

Teacher views on *the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (WSA)*.

In 2023/24, we interviewed 36 school staff as part of our evaluation of the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (WSA). We asked them about their current practice in relation to emotional and mental wellbeing and their views on introducing the whole school approach framework in their school. Here's a brief overview of what they told us.



Current MHWB Practice

Staff noted that there were **increasing pupil mental health needs**. Many felt concerned over **knowledge to best support students** as well as a lack of specialist services. Changes to classroom support included increasing check-ins with pupils and working with CAMHS In-Reach services. Many were **positive about work done on staff wellbeing** in their schools. However, there were also widespread concerns over **heavy workloads** and the challenges associated with the increasing **complexity of pupil needs**.

WSA Implementation Actions

Staff were generally clear on the aims of the framework and **what was expected of them**. Actions taken to implement the WSA varied by school. Some teachers outlined how **their schools had created action plans**. In contrast, some noted that although they knew about the framework, **no actions had taken place**.



WSA Implementation Actions (cont.)

Most schools had started using the Framework, usually through working with Healthy Schools/PHW colleagues to complete **self-evaluation and identify targets**. Several schools had a 'project lead' dedicated to the Framework, usually the existing wellbeing lead. Some were working together within local 'clusters'. One school noted that their cluster work was funding related and only short term.



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School staff were asked to discuss factors that could support or act as a challenge to WSA implementation. Here's what they had to say.

Factors supporting implementation

Relationships were viewed as key to getting started with the Framework, particularly **support from the PHW area lead**. Opportunities to meet with other schools and local authorities were also viewed as beneficial. Factors **supporting implementation** also included: costing time out of the classroom; faculty and leadership meetings to put the WSA on the 'agenda'; using student voice to inform change to school space and running surveys; bringing in external agencies; and, increasing the number of staff with pastoral roles.



Challenges to implementation

Barriers included the **lack of time** and resource pressure, including staffing. Dissemination across whole staff teams was also viewed as difficult. The evaluation tool was seen as somewhat burdensome to complete as well as finding **space and time to share the findings**. Staff mentioned the fluctuation of funding and how schools have to be responsive to these changes year-on-year. A barrier highlighted for Welsh Medium schools was the lack of resources in Welsh.

Alignment with existing practice

Schools noted that the framework was consistent with existing initiatives and activities. Some felt that it **helped to provide validation for what they were already doing in school**. Most schools talked about how actions had been integrated into the Curriculum, mostly within RSE lessons. Some schools encouraged further integration into other areas of teaching.

