



A practical guide to measuring wellbeing in schools



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**We treasure
what we measure
and yet less than 1/2
of schools in the UK
measure pupil wellbeing”**

ADRIAN BETHUNE, TEACHAPPY

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Introduction

Well Schools aims to help improve education outcomes by placing wellbeing at its very heart. It is for schools designed and delivered by like-minded schools and Trusts. It's all of us coming together to drive change, share challenges and solutions and help find support. This guide has been produced by schools to bring to life what a Well School looks like and will help you take your next steps to becoming a Well School.

What is a Well School?

A Well School builds everything from the foundations of staff and pupil wellbeing. It understands that children and young people are more effective learners when they are happy and well and that they must take care of their staff and their pupils' wellbeing to create a culture that allows everyone to reach their potential.

Why Well Schools?

The evidence shows that there is a clear link between higher levels of wellbeing, academic attainment and other educational outcomes particularly with those pupils facing the greatest disadvantage.

This can result in the following over time:

- Increases in progress and attainment
- Improvements in physical and mental health
- Increased attendance
- Higher self-efficacy
- Increased motivation and engagement
- Improved behaviour
- Reduced exclusions
- Improved job satisfaction
- Increased staff retention

Evidence¹²³ shows that happier teachers and happier children make for better learning environments.

//
Wellbeing = Success

BEN LEVINSON
HEADTEACHER AT KENSINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL IN LONDON



What is wellbeing?

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing refers to how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole¹. It is about the environments we live and work in, the people we interact with, and our personal choices and habits all impact on our levels of wellbeing.

It is possible to measure wellbeing through objective measures (e.g. physical health, education, rates of absence, material resources) and subjective ones (e.g. asking people how they feel about their lives).

This guide will mainly focus on 'subjective wellbeing' which is an assessment of how people feel their life is going. Measures of subjective wellbeing look at people's experience of positive and negative emotions, how satisfied people are with their lives and their sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Why is wellbeing important?

When we have higher levels of wellbeing we tend to do better in life overall. We're able to make the most of our talents and abilities, we enjoy stronger relationships with others, we notice and take advantage of opportunities that open up to us and we tend to bounce back and recover more easily from setbacks.

Links between wellbeing and attainment and other positive outcomes

There is good evidence that shows a clear link between higher levels of wellbeing and academic attainment and other educational outcomes^{2,3,4}.

Schools that put in place whole school programmes to develop students' wellbeing and social and emotional skills can show:

- Significant gains in attainment
- Improvements in mental health
- Higher self-efficacy
- Increased motivation
- Improved behaviour
- Decreased probability of dropout

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Measuring children's wellbeing is an essential first step to understanding how children are feeling about their lives and what they feel needs to change"

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY GOOD CHILDHOOD INDEX



It appears to be true that,
generally speaking,
happier children learn better.

CLICK HERE TO SEE FULL REPORT



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Well teachers are more effective teachers

It is no surprise then that happier teachers tend to teach better too. A report published in 2014, *Healthy Teachers, Higher Marks?* highlighted a statistically significant positive relationship between staff wellbeing and student exam scores. We also know from wider research about employee wellbeing, that happier employees tend to be more productive, perform better, have less time off sick and be more creative⁵.

Schools and teachers have a major impact on children's wellbeing

We also know from longitudinal data that the emotional health of children is the strongest predictor of adult wellbeing (in fact, it is significantly more important than all the qualifications a person ever obtains), and that schools and teachers have a huge effect on their children's wellbeing. This is why Well Schools are so important.

Why measure wellbeing?

There is an old saying, 'We treasure what we measure'. The fact that we can measure wellbeing in a reliable way means schools are likely to value wellbeing more as a result. However, at present, less than half of schools in England collect any wellbeing data of any kind⁶. There are three key reasons for measuring wellbeing in schools:

Baseline – Schools that measure wellbeing know their starting point and the unique issues facing their pupils and staff. Only then can interventions and whole school policies be designed and tailored to suit their needs.

