

Children's Wellbeing:

Pupil Attitudes to Self and School Report 2018



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INTRODUCTION

Greg Watson, Chief Executive, GL Assessment

Student wellbeing is one of those things – like a proper work/life balance or a healthy diet – that we can all agree is important and needs to be nurtured. Unhappy children tend to end up as troubled students and, eventually, unhappy adults. Student wellbeing is so obviously a ‘good thing’ that merely saying it risks an element of stating the obvious. If we are serious about it, though, we need to know how to identify it, assess it and, if it is low or declining, do something about it.

At some point, a significant proportion of children will underperform at school because they have attitudinal issues. A few may display obvious signs that all is not well – but many more will not. So, teachers have to look for the early, subtle indicators of trouble – poor engagement with learning and school, for instance - that could suggest that their wellbeing and confidence are more fragile than supposed.

Sadly, in the UK, although the vast majority of our children are content at school and confident in their learning, a significant minority are not. Indeed, international and longitudinal surveys suggest that our students are less satisfied and more anxious than those in most other developed countries and that the problem is getting worse.

This report confirms those fears. According to our study of over 850,000 7 to 14-year-olds – the largest of its kind in the UK – almost a fifth of them have negative feelings towards school and struggle with issues like self-regard and their perceived capabilities as learners. These often-hidden attitudinal issues can have a big impact on attainment. But it’s not only academic performance we should be worried about. These negative attitudes are precisely those that practitioners fear put children’s wellbeing at risk. When you add in other issues, such as a lax work ethic and a poor attendance record, the chances of children becoming unhappy or even ill increase significantly.

What then can teachers and schools do to rectify the problem? Our psychometric measure, *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School*[®] (*PASS*), plays a unique role in helping schools uncover and identify attitudes that if left unaddressed can undermine student wellbeing, as well as their academic success. Even if the overwhelming majority in a class has positive attitudes towards school and learning there will always be a few who are troubled. *PASS* helps teachers pinpoint exactly who is likely to be at risk and helps them decide what interventions may be necessary.

It is to the credit of schools and policymakers that student wellbeing has risen up the agenda in recent years. We at GL Assessment are extremely proud of the contribution *PASS* has played in increasing that awareness. But if we are to improve the wellbeing and life chances of our children further, we need to get even better at identifying when they are no longer as well as they could be – and do something about it.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Jonny Benjamin MBE,
award-winning mental health campaigner

I have been giving regular talks to children, businesses and the media to raise awareness of mental health issues, since 2012. At the age of 20 I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, a combination of schizophrenia and bipolar, and later began making films on YouTube, watched by thousands of people. I regularly hear from young people the struggles they undergo with their own mental health, the stigma and isolation. I speak to families, teachers and healthcare professionals with shared concerns. It is these personal stories and my own experience growing up, where I really suffered, particularly in my mid-teens onwards, in silence, scared and embarrassed, that drive my commitment to improving mental health education for young people.

I believe that there's more worry and pressure on children than ever and it is starting younger. Growing up is hard and whilst school may present triggers for difficulties, it is also a good place to find support to manage them. So, I welcome this report into children's wellbeing at school. I have seen some fantastic education practice in action, supporting young people with early intervention programmes and working with parents and teachers – and any data that allows teachers to target those children most at risk can only help. It will be interesting to see the impact of the Green Paper (Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health) recommendations on mental health support teams in schools.

Together with my public speaking and broadcasting, I really wanted to play my part in changing attitudes to mental health in schools so, in 2015, along with Postcard Productions, who made the Channel 4 documentary, *The Stranger on the Bridge*, Pixel Learning was created. Together with a team of professionals and teachers, we developed the ThinkWell programme, which now runs across education settings and business, for parents, adults and young people. The workshops use seminal moments in the documentary to teach young people about mental health, how to get help and to share their feelings.

