

Thematic inspection of personal and social education/health and wellbeing in Scotland's schools and early learning and childcare settings

August 2018

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Introduction

In its [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#), the Scottish Government committed to a review of Personal and Social Education (PSE); the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools; and services for counselling for children and young people. The review is taking place in three phases.

Phase 1, a review of communications and initial exploration of PSE teaching resources, was completed in August 2017 and the outcome published on the Scottish Government's [website](#).

Phase 2 has been a thematic inspection of delivery of PSE in schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland, carried out by Education Scotland. This report contains the findings of Education Scotland's thematic inspection.

Phase 3 will include further engagement with key stakeholders including from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), local authorities, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the third sector. This will inform the consideration of a suite of final recommendations.

Scope of Education Scotland's thematic inspection

Over the period September 2017 to May 2018, Education Scotland has visited ten early learning and childcare settings; 21 primary schools; 20 secondary schools; and four special schools. The sample of 55 schools and early learning and childcare settings visited included a wide geographical spread across Scotland, and both urban and rural areas. It included denominational and non-denominational schools, and a number of early learning and childcare settings and schools with high proportions of children and young people living in the most deprived areas. A list of all the schools and early learning and childcare settings visited can be found at [Appendix 1](#).

During their visits, the Education Scotland team observed learning and teaching; spoke to teachers and other staff; children and young people; parents and carers and partners; and looked at relevant documentation.

Personal and social education (PSE) and health and wellbeing (HWB) in Curriculum for Excellence

The curriculum in Scottish schools and early learning and childcare settings is known as Curriculum for Excellence and includes eight curriculum areas. Health and wellbeing (HWB) is one of the eight curriculum areas and includes food and health and physical education, in addition to what is commonly referred to as PSE.

PSE includes: planning for choices and changes; substance misuse; relationships, sexual health and parenthood; and physical activity and health. In early learning and childcare settings and primary schools, the name health and wellbeing is normally used for the aspects of the curriculum listed in this paragraph, rather than PSE. A minority¹ of the secondary schools visited also used nomenclature other than PSE, including personal support; personal development; and Wellbeing, Opportunities and Work (WOW).

¹ See Annex B for an explanation of the terms of quantity used in this report.

Health and wellbeing across learning is the responsibility of all teachers and other practitioners. Everyone within each early learning setting/school and its wider community, whatever their contact with children and young people may be, shares the responsibility for creating a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust; one in which everyone can make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of each individual within the school and the wider community.

The two key Curriculum for Excellence resources which support teachers to plan learning, teaching and assessment for children and young people aged 3-15, including in PSE/HWB, are the [experiences and outcomes](#) and the [national benchmarks](#). There is no equivalent national guidance relating to PSE for young people from S4 to S6.

The eight wellbeing [indicators](#), safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included, help ensure common understanding of what wellbeing means, and can support planning for, and evaluating children's and young people's wellbeing.

Education Scotland's findings are summarised in the remainder of this report under eight main headings:

1. The content and quality of PSE/HWB programmes for children and young people from three to 18 years in Scottish schools and early learning and childcare settings.
2. How PSE/HWB programmes are delivered and the quality of learning, achievement and progress.
3. The effectiveness of the provision of the universal support entitlement and staged intervention for social, emotional and behavioural support.
4. The effectiveness of pastoral guidance in supporting young people in secondary schools.
5. How positive mental health is encouraged, how issues are identified and the extent of specific counselling services available for children and young people in schools.
6. How the issue of sexual consent is taught within relationships, sexual health and parenthood from early learning through all stages of school education.
7. How learner engagement and co-design of PSE/HWB programmes is taken forward in schools and early learning and childcare settings.
8. The extent to which equalities issues taught in PSE/HWB, teach children and young people about prejudice and promote an understanding of different groups of people.

Under these sections key messages, information on evidence from early learning and childcare settings, primary, secondary and special schools together with examples of effective practice and children's and young people's views are provided.

Thematic inspection findings

1. The content and quality of PSE/HWB programmes for children and young people from three to 18 years in Scottish schools and early learning and childcare settings

Relevant QIs²: 1.2 Leadership of learning, 2.2 Curriculum, 2.3 Learning teaching and assessment, 2.6 Transitions, 2.7 Partnerships

Key messages

- Well-planned programmes are in place in early learning and childcare settings and in primary schools which ensure children have opportunities to develop their health and wellbeing. Staff are beginning to use the wellbeing indicators well to support planning but further work is required to help children reflect better on their own health and wellbeing.
- Children's and young people's views on PSE/HWB are mixed. While primary children are positive about their learning in health and wellbeing, young people in secondary schools sometimes feel that PSE/HWB is overly repetitive and lacks progression.
- Secondary schools have PSE programmes in place in line with national guidance, although they have widely varying approaches to delivering PSE and to the time allocated. Secondary schools have widely different ways of delivering PSE programmes in line with different local needs and curriculum approaches.
- Staff across sectors are committed to professional learning and to ensuring PSE/HWB programmes are continually updated to take account of '21st century issues'. A range of opportunities for career-long professional learning is required to support staff in developing confidence, knowledge and skills in delivering fully up-to-date PSE/HWB programmes.