Evaluation and identification – Once wellbeing programmes and interventions are in place, schools can measure and monitor their impact and effectiveness over time. Measuring wellbeing can also help schools identify children and young people who might need specialist support.

Share – If all schools routinely measured their pupils' and employees' wellbeing, it might be possible to see what it is that some schools do to successfully improve outcomes for their school communities. Well Schools could share best-practice with each other, improving the outcomes for children and staff in multiple communities.

Getting started

What questions should we ask?

There are a vast range of validated wellbeing surveys for use in schools and they ask a range of questions about different aspects of wellbeing.⁷ It can be helpful for schools to ask questions from these surveys so they can benchmark against regional or national data. It also helps to ask questions centred around known drivers of wellbeing (see right).

Four measures of personal wellbeing

The ONS has created the [Four Measures of Personal Wellbeing \(ONS4\)](#). These questions are now used in a wide range of surveys allowing schools to benchmark and to see how they are doing and what they might need to do next. On the right are the questions they ask under four key domains of personal wellbeing.

The five key drivers of wellbeing (in the workplace)

- 01 Health
- 02 Security
- 03 Environment
- 04 Relationships
- 05 Purpose

View the diagram [here](#)



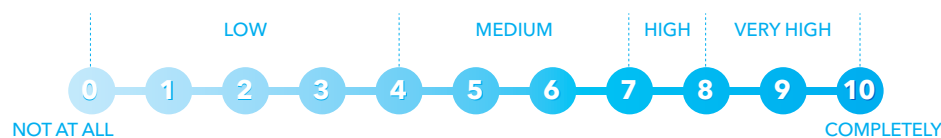
The 10 drivers of children's wellbeing

The Children's Society asked 'how happy are you with...'

- 01 Your relationships with your family?
- 02 The home that you live in?
- 03 How much choice you have in life?
- 04 Your relationships with your friends?
- 05 The things that you have (like money and the things you own)?
- 06 Your health?
- 07 Your appearance (the way that you look)?
- 08 What may happen to you later in your life (in the future)?
- 09 The school that you go to?
- 10 The way that you use your time?

What scale is used for PWB questions?

Thresholds of Life Satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness



Life satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Purpose

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

Happiness

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

Anxiety

Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

(It is not recommended that this question is given to children)



Other measures of pupil wellbeing

Schools may want to ask other questions about different aspects that affect pupils' wellbeing, such as how happy they are with:

- Physical health
- Relationships with friends and family
- Appearance
- The school they go to and their schoolwork
- Time spent on social media

It is recommended that schools use existing surveys and measures of wellbeing (rather than creating their own) so the data gathered is reliable and useful. Measures commonly used in the UK are:

- [Good Childhood Index](#)
- [Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale](#)
- [Student Resilience Survey](#)
- [Me and My Feelings](#)

Other measures of staff wellbeing

In addition to asking staff questions based on the four measures of personal wellbeing, a survey like the [Employee Wellbeing Snapshot Survey](#) is a great place to start and asks staff about:

- Job satisfaction
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Working environment
- Relationships

Choosing a wellbeing measurement tool

Once you have chosen the questions you would like to ask, the next step is to decide how you will gather the data. You may choose to do this yourself in your school, or in collaboration as part of a multi academy trust or local authority initiative. There are also a growing number of providers who offer services and tools related to measuring both pupil and staff wellbeing. These can be useful as they may allow you to collect and analyse your data more easily. Before you choose a provider, do your research and consider asking the following questions:

Choosing a solution top tips

- Does the service offer good value for money?
- Is the tool easy to use?
- Can you demo the service before purchasing?
- Does the service have validated scales and surveys to use?
- Can you create bespoke surveys?
- Can you break results down by groups such as SEND, gender, Pupil Premium?
- Will your data be secure using this service and are they GDPR compliant?

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Administering the survey

Now that you have your bank of questions and you have chosen how people will take the surveys, it is time to administer them.