When young people are asked how they think I was feeling at different points during the documentary clips, some of the responses are amazing; young people just say what they think. They are so interested and open to learning. 'Why did you feel like this? Tell me what it's like hearing a voice? What was it like to feel suicidal? What was it like to be on the edge of that bridge?' Questions that are quite personal, but I don't mind answering them. Initial evaluation shows that young people have a strong understanding and confidence in asking for help with their mental health after a ThinkWell.

I think we all understand that young people with mental health issues will face unequal chances in life. Evidence for the Green Paper indicated that one in ten children has some form of clinically diagnosable mental health disorder. The report goes on to show that it is these young people who are more likely to experience increased disruption to their education, time off school and exclusions, leading to poor life chances moving forward.

Thanks to the work of organisations like Place2Be, Young Minds, Time to Change and the Royal Foundation charity Heads Together, there are many more resources and much more support out there than when I was young, so I feel positive for a future where we are more tolerant and empowered, ending the stigma and isolation of those suffering, with people speaking about mental health as naturally as we talk about our physical health.

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CHILDREN'S WELLBEING: PUPIL ATTITUDES TO SELF AND SCHOOL

Background

In the last few years, educators and policymakers have taken an increasing interest in the wellbeing of young people. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development¹ (OECD) began to measure student wellbeing in its worldwide student assessments a few years ago, prompted in part by the realisation that student satisfaction, or the lack of it, plays a key role in academic performance.

Governments, too, have devoted more resources to gauging youngsters' wellbeing – not only because happy children tend to make successful students but also because happy children stand more of a chance of becoming contented and productive citizens than unhappy ones.

Across the UK, reports from organisations such as the Department for Education², Public Health England³ and NHS Scotland⁴ have all stressed the link between student wellbeing, academic attainment and pupil health. In England, the Government has published its mental health Green Paper, which outlines a series of proposals for mental health support in schools. In Wales, the Welsh Government has announced a new £1.4m initiative for specialist emotional and mental health support in schools, and in Scotland, the Scottish Government is making strides forward through its Mental Health Strategy 2017–2027.

Official awareness has only increased since studies have suggested that student wellbeing in the UK is a matter of some concern. Although the OECD found that UK youngsters were largely satisfied with their lives, the proportion who were highly satisfied was below the worldwide average (28% compared to 34%), while the percentage who were dissatisfied was disproportionately higher (16% compared to 11% globally). Attitudes to learning could in part explain that relatively high dissatisfaction. Anxiety over exams, for instance, was higher in the UK than almost anywhere else in the world (72% compared to a global average of 56%).

The conclusions of a series of annual reports from the Children's Society on youngsters' wellbeing are no less worrying⁵. They show that student wellbeing has decreased since 2008 after several years of improvement. Last year's report, based on interviews with 60,000 children, found that "young people's happiness is in decline", with dissatisfaction with school cited as a major factor.

More than **one in twenty** children (6%) exhibited **extremely poor attitudes** to their learning

Understanding pupil attitudes – largest study of its kind

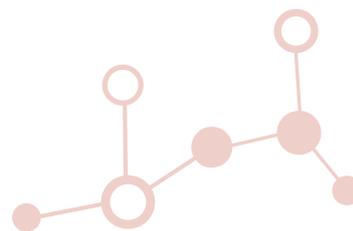
This study⁶, the largest of its kind ever conducted in the UK, aims to add to that body of evidence. It is based on analysis of data from more than 850,000 students aged 7–14 in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who were assessed over two years by GL Assessment's psychometric measure, *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)*.

Although there is no standard definition of wellbeing, most experts agree that it depends on a combination of external indicators – family income, education, health – as well as subjective personal perceptions about the quality of one's own life.

For the purposes of this study, any deductions about wellbeing are based solely on student attitudes to learning and school. Clearly, family, friends, economic circumstances and perceptions of self that have nothing to do with learning all contribute to children's happiness and wellbeing. Schools, however, have little or no influence over these factors and they are outside the remit of this study.