Well-planned programmes are in place in almost all the early learning and childcare settings visited. The development of HWB is well embedded in the daily activities planned for children at this stage. The most common areas of focus are healthy eating; basic hygiene; understanding emotions; relating to others; and making choices. Children in early learning and childcare settings spend increasing amounts of time playing and learning outdoors, and the benefits of these experiences are well understood by practitioners and parents. Practitioners in around half of the settings visited are making good use of the wellbeing indicators to support their planning. Most settings visited show strong commitment to ongoing improvement through, for example, identifying and addressing gaps in the programme, and professional development for practitioners in a range of relevant areas. Parental engagement is a particularly strong feature of early learning and childcare settings and almost all parents said they are pleased with their children's experiences and progress. A few settings use inputs from visitors and parents well to enhance children's learning about working in the local area.

In almost all the primary schools visited, the positive ethos and supportive relationships reflect and support children's health and wellbeing. Most primary schools have well-planned programmes in place which ensure children have opportunities to develop their health and wellbeing in line with national Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Primary schools are also giving appropriate attention to local issues such as mitigating the impact of economic difficulties, increasingly supported by the Pupil Equity Fund. Teachers are making good use of the wellbeing indicators in around a third of the primary schools visited. This is beginning to help children reflect on and evaluate their own health and wellbeing. In the remaining proportion of primary schools, teachers need to make better use of these indicators to help children reflect on their wellbeing. In denominational primary schools, the God's Loving Plan programme is helping teachers develop children's learning in relationships and sexual health. A significant minority of primary schools are in the process of reviewing their programme for PSE/HWB, in some cases supported by new local authority guidance. Areas which are receiving increasing focus are resilience; nurture; and internet safety. In most primary schools, staff have good opportunities for professional learning in these and other relevant areas. In a few primary schools, staff are raising awareness of the skills required for work including through learning about jobs in the local area from contributions from partners and local businesses.

Primary children's views of PSE/HWB programmes

Children spoke positively of their learning in HWB. In particular, they provided insight into its importance now and in the future:

'The co-operative work we do with different people in class, we are trying to learn from each other; it encourages us in future life to be able to communicate with different people.'

'Making friends during school so when you grow up, whatever the career, there is an element of socialising.'

'Health and wellbeing is fascinating – the mental aspect, learning about peer pressure. It helps in future if we experience it – helps us make good decisions about smoking/drinking alcohol.'

The most notable feature of PSE/HWB in the secondary schools visited is the widely varying approaches to its delivery and time-allocation from school to school in line with different local needs and curriculum approaches. All the secondary schools visited have programmes in place for PSE/HWB which take account of national Curriculum for Excellence guidance. The publication of the national benchmarks in 2017 has prompted a significant minority of secondary schools to review and improve their PSE/HWB programmes. There is extensive evidence to show that secondary schools are continually updating their PSE/HWB programmes to include '21st century issues' in order to meet young people's needs at local level. Opportunities for professional learning on a wide range of themes are enabling teachers to update the PSE/HWB programme on an ongoing basis in most secondary schools. In a significant minority of secondary schools, young people in the senior phase want more emphasis on skills for life, such as moving away from home and personal finance. Young people from S1 to S3 generally enjoy PSE/HWB more than their older peers. However, in a significant minority of secondary schools, young people from S1 to S3 find PSE/HWB overly repetitive, with themes such as alcohol and bullying being revisited from year to year without suitable progression being built in.



In the special schools visited, the development of children's and young people's health and wellbeing permeates all aspects of the curriculum. Special schools are working to ensure continuing improvements in the development of children's and young people's emotional literacy and mental health to enable them to achieve as highly as possible. In the special schools visited, all teaching staff are encouraged to participate in individual and collaborative learning which promotes children's and young people's wellbeing.

Relevant themes being given increasing attention in PSE/HWB programmes include:

mental health; body image and influence/impact of media; stress management; peer pressure; self harm; domestic abuse; knife crime; internet safety; and skills for work, supported well by SDS.

Secondary young people's views of PSE/HWB programmes

Young people's views of the PSE/HWB curriculum were mixed:

Some thought that their programme was appropriate and enjoyed opportunities to influence the content.

Some felt their programme was outdated and materials were not relevant or helpful.

'It should be more progressive.'

'PSE has no status as a subject as it is not a national award.'

'The programme is too repetitive, and not relevant to our experiences and knowledge.'

'If we were given more choice on what and how we learn, the programme might be more relevant and meet our needs.'

Learning about mortgages, finances, credit cards, how to get jobs in the local area, laws around issues such as sexual consent and drink driving, undertaking the theory test for driving, were some of the topics cited by young people as of value to learn and should be included in PSE/HWB.

