

Education Select Committee:
Response to the Inquiry on Ofsted
*The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition & Schools Wellbeing
Partnership submission
July 2023*

About the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition brings together over 270 organisations to campaign and influence policy, with and on behalf of children and young people, in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. The Coalition advocates for the better mental health of all infants, children, and young people. We do not represent any one organisation, approach, or professional group, but come together to provide a strong unified voice speaking out about children and young people's mental health.

About the Schools Wellbeing Partnership

The Schools Wellbeing Partnership exists to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing at school. We are a national network of over 70 member organisations from the education, health and wellbeing, and children's sectors, working together to improve the wellbeing of all children in education.

Summary of Recommendations

We welcome changes made to the Education Inspection Framework in 2019, particularly the creation of the personal development category and its emphasis on keeping pupils physically and mentally healthy. While the new inspection framework acknowledges the importance of personal development, it is necessary to address and account for the rising mental health needs among young people. By explicitly including the assessment of whole school approaches and staff well-being within the inspection framework, Ofsted can contribute significantly to supporting pupils' mental health. Additionally, by identifying and addressing harmful behaviour practices, Ofsted can help create safer and more inclusive school environments.

Recommendations

1. Ofsted should ensure that the Education Inspection Framework explicitly references and assesses the extent to which schools are embedding whole school approaches to mental health and well-being. This should include looking beyond just academic attainment and overall performance, and instead assess schools on their efforts to promote pupils' overall wellbeing, development, and creative sides.
2. Ofsted should assess and report on the measures schools have in place to support the well-being of their staff.
3. Ofsted should consult with key stakeholders to understand and define harmful behavioural practices in schools and further inform the 'Behaviour and Attitudes' judgement area to be used in inspections.

We urge the Education Select Committee to consider these recommendations and work towards a system that prioritises the mental health and well-being of all children and young people.

The Mental Health of Children and Young People

The current mental health landscape shows an increase in mental health needs among children and young people. According to NHS Digital, there has been a rise in mental health issues. Rates of probable mental disorder rose from 1 in 9 (12.1%) in 2017 to 1 in 6 (16.7%) in 2020 and rates in 17-19 years old rose from 1 in 6 (17.7%) in 2020 to 1 in 4 (25.7%) (NHS Digital, 2022).

Furthermore, a recent study by States of Mind found that 58% of pupils believe the education system does not support their mental health and wellbeing or respond well to the individual needs of pupils, and that 100% of teachers – as well as 98.6% of pupils – believe the mental health and wellbeing of pupils is one of the most important aspects that should be evaluated during Ofsted inspections.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further contributed to the deterioration of young people's mental health. The pandemic and subsequent school closures are likely to have led to social and emotional disruption that could have increased or exacerbated student anxiety and other mental health issues (Daniels et al., 2020). An estimate of 1.5million under 18-year-olds could need new or increased mental health support as a result of the pandemic (O'Shea, 2021). Following the Covid-19 pandemic, schools are in a significantly different place with rising need in children and young people. It is therefore more important than ever that mental health and wellbeing are more strongly considered within school inspections.

The Impact of the 2019 New Education Inspection Framework

Whole School Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing

Whilst the importance of whole school approaches to mental health have been advocated by both Ofsted and Government in protecting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils in education, there is currently no reference to this within the Ofsted inspection framework. Ofsted's document '*Education Inspection Framework: Overview of the Research*' recognised the benefit of a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. The Government also set out their vision for a whole school approach in their Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper, which included proposals to improve the availability of early intervention and preventative support in education settings through the roll out of Mental Health Support Teams (MHST), a training for a new senior mental health lead in every school and college, who will be responsible for overseeing the whole school approach.

Well-conducted systematic reviews further demonstrate clear evidence in support of a whole school approach to responding to mental health and promoting social and emotional wellbeing (Weare, 2015). This involves evidence-based approaches such as adopting a

whole school thinking; engaging the whole community; prioritising professional learning and staff development; implementing targeted programmes and interventions (including through the curriculum); developing supportive policy; connecting appropriately with approaches to behaviour management; and implementing responses and identify specialist pathways.

What is more, adopting whole school approaches has been found to have wider benefits on the school community, such as on behaviour. For example, an evidence review conducted by the Early Intervention Foundation highlights that whole-school interventions implemented as part of whole school approaches to mental health, which embrace change across the school environment as well the curriculum, have been identified as among the most effective means to prevent and respond to behavioural problems, and have been shown to be more likely to result in enduring positive outcomes (Early Intervention Foundation, 2021).