'At risk' children

PASS breaks down student attitudes into nine main factors (see overleaf). For teachers, the factors that are most likely to indicate that children's wellbeing could be at risk are factors 2 and 3, **Perceived Learning Capacity** and **Self-regard**, followed by factors 1 and 6, **Feelings about School** and **General Work Ethic**, and factor 8, **Attitudes to Attendance**. Each of these factors can be indicative of underlying issues that indicate risks to a pupil's wellbeing. But taken together they give far greater cause for alarm.



The factors behind the attitudes

1 Feelings about School:

Explores whether a student feels they belong to or are alienated from their learning community. A low score in this measure can indicate feelings of social exclusion and potential bullying

2 Perceived Learning Capability:

Offers a snapshot of a student's unfolding impressions of self-efficacy and can reveal early warning signs of demoralisation and disaffection

3 Self-regard:

Equivalent to self-worth, this measure is focused quite specifically on learning and shows a strong correlation with achievement

4 Preparedness for Learning:

Highly correlated with pupils at risk of behavioural difficulties, this measure explores whether a student feels they have the tools in place to learn. It covers areas such as study skills, attentiveness and concentration

5 Attitudes to Teachers:

Provides an invaluable insight into a student's perception of the relationship they have with school staff

6 General Work Ethic:

Highlighting students' aspirations and motivation to succeed in life, this is the first of two motivational measures. It focuses on purpose and direction, not just at school but beyond

7 Confidence in Learning:

Identifies a student's ability to persevere when faced with a challenge

8 Attitudes to Attendance:

Correlating very highly with actual attendance 12 months later, this measure enables teachers to intercede much earlier with strategies to reduce the likelihood of truancy in the future

9 Response to Curriculum Demands:

This second motivational measure focuses more narrowly on school-based motivation to undertake and complete curriculum-based tasks

Main findings

Overall, the study found that although most children appear to have a positive attitude to their learning and school, significant numbers are struggling. Scores were divided into four categories of satisfaction (high, moderate, moderate low and low) to show the distribution of high to low scoring students in each factor. In total, data from 862,724 children in 2,285 schools was analysed, in both state (95% of the total) and independent schools (5%).

Almost a fifth (19%) of 7 to 14-year-olds in the study had low or moderately low attitudes to Perceived Learning Capability and Self-regard.

Those factors that could indicate that children's wellbeing may be at risk registered some of the lowest scores. Almost a fifth (19%) of 7 to 14-year-olds in the study were assessed as having low or moderately low attitudes to Perceived Learning Capability and Self-regard. Almost as many (18%) were in the bottom two categories when it came to Feelings about School.

Students were a little more positive about the other two factors that could be most indicative of wellbeing – **General Work Ethic** and **Attitudes to Attendance** – only 15% in each were in the lowest two categories.

However, more than one in twenty children (6%) exhibited extremely poor attitudes to their learning, and negative feelings about school and very low self-regard, which makes them especially vulnerable. The study also found that negative attitudes in almost all factors tended to increase the older children were.

Gender and deprivation

There is little gender variation in most factors – boys are just as 'at risk' and as vulnerable as girls. The main exception is in Preparedness for Learning (20% of boys scored poorly compared to 13% of girls).

There is also little variation between schools with high and low numbers of free school meal (FSM) pupils, with two main exceptions. Just under a quarter of students (24%) in schools with high numbers of FSM registered low satisfaction in Response to Curriculum Demands compared to 17% of students in schools with fewer FSM pupils, which could indicate issues with prior attainment.

Students in schools with a high proportion of FSM pupils were more positive about their teachers than those with low FSM numbers (72% compared to 67%).

Conversely, **students in schools with a high proportion of FSM pupils were more positive about their teachers than those with low FSM numbers** (72% compared to 67%), which could suggest that many disadvantaged children see school as a stabilising factor in their lives.