2. How PSE/HWB programmes are delivered and the quality of learning, achievement and progress

Relevant QIs: 1.2 Leadership of learning, 2.2 Curriculum, 2.3 Learning teaching and assessment, 2.6 Transitions, 2.7 Partnerships

Key messages

- Partnerships and multi-agency working make a significant contribution to supporting children's and young people's learning in PSE/HWB and meeting the range of their needs.
- Opportunities for group discussions and collaboration in PSE/HWB lessons successfully engage children and young people in their learning. However, overall, children's and young people's learning experiences in PSE/HWB need to be improved to ensure they are of a consistently high quality.
- Approaches to tracking and monitoring children's and young people's progress in PSE/HWB need to be improved to ensure their needs are being met and that they are making suitable progress. Teachers are beginning to use national benchmarks in their planning. However, more work is required to improve approaches to assessment and to ensure that children and young people make better progress in their learning in PSE/HWB.
- PSE/HWB programmes in S5/S6 need to be reviewed to ensure young people get their full entitlement and their needs are met. Secondary schools need to review the effectiveness of tutor periods to ensure that the time spent is well used and relevant to support young people in developing an understanding of their wellbeing.

In most early learning and childcare settings visited, children are well engaged in their learning. Children benefit from opportunities to choose which activities to engage in, thus developing their independence. In most settings visited, the Education Scotland team found clear evidence that children are making good progress with their health and wellbeing, often highlighted and greatly appreciated by parents. Notable features of the delivery of the PSE/HWB curriculum in early learning and childcare settings are, use of the outdoors; visits in the wider local area; and support from partners, including health visitors and people who work in the community.

The delivery of HWB in primary schools is characterised by an effective blend of lessons on specific themes and the embedding of HWB across the curriculum. For example, children are developing positive attitudes and confidence in the context of numeracy and mathematics, in the expressive arts and through out-of-class opportunities for personal achievement. Aspects of HWB are often delivered through assemblies and by a range of partners. Most lessons observed were structured well by teachers. Children had good opportunities to work collaboratively and were well engaged in their learning. In discussions with children, there was clear evidence of enjoyment of HWB activities. Most children were able to talk confidently about what they had learned and are making good progress. The assessment of children's progress in HWB has been identified as an aspect for improvement in most primary schools, with teachers beginning to use the national benchmarks to support this work.

Primary children's views of the impact of learning in PSE/HWB

'I can help my sister when she feels down - I can lift up her spirits and make her happy.'

'We are learning to be critical consumers and can explain that body images on social media and magazines are not real.'

'We are learning about the importance of knowing who you are rather than being forced to be someone you are not.'

'It helps you be more positive at school. If you are not sleeping well, you won't achieve as much and not be as good as you can be.'

'I am kinder to my mum.'

'I am eating more vegetables and less pies.'

'I am more aware of rubbish – we have learned about the code of nature – 'leave no trace' and pick it up.'

'I don't vandalise now – if out on our bikes, we no longer break trees.'

'I am able to talk to family about being anxious.'

'I am more careful about what I do online.'

'I am more aware of different jobs, for example, a forensic scientist.'



In the secondary schools visited, the delivery of PSE/HWB programmes varies widely in line with different local needs and curriculum approaches. In almost all secondary schools, young people from S1 to S4 receive at least one 50 minute lesson a week of PSE/HWB. In a few cases, young people at these stages also receive additional periods of, for example, health education or the opportunity to gain an accredited HWB award. In around half of the secondary schools visited, PSE/HWB is enhanced by varying amounts and patterns of time spent with register teachers or tutors, where the focus is often on having discussions with young people about their learning and progress across subjects. In a few secondary schools, the quality of young people's experiences during tutor time is being

reviewed because of its lack of effectiveness. A few secondary schools have identified the need for professional learning for staff to improve their contribution and commitment as tutors. Young people in S5 and S6 receive at least one period a week of PSE/HWB in most of the secondary schools visited. In the other secondary schools, young people at these stages receive their PSE/HWB through assemblies, sometimes led by young people, and various inserts to the curriculum. A significant minority of secondary schools are reviewing the provision for PSE/HWB in S5/S6, considering the reintroduction of formal PSE/HWB periods, or aiming to provide a broader and more coherent experience for young people. In most cases, PSE/HWB is delivered by guidance, pupil support and pastoral care staff. In denominational secondary schools, significant parts of the PSE/HWB programme are delivered in religious education lessons.

The quality of learning and teaching in most PSE/HWB lessons observed in secondary schools was good, with young people benefitting from opportunities for group discussion and to work collaboratively. In a minority of lessons observed, the quality of learning and teaching was not high enough. For example, the Education Scotland team observed lessons which were overly teacher-led, or where young people disengaged because the lesson content lacked relevance. A notable feature of the delivery of PSE/HWB in secondary schools is the extensive contribution of partners, including health, community learning and development and third sector organisations. In discussions with the Education Scotland team, young people were able to talk well about their learning in PSE/HWB. The development of formal systems for monitoring and tracking young people's progress is an area requiring improvement in most secondary schools. Teachers recognise that the national benchmarks will help with this work. Secondary schools should now make more systematic use of the wellbeing indicators to help young people with evaluating their own wellbeing.

In the special schools visited, children and young people were actively and enthusiastically involved in their learning. Children and young people are making good progress, for example in developing their independence, and developing their consideration for others. Partners make an important contribution to the delivery of the HWB curriculum. Visits in the local community play a key role in reducing children's anxiety and increasing their confidence.