A good place to start is by taking this free e-learning module '[measuring mental wellbeing to improve the lives of children and young people](#)' offered by CORC.

Tips to bear in mind:

Anonymity – do you want the surveys to be named or anonymous? Anonymity means respondents are likely to answer more openly. Named surveys, however, mean you can identify individuals who may need extra support.

Communication – be sure to communicate clearly with staff, pupils and parents why you are carrying out the surveys. You might want to tell students (and their parents and carers via a letter home) and staff that you want to see how they feel about their lives inside and outside of school and what the school can do to make their lives better.

Accessibility and inclusion – everyone in the school community needs to be able to access the surveys. Make sure the language and administration is inclusive and accessible for all.

Data protection – be sure that how you plan to collect, store, analyse and share the data is data compliant and ethical.

Support – asking people personal questions about their lives and wellbeing can be distressing. Ensure that staff and students know who they can speak with if they need to (e.g. school counsellor or Mental Health First Aider).

Timing – it is worth administering the surveys at roughly the same time each year and at different points in the year. A survey at the start of the year, one around exam periods and one at the end of the year can show how wellbeing changes over the academic year, for example

73%

of parents would prefer to send their child to a 'happy' school

Accessibility and inclusion top tips

- Ensure language is simple and easy to understand.
- Consider those who don't speak English as their first language. Translations of WEMWBS questions into other languages are available [here](#).
- Use emojis alongside 0-10 scales of wellbeing.
- Have a member of staff on hand to help explain questions that children may be unsure of (but allow the child to answer by themselves).

Analysing the data

Once your staff and pupils have filled in the surveys, it is then time to make sense of the data. Using wellbeing measurement tools may allow you to do this more easily.

Headline data

It can be helpful to use thresholds to tell you something meaningful about the wellbeing of your pupils or staff. For example, when using the ONS4, you could group respondent scores into 'low', 'medium', 'high' and 'very high':

Personal well-being thresholds

Life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness score		Anxiety scores	
Response on an 11 point scale	Label	Response on an 11 point scale	Label
0 to 4	Low	0 to 1	Very low
5 to 6	Medium	2 to 3	Low
7 to 8	High	4 to 5	Medium
9 to 10	Very high	6 to 10	High

Source: Office for National Statistics

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Benchmarking

Benchmarking helps you to understand how your staff and pupils compare to others in the UK and to track changes in their wellbeing over time. It is likely that you will be comparing your scores either with average scores from a national, regional or local area. You can compare wellbeing scores with national, regional or local averages:

- At the start of your project - to help you understand whether you are targeting a group with higher or lower wellbeing to start with or to help you build a baseline if you can't build one yourself
- At the end of your project - to make an informed judgement on the contribution of your interventions.

You can compare your scores for the ONS4 wellbeing measures for adults [here](#) and for young people [here](#). You can compare your scores for the Good Childhood Index, using the data from the latest Good Childhood report [here](#). Thresholds for WEMWBS can be found [here](#).

NB – Things can get a bit technical at this stage, so it can help to have a member of staff who is confident with data and statistics to assist.

Looking at specific groups

Averages and headline data can hide what is known as 'wellbeing inequality' - the extent to which people's experiences of life vary within a population or between groups. Therefore, it is really useful to be able to see how different groups in your school community are doing relative to each other.

You might want to break your data down so you can look at:

- Gender
- SEND
- Children receiving Free School Meals
- Children receiving Pupil Premium
- Children with EAL
- Age
- Classes

Measuring progress

A one-off wellbeing survey gives you a snapshot of how people are doing at a particular moment in time. However, when schools systematically measure wellbeing over time, it's then possible to identify trends and measure progress.

It's important to note that, despite a school's best efforts, the wellbeing of pupils and staff (or at least certain groups) may not improve initially. If this happens, reflect on why this may be.. It is normal for wellbeing measures to change down as well as up - often that signifies a very healthy response to a difficult situation e.g. a pandemic, change in circumstances, a life event or a period of hard work.