Positive attitudes

Overall, students were most positive about their Confidence in Learning (78% were highly satisfied), General Work Ethic (76%) and Preparedness for Learning (75%). Relatively few expressed high satisfaction in Response to Curriculum Demands (69%) and Attitudes to Teachers (71%).

However, these percentages conceal some widely divergent individual findings. Take two secondary schools in England with similar intakes and socio-economic profiles, which we will label School 1 and School 2.

When it comes to Perceived Learning Capability and Self-regard, School 1's students registered 11% and 15% respectively in the lowest two categories compared to 37% and 34% for School 2. There were similar divergences in other factors. When it came to Feelings about School, General Work Ethic and Attitudes to Attendance, 11%, 12% and 12% respectively of School 1's students scored in the lowest categories compared to 39%, 29% and 36% of School 2's students.

Such divergent findings show that national averages can conceal some very wide differences when it comes to individual schools or even classes.

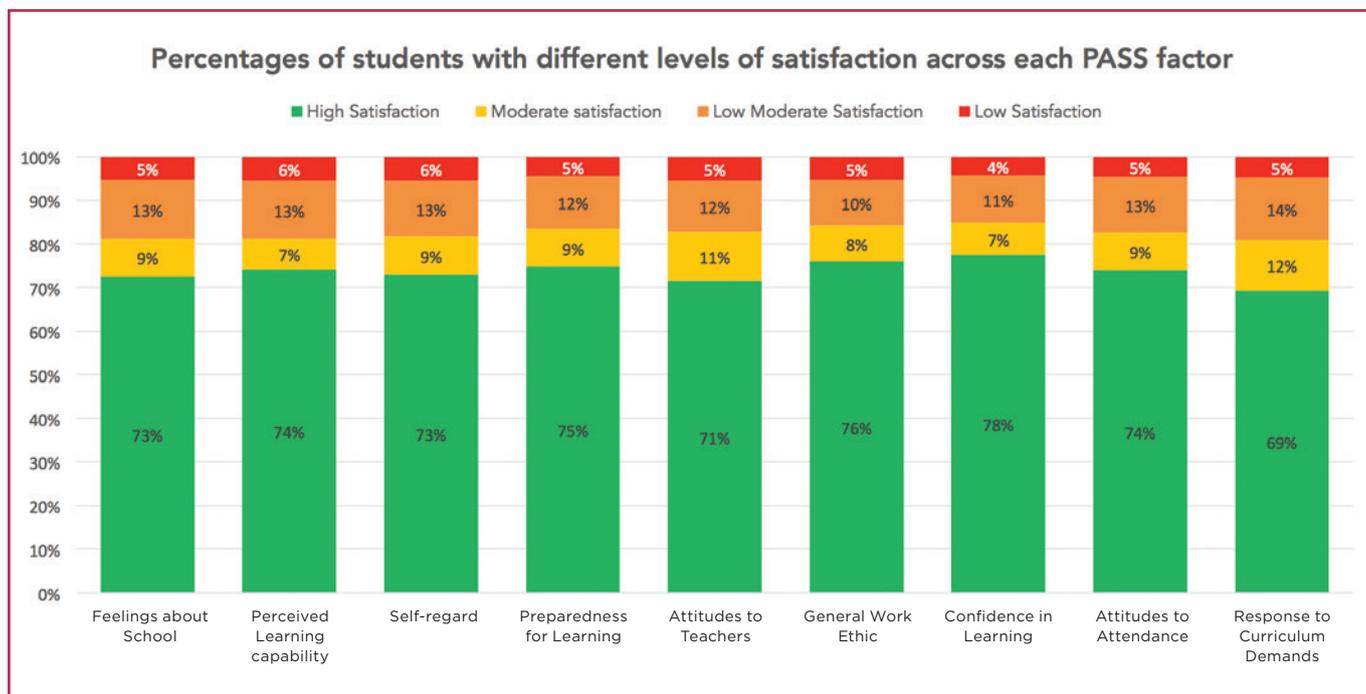
UK-wide differences

Analysing the constituent countries of the UK, it is clear that there are more similarities than differences. Overall, students in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales tended to have more positive attitudes to teachers, schools and curriculum demands – though not by wide margins.