Secondary young people's views the impact of learning in PSE/HWB

'PSE helps you with tricky situations in the real world.'

'It has really broadened my horizons.'

'I understand a lot better now how it must feel to be growing up gay.'

'I think more about what other people experience and feel like.'

'I think it's really important and maybe we should get more time on some stuff.'

'It's good when outside people come in – like nurses, and the mental health people.'

'We get opportunities to do research on areas we are particularly interested in – like bulimia and anorexia.'

'I've got some ideas about how to ease stress.'

'It's a safe class. You can ask anything there and everyone's treated with respect.'

3. The effectiveness of the provision of the universal support entitlement and staged intervention for social, emotional and behavioural support

Relevant QIs: 2.4 Personalised support, 2.6 Transitions

Key messages

- The commitment of staff and partners to universal support and children's and young people's access to a member of staff who knows them well helps to promote the wellbeing of children and young people. Staff understand the need to support children and young people in ways which are responsive, flexible and targeted at individuals' needs.
- Positive ethos and relationships are supporting children's and young people's health and wellbeing, including positive mental health. Children's and young people's wellbeing is enhanced by support from partner agencies.
- Opportunities for personal achievement and the celebration of successes are also contributing to children's and young people's confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing in primary and secondary schools.
- Staff use well-established approaches to identify children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs and the range of targeted support to meet their needs. Secondary schools are developing the use of data to identify where additional support is needed and to evaluate the impact of any intervention.

In most early learning and childcare settings, and primary, secondary and special schools, the positive relationships between staff and children are an important factor in ensuring that all children get the support they need to ensure their wellbeing.

In early learning and childcare settings, the 'key worker' approach, where a nominated member of staff has lead responsibility for planning to meet children's individual needs, works well in most settings. This approach ensures that interventions are made where necessary to provide additional support for children who require it, very often involving a range of specialist partner agencies. Most settings provide good support for children with particular social, emotional and behavioural needs at times of transition, which sometimes includes home visits before children start nursery. In a few settings, practitioners commented that specialist agencies are under pressure to deliver the support required. Practitioners in rural settings stated that specialist support was sometimes hard to access due to remoteness of their locations.

Almost all primary class teachers know their children well and are committed to ensuring their wellbeing. In primary schools, opportunities for personal achievement and the celebration of children's successes make a positive contribution to children's confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. Most primary schools have good systems in place for identifying those children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. There is clear evidence that most primary schools are providing good support for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs, frequently in partnership with other agencies. The increased confidence of staff in managing

the behaviour of distressed children was noted as a positive outcome of professional learning in around a quarter of primary schools visited. Around a half of primary schools have nurture rooms or quiet spaces to support children with social, emotional and behavioural needs for short periods of time to address specific needs as required. Most primary schools also ensure that these children receive extra support at times of transition, in particular when they move on to secondary school.

In secondary schools visited, most teachers recognise their responsibilities with regard to universal support by establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and by providing learning experiences which support young people's wellbeing. In all secondary schools, young people are allocated a key adult, usually their guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teacher or their tutor who knows them well, and to whom they can talk if they have a concern. In a few secondary schools, young people stated that they are not fully confident in speaking to their guidance teacher, or that they preferred to talk to another member of staff whom they know better. Most secondary schools have effective systems in place to identify young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs, and to ensure they get the targeted support they require, often supported by partners. We noted good practice in the use of data to identify where additional support is needed, and to evaluate the success of interventions for example improved attendance and reduced exclusions in a few secondary schools. Commendably, guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers and senior promoted staff talked about the need to support young people in ways which are responsive, flexible and targeted to individuals' needs. The approaches to providing support for young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs include special programmes for groups of young people; behaviour support in lessons across the school and in special units; inputs from an extensive range of partners; and enhanced transition arrangements. These interventions are increasingly being enhanced and extended through the Pupil Equity Fund. A few secondary schools are reviewing their approaches to support, having recognised the need for a clearer strategy for interventions and how to evaluate their impact.

In special schools visited, the learning environment is built on the foundations of nurturing and caring relationships. The special schools are welcoming and inclusive. Staff are sensitive and supportive of the wellbeing needs of individual children and young people. Staff are making good use of staged intervention and support from specialist staff and partners to ensure the social and emotional needs of children and young people are met. Most special schools are reviewing how they monitor and track progress in HWB. All special schools visited are providing a wide range of targeted interventions and programmes to help children and young people self-regulate their own emotions with resilience, restorative practices and nurturing being the most effective. There is evidence that more effective partnerships with parents is helping to promote the wellbeing of children and young people with social and emotional needs. All special schools provide enhanced transitions. Half the special schools use community-based workers well to support children's transfer to secondary school to ensure it is a positive experience for children and their families. Most special schools identified a key adult to provide universal support to named individual children and young people.

