behaviour acts as a barrier to learning.

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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