The biggest attitudinal differences were in Feelings about School, where students in England were more negative than those in Northern Ireland (20% of the former in the lowest categories compared to 14% of the latter), Attitudes to Teachers (18% of English students registered low satisfaction compared to 13% of their Scottish peers) and Response to Curriculum Demands (20% in the lowest two categories in England compared to 16% in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

Finally, there are some differences in attitudes between independent and state school pupils. They tend to be widest in Response to Curriculum Demands (85% of the former compared to 69% of the latter are highly satisfied) and Attitudes to Attendance (85% compared to 74% respectively).

Conversely, there is little difference between the two sectors when it comes to Attitudes to Teachers (72% of independent students are highly satisfied compared to 71% of state students) and Preparedness for Learning (74% of the former compared to 75% of the latter).



Footnotes

1. PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being, OECD, 2015
2. The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes, Department for Education, November 2012
3. The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment, Public Health England, November 2014
4. Rapid Evidence Review: Reducing the attainment gap – the role of health and wellbeing interventions in schools, Dr Jane White, NHS Health Scotland, 2017
5. Good Childhood Report 2017, The Children's Society
6. The study analysed a dataset of 862,724 attitude surveys completed by students aged 7-14 in the UK over the past two years. By region, the number of student records are: England - 638,712 students; Northern Ireland - 67,886 students; Scotland - 30,031 students; and Wales - 126,095 students

PUTTING WELLBEING FIRST

Nicola Lambros, Deputy Head Whole School,
King's College, Soto, Madrid

Over the last few years the need to place mental health high on the education agenda has at long last materialised. Educators are waking up to the fact that students cannot become the best version of themselves if they do not have positive mental health. However, the sharp focus on grades in Western education remains a threat to our work in schools on promoting positive mental health.

The message we hear all too often in schools at the macro level is: study hard and get your qualifications, your lifestyle will follow, and you will end up being healthy (and happy) in time. We must recognise that this is completely the wrong way round. If we are to reduce the prevalence of poor mental health and wellbeing in our young people and enable them to achieve their true full potential in life, it is crucial we change our focus so that our primary aim in schools is to help our students be healthy (and happy), from where they will derive a good lifestyle, and then they will be on the right road to achieve excellent qualifications through a positive mindset and love of learning.

Schools are keen to support the mental health and wellbeing of their students. This has led to strategies such as mindfulness becoming very popular in schools, and in the UK the Government is investing in training teachers to become 'mental health first aiders' to enable them to recognise and effectively support students who may be suffering from poor mental health. However, these strategies only serve to support the symptoms of poor wellbeing and mental health problems; they do not prevent them from occurring.

For me this is rather like taking a paracetamol every day for a constant headache rather than finding out the cause of



the headache to prevent it from happening again. The good news is that many schools are now exploring how they can create an ethos and culture that support positive wellbeing in their students to support the prevention of mental health issues developing. This is where *PASS* becomes invaluable.

In most of our work in schools we gather data about our students – what is their cognitive ability, how much have they understood, how well can they perform in assessments. The *PASS* assessment is different; it is data from the students' perspective – it allows students to give us information about how well we are doing in our work to create a culture and ethos in our schools which promote positive wellbeing and a love of learning. This data is indispensable as it provides the information schools need to determine how successful they are in developing positive mindsets in their students from the whole school level right down to each individual.

When drilling down to year group data, very often those year groups that have moved Key Stages, particularly those entering examination years such as GCSE or Sixth Form, have relatively low percentile scores for Preparedness for Learning. And just as the research tells us that students with EAL have a lower self-efficacy, we see that these students show relatively lower percentile scores for Learner Self-regard and Perceived Learning Capability than their peers. However, just as every student is an individual so is every school, and therefore *PASS* data varies from one school to the next, depending on the school's ethos and culture.

