

FLOURISH PROJECT

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS TO EMBED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



It is clear to all that schools have a primary role to play in identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with respect to social and emotional health and well-being, but increasingly researchers in the field have been acknowledging the pressing need for current approaches to be embedded within the wider school systems and the broader pedagogical approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum.¹ Both students and staff bring with them the social and emotional contexts of their family and community lives and everyone within the school community therefore has a role to play in impacting the health and wellbeing of the whole.

The Flourish Values Model (FVM) facilitates exactly this kind of coherent and integrated approach.

Flourish Model

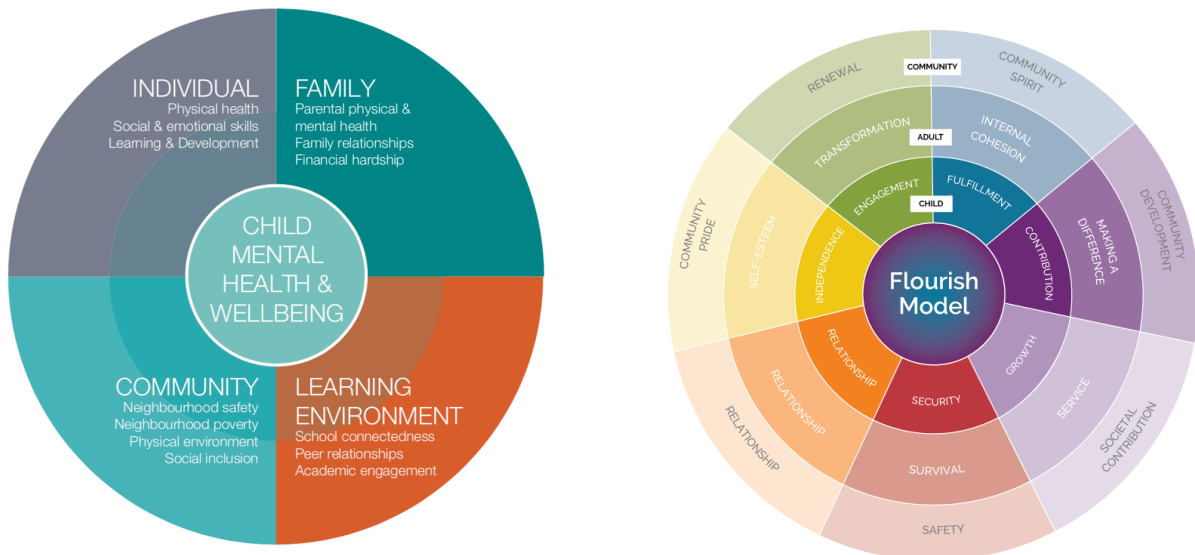


Figure 1: High-level domains that inform measurement of mental health and wellbeing (informed by PHE publication: *Measuring Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People*)

In its Wellbeing Toolkit², Public Health England defines mental wellbeing “as children and young people’s happiness, life satisfaction and positive functioning.” It goes on to highlight the crucial role played by schools and the need for a ‘whole system approach’:

Schools and colleges also play a key role both in providing onsite support through, for example, pastoral support systems, inclusion officers, school and college nurses and other school/college based health services, and in providing links and referrals to more specialist support for mental health and wellbeing available in the wider community.

Evidence shows that interventions which take this multi-level, comprehensive 'whole organisation' or 'whole system' approach are more likely to have a positive impact in relation to outcomes.^{6,7}

In its 2016 synthesis of the evidence this was the conclusion of the Public Policy of Wales:

*“Our synthesis demonstrates that supporting children’s emotional health, wellbeing and resilience effectively in schools requires thinking and practice that treat the task as complex – **that see the school as a web of connected systems that impact on young people.** Indeed, one of the key conclusions of Grey et al.’s (2011) Nuffield Foundation study centred on the need to look at the relationship between the many different school processes, i.e., the total impact of all the elements and how they interrelate....*

***Our overarching recommendation is to develop a carefully planned and well-supported approach to social and emotional learning that is integrated with core pedagogical principles and situated within a connected school.** The key role of school staff, including those in specialist roles as well as the general workforce of teaching and support staff, in providing this support both directly to children and through engaging with families; and, crucially the value of systematically planning and tracking how school systems – across academic learning, behaviour/discipline, and well-being domains – can be integrated and connected with one another in order to ensure that work on emotional health, wellbeing and resilience is not competing with other priorities”.*

Greater awareness of how programmes can best be integrated with whole school systems, including policies, organisational structures, and practices, as well as with pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning across the entire curriculum, can then facilitate:

- **the mapping over time of states of wellbeing in children in general, and particularly those who are at risk due to socioeconomic disadvantage**
- **the mapping over time of states of wellbeing in staff members, and how schools respond to and support staff in appropriate ways**
- **the identification of strengths and assets, as well as potential areas of concern**
- **the mapping of observed associations between SEL and academic attainment outcomes**
- **innovative and cost-effective models for deploying specialist staff and services in schools in such a way that their work provides a bridge to relevant external services**
- **coherent and evidence-based guidelines of best practice for supporting emotional health and well-being in children with different kinds of special educational needs**

- **consideration of how efforts to prevent or intervene with problems overlap with and/or can be integrated with emerging developments regarding the promotion of positive outcomes**
- **improved understanding concerning key transition points - such as the move from primary to secondary provision into and throughout secondary school**

¹ Public Policy Institute for Wales, Promoting Emotional Health, Well-being and Resilience in Primary Schools February 2016

² Public Health England, A Toolkit for Schools and Colleges, 2017