4. The effectiveness of pastoral guidance in supporting young people in secondary schools

Relevant QIs: 1.2 Leadership of learning, 1.3 Leadership of change, 2.5 Family learning, 2.6 Transitions

Key messages

- Guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff in secondary schools are responsible for the pastoral care of young people and have numbers in their caseload which varied from 74 to 280 in the schools visited. A few secondary schools are taking action to reduce the numbers in caseloads to ensure that guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff have sufficient time to meet the needs of all young people, including those requiring targeted support. In secondary schools, a review of the role of guidance/pupil support/pastoral staff is required to ensure an appropriate balance of responsibilities across universal and targeted support.
- The leadership role of guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers in delivering PSE in secondary schools builds relationships and enhances support for the wellbeing of all young people. As a result, most young people value their guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers.
- Guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff play an important role in supporting post-school transition together with staff and partners. Schools should give more emphasis to developing an understanding of future career options and skills for work at an earlier stage in line with the Career Education Standard 3 - 18.

In most secondary schools visited, all young people are members of 'houses' which include young people from S1 to S6. Typically, there are three or four houses in a school. In effective Gaelic Medium provisions, young people learning through Gaelic are allocated to the same designated house/house group as a way of strengthening the use of Gaelic in the curriculum. Guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff are allocated to houses and are responsible for the pastoral wellbeing of the young people in their house. The average number of young people in a guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teacher's caseload is 200, with numbers ranging from 74 to 280 in the secondary schools visited. A few secondary schools are taking action to reduce the numbers in caseloads, or are seeking to achieve greater equity of numbers of young people across the guidance/pupil support/pastoral team. In around half of the secondary schools visited, aspects of pastoral care are also delivered by teachers acting as tutors, as outlined in section 2.

In most secondary schools, formal PSE/HWB lessons are taught by guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers; this allows them to see their young people on a regular basis and get to know them well. In most secondary schools visited, guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers are seen as approachable and are highly regarded by young people who feel well supported. In a few secondary schools, guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers stated that they feel under pressure and spend the majority of their time dealing with pupils who have additional needs. In a few secondary schools, young people stated that they do not get one-to-one meetings to discuss their wellbeing and progress, or that some guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers are not always approachable.



Most secondary schools visited place a high priority in supporting young people in the senior phase in moving on from school to further study and employment. Guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff play an important role in this, often supported by other staff with responsibility for employability and/or Developing the Young Workforce, as well as by a range of partners including Skills Development Scotland, local colleges and businesses. Young people in the senior phase speak positively about the support they receive in relation to work experience, careers information, advice and guidance, and through the focus on careers and employability in the curriculum. However, often there was too much focus on support for university applications and not enough on other post-school destinations such as Modern Apprenticeships, college and employment. In the senior stages of special schools, young people benefit from enhanced transitions into the world of young adulthood through a range of targeted interventions which are well supported by committed partners. Schools need to extend this work in the senior phase to ensure that young people in S1-S3 benefit from a stronger focus on career choices and skills for work as they progress through school.

Transitions from primary and from school into employment or higher or further education are a strength of the school and positive destinations, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, have improved year-on-year. Partners, including Skills Development Scotland (SDS), said that the school's very good organisation of universal support allowed them to contribute effectively to courses and programmes as well as working with groups and individual young people.

All young people have been introduced to 'My World of Work' and to custom built ICT facilities in the school's careers hub to support effective engagement with online resources. Discrete Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) curriculum options available in the senior school effectively promote careers and employability skills. These are valued by staff, young people and parents.

Strong links with local businesses support delivering the entitlements detailed in the Career Education Standard and the wider Developing the Young Workforce recommendations. These are contributing towards the school's high level of positive destinations. An employability course for a small number of targeted parents delivered by the careers advisors in school is benefitting young people indirectly through increased levels of parental confidence and wellbeing.

secondary school

5. How positive mental health is encouraged, how issues are identified and the extent of specific counselling services available for children and young people in schools and early learning and childcare settings

Relevant QIs: 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection, 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion, 2.4 Personalised support

Key messages

- Across early learning and child care settings and primary schools, children's positive mental health is supported by a range of approaches including a positive ethos and nurturing relationships.
- PSE/HWB programmes in secondary schools now have a greater emphasis on mental health, than previously, due to an increase in young people experiencing stress and anxiety. Commendably, young people are beginning to develop strategies to build resilience to deal with stress, anxiety and loss. Guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff are giving high priority to ensuring that vulnerable young people receive the support they require.
- Across all sectors, staff benefit from professional learning to deepen their understanding of mental health issues in children and young people but would welcome more opportunities to learn. In a third of secondary and a few primary schools, children and young people have direct access to a mental health counsellor. The impact of these approaches helps to reduce the number of referrals to specialist counselling services. Access to specialist counselling services needs to be improved.

In the early learning and childcare settings visited, there was clear evidence that the nurturing ethos and the focus on playing and learning outdoors is supporting positive mental health in children. When necessary, these settings are able to access support for children with additional needs from a range of partners, including educational psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services ([CAMHS](#)), and speech and language therapists. These children are identified through observation of their behaviour and engagement with parents. Practitioners in a minority of settings stated that they would welcome more support than is currently available to them from partner agencies.

