



Well Schools Evaluation

AN EVALUATION OF THE WELL SCHOOLS COMMUNITY WHOLE SCHOOL
APPROACH FOR SUPPORTING TEACHER AND STUDENT WELLBEING: A
MIXED-METHOD ECOLOGICAL CASE STUDY APPROACH

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Who we are?



Dr Alexandra Hennessey



Lecturer in Psychology of Education

Expertise in large-scale, multi-region, school-based academic, socio-emotional, and wellbeing intervention research, and mixed-methods approaches to evaluating these.

Dr Sarah MacQuarrie



Lecturer in Psychology of Education

Expertise regarding implementation and the role of play, physical activity and outdoor spaces that contribute to school experience.

What is Well Schools?

- Well Schools is a whole school approach to wellbeing.
- A Well School places as much emphasis on wellbeing as it does on academic performance.
- It understands that children and young people are more effective learners when they are happy and well.
- Promotes creating a culture that allows everyone to reach their potential by supporting the **wellbeing of school staff, senior leaders and students** to improve education outcomes.
- The Well Schools ideology of school culture and ethos for supporting wellbeing is underpinned by three pillars (see Figure overleaf).

WELL CULTURE

Wellbeing is put at the heart of school life and enables everyone to thrive and achieve their potential

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, STUDENT & STAFF VOICE, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY, HOME ENGAGEMENT, WELLBEING MEASUREMENT, POSITIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, PASTORAL/SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT

WELL LED

Staff and head teacher wellbeing is actively supported and championed

STAFF WELLBEING CHARTER
WELLBEING GOVERNOR(S)
WORKLOAD SUPPORT
RECOGNITION PROGRAMME
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
PERSONAL LIFESTYLE PROGRAMMES

WELL PREPARED

Every child has positive physical and mental health as a foundation for life

HIGH QUALITY PE
SPORT/ARTS/MUSIC
ENRICHMENT
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
TEAMS
WHOLE SCHOOL PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY
GOOD FOOD PLAN
OUTDOOR
EDUCATION/LEARNING

WELL EQUIPPED

Every child has the human skills and social capital to thrive on the modern world

PUPIL LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMMES
OFF-SITE
EXPERIENCES/VISITS
TEAM BUILDING
EXPERIENCES
SCHOOL EXCHANGES
DEDICATED PSHE/RSE TIME
FUNDRAISING/FOCUS
EVENTS

The main objective is to explore and understand the factors that affect successful implementation of Well Schools and the perceived impact on schools, teachers, and students who are part of the Well Schools community.

We are interested in finding examples of good practice and how challenges are addressed.

Design

A mixed-method ecological case study approach will be used.

1) Case studies:

10 case study schools to illustrate diversity in the Well School community, to understand different Well School journeys and practice, via a range of qualitative interview.

Some findings so far...

Well Schools Case Studies example



- Role of the school in curating wellbeing - contextual
- Well Schools are schools that have joined to develop wellbeing practice and approaches, in particular teacher wellbeing has been cited as a reason to join, as is often over-looked .
- Wellbeing interventions can often fail, whether targeted or universal. So such research is limited by its very nature. A different approach is adopted in this project seeks to recognise the wellbeing practice and approaches embedded within schools that contribute to the wider holistic school environment. This integrated approach is to be considered from multiple points of view.

Case study profile: School H

Secondary school located in a village in London

It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school

Although the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM is at average, the proportion with SEND and speaking EAL are below national averages, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils has increased

- The school was judged as requiring improvement in May 2017.
- The current Headteacher has been there for four years, starting in 2018 when the school became an academy, and has since made strides “*to get the school out of special measures*”.
- They joined the “Well Schools” community in 2020 during the pandemic.

A Whole school culture

- Values adopting a curriculum that puts as much emphasis on wellbeing as it does on academic performance to create a culture that allows everyone to reach their potential.
- It was perceived to sit at the “core of the school” and fit well with existing practice while offering opportunity to head in the right direction.
- Staff value being part of the decision-making processes involved in Well Schools, supporting whole school buy-in.
- Keen for Well Schools not to be recognised as just another intervention or programme, conscious of the perceived pressures put on staff to learn and deliver more and new initiatives.

“Putting wellbeing at the top of the, so it’s more of I guess it’s like part of our daily conversation”

“acted as an umbrella you can see... basically everything we do as a school fits under this umbrella”.

“It is a good direction for us to go in, we’re doing most of these things anyway, this is a really good fit, this is where we should where our school would be good like healthy wise, so yeah, it was definitely like talked to us about in that sense it wasn’t like ‘oh’ it wasn’t a joint decision.”

Leadership

- Throughout the school staff wellbeing is actively supported and championed and this approach has led to a thriving and successful environment for both staff and students.
- Senior leadership team each take roles and responsibilities and communicate regularly.
- A Head of Health and Wellbeing role created.
- Focused on staffing and in reducing pressures such as considering timetabling and resources, and offering to support staff wellbeing.

- A personal cheerleader programme
- Employee assistance programme
- 7 inset days not 5, and 2 are specifically for wellbeing and staff can do whatever they want on that day for their wellbeing (approved at Trust level)
- Deep culture surveys amongst the staff to which the leadership team respond
- Staff clubs e.g., yoga club, running club, after school walks
- Cuppa with colleagues on a regular basis

“Looking after people is good leadership”

“I think fundamentally as a leader I know that if people are in a good place, we get the best out of them”

“Well School is about showing people that you genuinely care about them that their wellbeing is important that they have a place, they have a value, and I wouldn't subscribe to any leadership culture that didn't think that was an important.”

Impact & Sustainability

- The School went from special measures to being awarded Good, *“our Ofsted report’s been published so amazing stuff... .. and wellbeing gets a good mention”*.
- The staff reaction has been positive and *“there’s good staff buy in”* and it has been *“really good”* to have wellbeing *for all* taking a central place.
- Interactions between students has improved as did staff-student relationships - attributed to the school culture and ethos of looking after everyone’s wellbeing.
- Keen to build on the work and successes of their first year of Well Schools, and prioritising wellbeing is at the forefront of future planning.

“I think the staff are happier on the whole this year.”

“It was going to benefit everyone, you know, everyone wants to focus on their wellbeing and it’s definitely something that’s at the forefront at the moment.”

“It’s opened our eyes as well about wellness and wellbeing.”

“It’s just raising this, the profile of it, I believe is something first year, next year will be trying to raise it even further.”

Discussion

- Findings suggest the value of supporting staff and student wellbeing can be central to an effective learning environment.
- Schools are more than a place for academic learning. Wellbeing clearly valued by staff, students, parents and community.
- Contextual - open framework to be designed to fit each setting. Need to fit with school planning, direction and embedded whole school into culture and ethos.

Next steps

- More case studies across other contexts to be analysed.
- Survey data to quantify wellbeing and associated domains.
- Feedback data back to YST to inform the Well School framework and share good practice.

Questions?



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