

Wellbeing in Education

Do we have a problem in our schools?



**Veema
Paper**

**April
2018**

There is a growing concern and an increase with Mental and Emotional health issues in our schools. We need to stand together, work as one, and support each other to be emotional and physically healthy. Develop resilience, seek to be happy and prepared for the ongoing struggles and challenges that 21st Century Education forces upon us, to be the best that we can be, for the children we teach and ourselves as educational practitioners.

Do you have an “inside out, outside in” emotional wellbeing philosophy and approach in your school? The skills and strategies needed for wellbeing and mental health should form part of teaching, learning and child development, interweaved into the curriculum as part of daily life.

So why is it that some topics are still difficult to talk about or even tackle? Why taboo? Why are so many scared of talking, addressing and supporting the needs of our children and staff in an ever changing, stressful and complex system of wellbeing and mental health. It's because most people are scared of the unknown. If you have never suffered a mental or emotional health issue you will have little or no understanding of the complexities involved. It's an unique and individual experience. It's not the same for everyone. One set of symptoms will not be the same for another. That's why it's complex. But, what isn't complex is checking that your learners and your colleagues feel well,(emotionally) and look well (physically) and are able to function on a daily basis without too much difficulty.

When it comes to Wellbeing, do you feel that you're not sure what the right thing to say or do is? Are you worried as a teacher, parent, carer or friend that if you ask the wrong thing or difficult questions you may make things worse? This is why so many pretend or stay clear of addressing and supporting those issues in our schools, classes, playgrounds, homes, communities as well as with each other.

Wellbeing is complex. Wellbeing is unique to everyone. Wellbeing begins with an individual 'knowing themselves', their strengths, weaknesses and the way their unique magical ingredients makes them who and what they are as a human being. If we were all the same the world would be full of robotic human beings, and that would be a very sad world indeed.

When thinking about Wellbeing in your school consider the following:

- Make sure the leadership and management in your school supports and drives every effort to promote emotional, physical and mental health.
- The curriculum, teaching and learning promotes and teaches resilience through social and emotional support.
- Give the children and young people a voice. Allow them to be decision makers in the process of addressing Wellbeing in and around the school.
- Prioritise staff development in the area of Wellbeing so that they can address their own needs as well as the needs of the learners. If your staff are not well, then teaching and learning will suffer.
- Have clear systems for identification, monitoring and impact of any interventions you put in place.
- Working with, and including parents is crucial. Create 'Parent Wellbeing Networks' and run session with them too. Ask them what they are concerned about. Tap into their expertise also.
- Make sure your targeted support and appropriate referrals to a School Counselor or Wellbeing Officer are clear for all staff.
- Take time to consider and implement an ethos, culture and school environment that embraces Wellbeing which promotes respect and values diversity. A school that lives and breathes personal Wellbeing and the wellbeing of others is an outstanding school in its own right.

Understanding and practicing Wellbeing must be experiential. You cannot teach and embed Wellbeing without experiencing what it is. It relates directly to our every day lives and that's why interweaving Wellbeing into daily teaching and learning through knowing how to 'do' and 'reflect' on Wellbeing is crucial. Getting students to discuss and share what Wellbeing means to them is a good starting point.

Increasingly we hear that children and young people are feeling stressed and anxious about school, exams, tests and the realisation that competitive learning has it's pressures on everyone. This is the case for teachers too. A lack of understanding about stress and anxiety in itself can lead to depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Our aim as teachers needs to ensure we address the skills needed for children and young people to learn about themselves. What they do and cope well with, and what they don't do as well and cope with. Coping mechanisms and 'knowing oneself' are the main foundations of Wellbeing.

Because each individual is unique, unless you can find out what the issues are through individual support, group work or open class discussion then they may feel they are the only ones experiencing these difficulties, when in all honesty, once the discussion is in full flow and there is trust and openness, they will begin to glean that others too may experience similar thoughts and emotional turmoil. You will be surprised how they can support each other by sharing their own personal coping mechanisms.

This short paper can only get you thinking about Wellbeing for yourself, in your school, your home, community and family life. What I can offer you is my lifetime experience

as an International Mental Health Ambassador and Suicide Survivor in crafting a bespoke Wellbeing Programme/ Philosophy and application in your educational setting. When you get another chance to live your life you can see and experience the world in a whole new different light. A light that can help, save and guide others to a better understanding in practicing and developing their own Wellbeing.

We need to consider what we can do to help each other and the children we teach – and there is a great deal.

Thank you for reading. I'm Nina Jackson, (@musicmind) an Educational Consultant and Practitioner with Veema Education.

To find out more about our Wellbeing Programme for schools and educational establishments please contact Mr. Costa Constantinou, Director of Educational Services on c.constantinou@veema.co.uk.



Nina Jackson

Teaching and Learning Consultant,
Author and Keynote Speaker

Veema Education

Veema Wellbeing CPD Package

Creating a Whole-School Framework for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health — Building a confident team to lead wellbeing across the school

- Establish a culture that develops positive wellbeing and mental health throughout the whole school system.
- Create a supportive wellbeing and mental health agenda across all key stages based on the most reliable educational research.
- Reduce barriers to learning through practical strategies that promote wellbeing and mental health in your school.
- Implement preventative measures that enable you to effectively assess, monitor, review and evaluate student cases.
- Discover how to instil 'digital resilience' in children and young people to ensure their social and emotional wellbeing online.

Suitable for:

All staff, but particularly those with a pastoral responsibility.

Duration:

4-5 days of in-house training over the course of the academic year, including up-to-date safeguarding training from an accredited safeguarding consultant. Plus 9-10 hours of online learning.

To discuss anything covered in this paper or for any other queries, please call us on **+44 (0)20 3637 4232** or email info@veema.co.uk.