In most primary schools, children's mental health is supported by a range of approaches including the focus on a positive ethos and nurturing relationships. Learning outdoors and the successful use of commercial packages of resources relating to mental wellbeing are also having a positive impact in most primary schools. A few primary schools have direct access to a professional counsellor. However, where children have been identified as in need of specific support, for example through observation of behaviour, check-in conversations or notes in 'worry boxes', primary schools work with a range of partners to meet children's needs. These partners include educational psychologists; specialist local authority teams; school nurses; and community link workers. Staff training relating to mental health issues has reduced the need to refer children to external agencies in around a quarter of primary schools. Around a third of primary schools stated that they contact CAMHS, with around half of these noting long waiting times.



Secondary school staff noted an increase in stress and mental health issues for young people. As a result, PSE/HWB programmes now include an increased emphasis on mental health, and staff are giving high priority to ensuring that vulnerable young people receive the support they require. For example, secondary schools are using an increasing range of approaches to supporting mental health and building resilience, such as providing increased specialist input from partners, anxiety workshops, stress management, dealing with bereavement and loss, whole school approaches to nurture, restorative approaches and raising awareness of mental health. The Education Scotland team noted a few good examples of seniors supporting their younger peers with mental wellbeing. Staff are benefiting from professional learning in mental health issues, but stated that they require more. Young people in around a third of secondary schools have direct access to a counsellor, most commonly a practitioner working in the third sector. Other secondary schools ensure suitable support for young people through working with a range of partners including, for example, a GP drop-in service and specialist local authority teams. A few secondary schools are planning to use Pupil Equity Funding to reintroduce counselling in secondary schools, or to increase the provision already available. Waiting times to access CAMHS can be as long as eight months in a few areas, with only the most pressing cases seen.

In the special schools visited, there is a calm and supportive ethos where children and young people feel safe. Most special schools are using outdoor spaces and experiences to promote positive mental health. Physical activities such as horse riding and swimming are helping to promote children's and young people's wellbeing. Children and young people identified as requiring targeted support benefit from a range of proven programmes to alleviate bereavement and loss or to promote mindfulness. When required, staff are able to access high quality support from a range of allied health professionals and third sector organisations. All special schools reported referring a few children to CAMHS. Most special schools successfully encourage children and young people to take more responsibility for their actions and to promote positive behaviours. Staff are encouraged to model positive attitude. The special schools visited did not have direct access to a counsellor but a few of the special schools are in the process of pooling Pupil Equity Funding across the cluster to secure a mental health worker.

6. How the issue of sexual consent is taught within relationships, sexual health and parenthood from early learning through all stages of school education

Relevant QIs: 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection, 2.2 Curriculum

Key messages

- While consent is taught appropriately in most early learning and childcare settings, an appropriate focus on the issue of sexual consent, especially in primary schools and the early stages of secondary schools, is required.

Consent is taught appropriately in most early learning and childcare settings, with the focus at this stage on respecting personal space; asking permission; appropriate touching; and issues of privacy.

In a significant minority of primary schools, it is not clear how consent, which includes issues such as appropriate touching, is taught. This issue is recognised as an aspect for improvement, with teachers requiring professional learning.

Consent is taught appropriately in most secondary schools. However, in a significant minority of secondary schools, consent is not taught at an early enough stage. Denominational secondary schools teach consent as part of religious education, drawing on the resource 'Called to Love'.

In the special schools visited, there is a strong focus on meeting children's and young people's specific, individual needs, including in the teaching of consent. Almost all special school use programmes suitable for a range of children and young people to help their understanding of sexual health. Staff would benefit from opportunities for professional learning in approaches to teaching sensitive information to children and young people with more complex needs. Partnerships with other agencies, including the school nurse, are used effectively to support the delivery of sexual health education.

'We explore family and community relationships through the nursery experiences. Through the development of PSE experiences offered we encourage the children to recognise the importance of keeping ourselves safe both mentally and physically in relation to peers and adults.'

nursery class

'This [sexual consent] is a particularly sensitive area of the curriculum that causes staff concerns in terms of their obligation to cover such areas and the potential serious concerns amongst parents, within our small, relatively sheltered community.'

primary school

'Through 'God's Loving Plan' statements of experiences and outcomes in relation to sexual consent (HWB 0-49a, 1-49a, 2-49a) are progressively addressed at all stages of learning. This, in conjunction with promotion of UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), ensures that all children are supported to understand that they have the right to be safe and to be protected from all forms of abuse.'

primary school and nursery class

'The issue of sexual consent permeates the local authority RSHP [relationships and sexual health programme], devised by a range of practitioners across the local authority in collaboration and partnership with the NHS following national and local guidance. Principal teachers and pupil support staff attended training sessions run by the NHS to ensure they felt informed and supported to deliver the locally agreed programme, particularly in response to school nurses being unable to support condom demonstrations etc. in schools. Consistent delivery by pupil support teachers ensures learners can progress through RSHP, developing the necessary transferable skills in different context to ensure sexual consent is not only taught effectively but also understood by all, at the right and appropriate time, meeting individual needs.'

secondary school



'[In S1] the issue of sexual consent is delivered through the resource pack 'Exploited' which tackles a range of sensitive issues including grooming, power and control, blackmail and coercion, peer pressure and, indeed, sex under the age of consent. Parents and carers are informed of the delivery of this resource both before and after its delivery to both raise awareness and so that they can engage with their youngster throughout the process. A letter is then sent at the end of the series of lessons to ascertain if the learners have been affected by the lessons in any way or to act as a safeguarding strategy should disclosures arise as a result.'

secondary school

7. How learner engagement and co-design of PSE/HWB programmes is taken forward in schools and early learning and childcare settings

Relevant QIs: 1.2 Leadership of learning, 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

Key messages

- Increased opportunities for children and young people to be involved in designing their PSE/HWB programmes are required.