This presents schools with a problem; as every school is different, there is no one programme, intervention or approach that should be adopted to tackle the areas of development identified through data analysis.

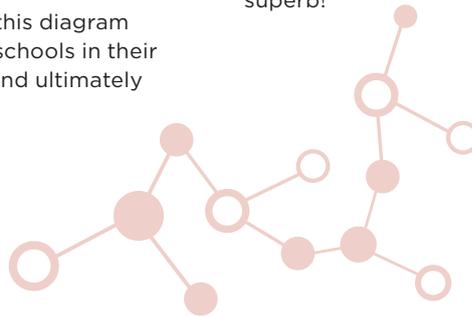
Luckily the theory and research underpinning *PASS* tell us that the three factors that determine self-efficacy for academic success - Learner Self-regard, Perceived Learning Capability and Confidence in Learning, in combination with the factor that determines self-efficacy for self-regulation, Preparedness for Learning - are key to driving improvements in other areas.

“ Educators are waking up to the fact that students cannot become the best version of themselves if they do not have positive mental health. However, the sharp focus on grades in Western education remains a threat to our work in schools on promoting positive mental health. ”

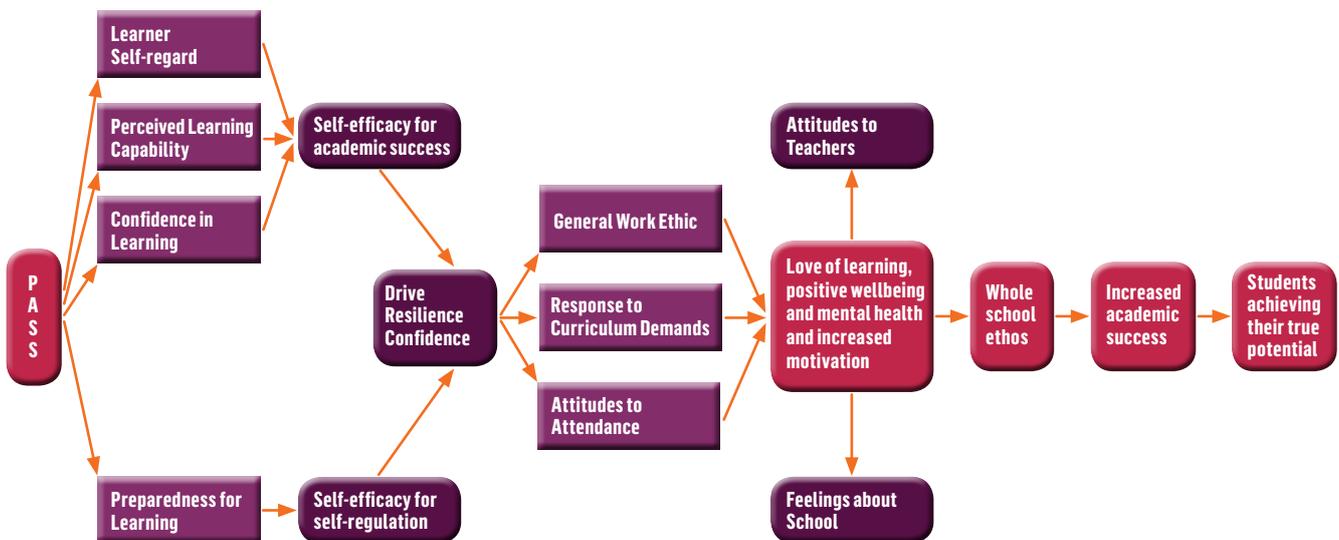
To illustrate this I have put together the diagram shown. My extensive research and work in schools have given me an in-depth understanding of the research and theory behind *PASS* and self-efficacy, and this diagram summarises the information below to help schools in their endeavours to improve student wellbeing and ultimately academic achievement.