Try and learn from your data and think about what it tells you. Discuss it with staff and pupils. Think about why things haven't improved, and what this might say about your organisation, your policies and the people you support.

There are a number of reasons why schools may not see wellbeing improvements:

- **Wellbeing fluctuates** – wellbeing isn't a stable entity and even if people show improvements, there may be dips along the way too.
- **People have complex lives** – you can't always influence the negative aspects that affect their wellbeing. But you may be able to help them maintain their wellbeing rather than improve it.
- **External factors** – wellbeing scores can drop because of factors outside people's control (for example, Covid-19).
- **Emotional honesty** – as relationships strengthen in a school, staff and pupils may feel they can be more honest about how they're actually feeling. Wellbeing scores may fall unrelated to your interventions.

For a more detailed understanding on analysing and interpreting wellbeing data it's worth checking out this comprehensive [What Works Centre For Wellbeing Guide](#).



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Sharing results and creating an action plan

After the data has been collected and analysed, the next step is to share it with the key stakeholders in your school community and create a plan of action.

What are we good at?

It's always best to take a strengths-based approach to wellbeing in school. What do your results show are your strengths? What are you doing well? What are you good at? Celebrate the good stuff first.

Focus groups

Qualitative feedback or focus groups can help you understand what's happening in your school. If wellbeing scores haven't improved, focus groups can help you understand why that may be the case. They can also help suggest changes and interventions that can feed into your action plan. Ensure that there is a diverse range of staff, pupils, governors and parents in the focus groups and create space to hear those voices that might not normally be heard.

Extra support

Your results may have highlighted that there are certain groups within your school that need extra support or specific interventions. Ensure any extra support is based on wellbeing drivers.

Involve all stakeholders

Give the key stakeholders in the school the autonomy and agency to be part of the process for change and start to make a plan for what changes can take place.

Put the plan into action

You've surveyed wellbeing. You've identified strengths and weaknesses. You've engaged stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process. Now it's time to put the plan into action. Decide who is responsible for delivering the various actions, set time frames and give them the support they need to succeed

Measure again and continue the cycle

Once your action plan is being enacted, you'll need to review if the changes are working and having an impact, so it'll be time to measure wellbeing again following the steps above.



Children tell us they enjoy being asked these questions and that the topics are important to them."

**CHILDREN'S SOCIETY GOOD
CHILD INDEX**



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Taking Action



Top Tips for taking action and creating your Well School:

- 01** Embed wellbeing in the culture of your school - A Well School is one that takes an holistic approach to wellbeing, where there is a commitment from the governing body and senior leadership team to promoting the wellbeing of everyone in the whole school community.
- 02** Embed wellbeing in the curriculum - Developing a curriculum that is broad and balanced and lays a foundation for physical and mental health and equips them with the human skills and personal development outcomes they need to be happy, healthy citizens of the future.
- 03** Link with Ofsted - The current Ofsted Inspection Framework has a judgement on the 'personal development' of pupils through a curriculum that enables learners' broader development and develops 'character' traits such as resilience, confidence and independence as well as how to keep physically and mentally healthy.
- 04** Use data to work with partners - The data you have gathered will help you engage with partners locally including services like Early Help or SEND services, the police, charities and community organisations, safeguarding and CAMHS, food banks and local sports and youth organisations.



You can find further guidance and support to deliver your Well School priorities at www.well-school.org

Further reading, resources and references

Below is a link to an online webinar created by Adrian Bethune at Teachappy, that provides you with a short guide to measuring wellbeing:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMneAHaVYfw>

If you have found this resource useful, you can find much more in our community of practice at

www.well-school.org



References

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- 5 What Works Centre for Wellbeing, Why Invest In Employee Wellbeing? (2017)
- 6 Department for Education, Supporting Mental Health in Schools and Colleges (2017)
- 7 Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, Measuring and Monitoring Children and Young People's Mental Wellbeing (2016)



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