In a few early learning and childcare settings, staff ensure the HWB programmes are responsive to children's needs and interests and are beginning to take account of their views. The Education Scotland team noted very little evidence of children's involvement in designing HWB programmes in primary schools. There are some strong examples of young people leading and evaluating learning in PSE/HWB in secondary schools. The need to take more account of young people's views has been identified as a priority in around a quarter of secondary schools visited. In a few of the special schools visited, children and young people are helping to choose the focus of some aspects of their HWB programmes.

Opportunities for the children to choose and be self-directing in their learning are evident. Staff are supportive and encouraging and it is clear that they know each child well. Children's interests are listened to and valued and staff plan learning activities around what children say they want to discover. Discussions with children are captured in their personal learning plan twice a year or more frequently for children identified as requiring additional support.

nursery class

Children are consulted on a regular basis about school issues and curriculum matters. A children's group has been established to highlight what makes the school unique and utilise these features within the delivery of the curriculum to enhance outcomes for children. The school has offered further opportunities for children to participate in the wider school through working groups on anti-bullying and internet safety.

Children are also asked for feedback on how they are learning and offer suggestions for improvements. This is all recorded and considered when adjustments are being made.

Child-led internet safety and anti-bullying groups have presented at assemblies with the wider school to raise awareness of the issues. These sessions were very well received by learners.

primary school

The school has a high number of young carers and has a well-established young carers group. Young people take an active role in planning the content of group sessions based on their current needs and interests. Young carers feel well supported and have benefitted from participating in a range of activities to develop their social and team building skills during school time and outwith the school day. Young people have also participated in community activities to raise awareness of young carers.

secondary school

All staff, learners, parents and partners are involved very effectively in the continuing evaluation of the impact of learning in health and wellbeing. As a result, areas for further improvement are identified and incorporated into planning for improvement.

Health and wellbeing courses are regularly reviewed, well planned and make effective use of experiences and outcomes to ensure progression. As a result, it ensures coherence and progression for all young people. In consultation with young people and their parents, senior staff have taken decisions about the content and structure of the wellbeing curriculum that have positive outcomes for learners.

The regular review of the wellbeing curriculum and of the school's context has led to its effective updating in relation to, for example, mental health, gender identification and sexual orientation and internet safety.

Staff have very effectively involved young people in reviewing the effectiveness of the health and wellbeing courses. There is regular evaluation of both content and delivery of wellbeing topics and evidence of changes made in response to young people's views. In addition, there is ongoing involvement of young people in contributing to and reviewing specific aspects of programmes, for example, anti-bullying and mental health.

secondary school



8. The extent to which equality issues taught in PSE/ HWB, teach children and young people about prejudice and promote an understanding of different groups of people

Relevant QIs: 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection, 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

Key messages

- Across all sectors, children and young people are developing an appropriate understanding of respect and to value diversity through rights-based learning. Equality of different groups including LGBTI³ is being promoted well in most secondary schools. A greater focus on learning about all aspects of equalities and a wider range of groups is required especially in the early years and primary settings.
- Staff benefit from professional learning and resources provided by specialist partners, although resources require to be regularly refreshed. Increased staff awareness and use of guidance available on the teaching of LGBTI issues is required, particularly in early learning and childcare settings, primary and special schools.

In a minority of early learning and childcare settings, children are learning about equalities issues through a focus on rights, and about LGBTI issues through resources which feature different types of families. Non-gender stereotypical play was noted in a few early learning and childcare settings. Equalities need to be given more attention in early learning and childcare settings, including in relation to challenging stereotypes in the context of work.

In around half of the primary schools visited, children are learning about equality issues, for example valuing and respecting difference through rights-based learning programmes and at assemblies. A greater focus on understanding LGBTI was noted in a minority of primary schools. In particular in denominational primary schools, teachers want more guidance on the teaching of LGBTI issues.

Issues relating to equality, including LGBTI, are well covered in most secondary schools. Just under half of the secondary schools visited have a LGBTI group to support young people. Non denominational secondary schools use the NHS resource [Sexual Health and Relationships Education \(SHARE\)](#). In a few secondary schools, staff and young people commented that SHARE needs to be updated, including to take more account of LGBTI perspectives and social media.

In the special schools visited, there is a strong focus on meeting children's and young people's specific, individual needs, including in the teaching of diversity. Commendably, the recognition of personal achievement often at assemblies helps to promote equality through celebrating diversity. Most of the special schools are using rights-based education well as a framework to promote equality and to develop an understanding of the needs of others.