A student's self-efficacy will impact their academic achievement, goals, aspirations and confidence and drive resilience and, therefore, their motivation. Ensuring the four factors that influence self-efficacy show a high percentile for cohorts and individuals means they have a robust self-efficacy and this in turn positively influences a student's drive, resilience and confidence, leading to a strong General Work Ethic, Response to Curriculum Demands and Attitudes to Attendance.

All this in combination creates students who have a love of learning, positive wellbeing and mental health, and increased motivation which, if true for all cohorts and individuals, will result in a positive school ethos, increased academic success and students who achieve their full potential in all aspects of their life, not just academic achievement. Furthermore, when students are feeling this good about themselves and their achievements, they want to be in school and a part of the school community, therefore the percentile scores for Attitudes to Teachers and Feelings about School will look superb!



The *PASS* factors that determine self-efficacy for academic success and self-regulation



Arrow denotes direction of positive influence

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HELPING CHILDREN TO TAKE THE RIGHT PATH TO GOOD CHOICES

Jill Wilson CBE, Headteacher, The Gleddings Preparatory School, Halifax



From the time children start with us at the age of three, we teach them that life is about choices, and that making good choices leads to good consequences, such as recognition, reward and praise.

On the odd occasion that children decide to express their naughtier side, we take the opportunity to explain that they made a poor decision and that they are capable of choosing differently next time.

“ For children to thrive, we need to make sure that academic ability, social skills and emotional intelligence are aligned. ”

The reason we take this approach is that good judgement is one of several key learning dispositions that children will come to count on as they grow up (others are included in the table below). After all, by 2030 or so, when our pupils enter the workplace, many of the jobs that exist now will be obsolete and new ones will have sprung up. Success in the real world will depend on adaptable and transferable skills.

For children to thrive, we need to make sure that academic ability, social skills and emotional intelligence are aligned. Using *PASS* fits with this philosophy and keeps us in the know about our pupils' attitudes to themselves and to learning. It also ensures that any self-esteem issues are quickly picked up, particularly amongst the 20% of our cohort who have special educational needs.



Our *PASS* scores are consistently positive – *PASS* uses a traffic light system and the vast majority of our children score in the green band across all nine of the areas explored – but this is not something we take for granted.

We've introduced a number of strategies across the school designed to support our focus on developing children's happiness, resilience and confidence to persevere.

These include visual prompts such as 'Effort Ladders' which children can climb up as they progress. We even have a 'Perseverance Person of the Week' in each classroom to underline that a good attitude, one where you keep going and give a little extra to be the best you can be, is valued and valuable.

It's a message we reinforce at parents' evenings too, as education is more than just a race through the reading scheme. Sharing *PASS* results on these occasions means parents can really appreciate what underpins the best learning. It helps us present a holistic profile of individual children so we can work with parents to identify and celebrate the positive elements of their child's progress.

Statistics suggest that 1 in 10 children between 5 and 16 years of age, or three in every classroom, have a diagnosable mental health problem. Too much screen time can negatively affect children too, yet it is often hard for them to escape the constant media and social pressures from the technology gadgets that surround them. Although ours is a relatively small school, we employ a counsellor two days a week so that the children have someone with whom they can talk about anything that is concerning them, from family and friendship situations to cyber bullying and eating disorders.

We keep wellbeing at the heart of what we do, and this clearly reflects on our children's academic ability. In an area served by selective grammar schools, a high percentage of our children are offered places. There is certainly a growing need for schools to support both the educational and pastoral needs of their pupils. With *PASS*, we have a valuable tool to help us ensure children are equipped with the academic and emotional skills they need to make advantageous choices as they journey into the future.

Which learning dispositions should you focus on?