Education inspectorates across the nations have begun paying closer attention to the outcome of young people in education, beyond the academic. For example, Estyn, the Welsh schools' inspectorate, has recently worked to implement more wellbeing measures into the inspection process. Estyn refined how objective data can be used as a measure of wellbeing (such as attendance rates in a school compared to those in similar schools). They have also increased the opportunity to listen to pupils prior to and during the inspection process. Estyn's 2019 Healthy and Happy report found that *"Involving pupils meaningfully in the evaluation and development of a school's work to support their health and wellbeing is a key factor for success. Pupils' sense of belonging and value is often rooted in the extent to which they feel that staff care about them, take time to get to know them, and listen to their views."* (Estyn, 2019).

Drawing upon the Department for Education's vision for whole school approaches to be implemented across settings, academic evidence and example of Estyn, it is therefore crucial for the inspection framework to account for whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

Recommendations:

- Ofsted should ensure the Education inspection framework explicitly references and assesses the extent to which schools are embedding whole school approaches to mental health and well-being. This approach promotes a comprehensive, school-wide strategy to support the mental health and well-being of all students.
- The Department for Education should develop a national implementation programme to support every school, college, and university to adopt a whole education approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Staff Wellbeing

According to the Teacher Wellbeing at Work in Schools and Further Education Providers Ofsted report, satisfaction with life and occupational well-being are generally lower in school staff than the public (Ofsted, 2019). In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in

the overall wellbeing of teaching staff, attributed to factors such as resource deficiencies, heavy workloads, and a perceived lack of support from senior managers (Ofsted, 2019).

Teachers have noted that their wellbeing can often impact their performance as an educational professional and students are often attuned to this (Glazzard et al., 2019). In our report on Behaviour and Mental Health in Schools, we found that staff wellbeing and staff capacity are perceived to have a large impact on how a teacher responds to pupil behaviour. Research has shown that promoting teacher wellbeing enhances the capacity of schools to meet the needs of diverse populations, which is likely to reduce the numbers of students needing intensive support – especially for social and behavioural difficulties, but also for learning needs (Roffey, 2012). Furthermore, States of Mind found that 45% of teachers consider Ofsted inspections to have a negative or very negative impact on their mental health.

In the 2019 Ofsted Report it is highlighted that the Education Inspection Frameworks frames staff wellbeing as part of the leadership and management judgement criteria with inspectors instructed to take this into account. However, to address the significance of staff wellbeing it is essential that greater emphasis is placed upon this.

Recommendations:

- Ofsted should assess and report on the measures schools have in place to support the well-being of their staff.
- The Department for Education should invest in initiatives that promote and enhance teacher well-being, ensuring they are adequately supported to address the mental health needs of students.

Identifying Harmful Behaviour Practices

The CYPMHC's recent behaviour and mental health in schools' inquiry revealed that behaviour can be driven by unmet need often related to mental health, special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities (CYPMHC, 2022). This behaviour is often misinterpreted and punished. The employment of punitive and isolating measures, such as removal rooms, permanent exclusions, whole class punishment, and suspension, can be ineffective and can have adverse consequences on the mental health of children and young people. Although these techniques may yield some short-term advantages, they are not effective in instilling long-term behavioural change. It is imperative that a shift is made towards compassionate approaches to behavioural management that address the underlying causes of such behaviour. Alongside clearly established expectations and boundaries regarding student conduct, the creation of a supportive, nurturing, and inclusive environment is crucial for effective behaviour management and positive mental health.

Government guidance stipulates that it is the responsibility of individual educational institutions to formulate their own optimal approach towards behavioural management. We know that many schools do their best to positively support pupil behaviour, however, there have been examples of a minority of schools misusing behaviour management approaches. Ofsted have started to take steps in highlighting harmful behavioural practices, for example, with their latest annual report identifying how part-time timetables are being used as a way to manage pupil behaviour (Ofsted, 2022).

It is crucial that Ofsted evaluate the suitability of these practices and their influence on the well-being of children and young people. We believe work to identify harmful behavioural practices needs to be built on by Ofsted as part of the judgement area on behaviour and attitudes. As a first step, Ofsted should work with stakeholders, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, to understand what this means in practice and to define harmful behavioural practices in order to inform future work in this area.

Recommendations:

- Ofsted should also actively investigate and report on harmful behaviour practices during inspections, ensuring schools have effective measures in place to address such issues. This is essential to create a safe and inclusive environment that promotes positive behaviour and mental well-being for all students.

For more information contact:

Zainab.Shafan-Azhar@centreformentalhealth.org.uk Mb: 07719193367

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