The effectiveness of PSE/ HWB in Scotland's schools and early learning and childcare settings

This section sets out the overall findings of the thematic inspection.

Key strengths

Across all sectors

1. Positive ethos and relationships supporting children's and young people's HWB, including positive mental health.
2. Partnerships and multi-agency working to support children's and young people's range of needs.
3. Commitment of staff to professional learning and to ensuring PSE/HWB programmes are continually updated to take account of '21st century issues'.
4. The contribution to children's and young people's confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing made by opportunities for personal achievement and the celebration of successes.
5. Opportunities for group discussions and collaboration in PSE/HWB, which successfully engage children and young people in their learning.
6. The commitment of staff and partners to universal support and children's and young people's access to a member of staff who knows them well. This effectively promotes children's and young people's wellbeing.
7. Approaches to identifying children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs and the range of targeted support to meet their needs.

Secondary schools

8. The leadership role of guidance/pupil support/pastoral care teachers in delivering PSE/HWB in secondary schools which builds relationships and enhances support for the wellbeing of all young people.

Aspects for improvement

Across all sectors

1. Ensure that children's and young people's learning experiences in PSE/HWB are of a consistently high quality.
2. Improve approaches to tracking and monitoring children's and young people's progress in PSE/HWB to ensure their needs are being met and that they are making suitable progress. Use of the national benchmarks and the wellbeing indicators will support this work.
3. Improve access to professional counselling services.

4. Ensure an appropriate focus on the issue of sexual consent, especially in primary schools and the early stages of secondary schools.
5. Increase opportunities for children and young people to be involved in designing their PSE/HWB programmes.
6. Ensure a greater focus on learning about all aspects of equalities.
7. Continue to ensure a range of opportunities for career-long professional learning to support staff, in developing confidence, knowledge and skills in delivering fully up-to-date PSE/HWB programmes.
8. Building on the positive progress being made in S5/S6, more emphasis should be given to developing an understanding of future career options and skills for work in the earlier stages of secondary as well as in primary schools and early learning and childcare settings in line with the Career Education Standard 3-18. This should include purposeful engagement with local employers and meaningful experiences of the world of work.

Secondary schools

9. Review PSE/HWB programmes in S5/S6 to ensure young people get their full entitlement and their needs are met.
10. Review the effectiveness of tutor periods in secondary schools to ensure that the time spent is well used and relevant to support young people's health and wellbeing.
11. Continue to review the role of guidance/pupil support/pastoral care staff in secondary schools to ensure an appropriate balance of responsibilities across universal and targeted support.

Appendix 1: Schools and early learning and childcare settings visited

Early learning and childcare settings

The Bearsden Nursery
Bright Beginnings
Dornoch Primary School Nursery Class
Fauldhouse Nursery Class
Larbert Village Primary School Nursery Class
Leith Primary School Nursery Class
Newark Nursery School
Pathhead Primary School Nursery Class
Petersburn Primary School Nursery Class
Troon Primary School Nursery Class

Primary schools

Camstradden Primary School
Carsphairn School
Crieff Primary School
Cullen Primary School
Denny Primary School
Eddleston Primary School
Finzean Primary School
Lochdonhead Primary School
Lynburn Primary School
Milton Primary School
Newmains Primary School
Sgoil an Rubha
St Andrew's RC Primary School
St Andrew's RC Primary School
St Anthony's RC Primary School
St Anne's RC Primary School
St Mark's RC Primary School
St Ninian's RC Primary School
St Peter's RC School
Stenhouse Primary School
Stoneyburn Primary School

Local authority

East Dunbartonshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
The Highland Council
West Lothian Council
Falkirk Council
The City of Edinburgh Council
Inverclyde Council
Fife Council
North Lanarkshire Council
South Ayrshire Council

Local authority

Glasgow City Council
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Perth and Kinross Council
The Moray Council
Falkirk Council
Scottish Borders Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Argyll and Bute Council
Fife Council
The Highland Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
East Ayrshire Council
East Dunbartonshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
Dundee City Council
Aberdeen City Council
The City of Edinburgh Council
West Lothian Council

Secondary schools

Aboyne Academy
Blairgowrie High School
Castlehead High School
Dalziel High School
Dunbar Grammar School
Farr High School
Forrester High School
Grange Academy
The James Young High School
Jedburgh Grammar School
Kirkcaldy High School
Lasswade High School Centre
Montrose Academy
The Nicolson Institute
St John Ogilvie RC High School
St Ninian's RC High School
St Peter the Apostle RC High School
St Roch's RC Secondary School
Wallace High School
Whitehill Secondary School

Special schools

Firpark Primary School
Howford Primary School
Rowanfield Special School
Westfield School

Local authority

Aberdeenshire Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Renfrewshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
East Lothian Council
The Highland Council
The City of Edinburgh Council
East Ayrshire Council
West Lothian Council
Scottish Borders Council
Fife Council
Midlothian Council
Angus Council
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
South Lanarkshire Council
East Renfrewshire Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
Glasgow City Council
Stirling Council
Glasgow City Council

Local authority

North Lanarkshire Council
Glasgow City Council
The City of Edinburgh Council
Aberdeenshire Council

Appendix 2: Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

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