At The Gleddings Preparatory School, pupil reports for parents include information on whether a child is a 'Beginner', 'Developing' or 'Mastering' the following skills:

Flexibility of Mind	Originality
Curiosity	Persistence
Collaboration	Reflectiveness
Empathy	Resilience
Focus	Risk-taking
Good Judgement	Self-assurance
Initiative	Ambition

The Gleddings was named *The Sunday Times* Prep School of the Year in 2017

HOW DO PUPIL ATTITUDES IMPACT ON PUPIL PROGRESS?

Zoe Hames, Assistant Headteacher, Shevington High School



Shevington is a small, 11-16, oversubscribed comprehensive high school in Wigan. It's a happy school where individuality and difference are embraced, and curiosity, creativity and leadership are fostered.

This approach is encapsulated in our mission statement: 'Together we have the highest expectations for all our students, inspiring and enabling them to become amazing and successful individuals. The Shevington Way is one of: Excellence, Resilience, Ambition, Creativity, Leadership, Respect and Equality.'

As we moved to a linear assessment framework at GCSE, the Senior Leadership Team decided to look more closely at student attitudes from Year 7 to see if we could see a pattern between poor attitudes among students who are underachieving on entry. We then wanted to look at how we could improve pupil attitudes and, ergo, progress. *PASS* gave us the opportunity to realise these aims.

Our pilot project

The whole school completed a *PASS* survey in January 2017 and from there we identified a group of ten students in Year 10 who had particularly negative *PASS* scores. We also looked at their *Cognitive Abilities Test*® (*CAT4*) results, their current attainment data and then the subjects where the most impact was needed - namely Maths, Science and EBacc (Humanities).

Following discussions with each of these faculties, we did some work on mentoring and looking at the *CAT4* data, and each member of the team took three students to mentor. Each mentor then went away and produced a background report on their students, taking into account their *CAT4* profile, *PASS* score and any other relevant information - see an example profile below.

Once mentors had developed their student profiles, they shared them with the subject teachers of their three students and involved them in a mentoring programme.

In their sessions, they talked about *PASS* and *CAT4* and built lesson activities around the students to discuss at mentoring. This was then disseminated to their subject teachers for subject teachers to develop and work with the students in the classroom.

I then developed this even further by rolling it out, firstly with the Care and Guidance teams, and then the heads of year disseminated it at a staff INSET, where we had a whole session on *PASS* led by the *PASS* mentors alongside the heads of year. They identified three children in each year group to do the same pilot with.

“ The pilot showed me that the quality of mentoring was key to our success; and for us to see a long-term benefit, mentoring needed to be properly embedded across the whole school. ”

Evidence of impact to date on practice, pupil attitudes, pupil outcomes and other colleagues

Students retook *PASS* in July 2017 and a current data lift was taken to populate the spreadsheet. While there were no group trends from *PASS*, some individual low scores did correlate to underachievement in almost all cases.

Our topline findings were:

- 80% of students improved their mean *PASS* score, showing the pilot had had a highly positive impact on improving attitudes. However, two students (one male, one female) had a lower mean *PASS* score
- 30% of students had improved total progress when comparing target total points against current total points
- The Self-regard factor was most improved in the three students with improved progress, thus showing the mentoring had had a positive effect on this element of *PASS*
- Two of the students involved in the project continued to make significant progress and they received a certificate for their efforts and achievements.

The pilot showed me that the quality of mentoring was key to our success; and for us to see a long-term benefit, mentoring needed to be properly embedded across the whole school. We've moved this forward by providing every child in Year 11 with a coach and by encouraging them to take more ownership of the coaching experience.

There are many complex elements involved in making learning successful and *PASS* has shone a light on some of the non-curricular areas that can have a direct impact on learning. And of course, building a student's self-esteem and self-worth supports them in living a fulfilled and enriched life beyond their studies.

Shevington High School is part of the Whole Education network

Pastoral	CAT4
Low working memory Assessed for dyslexia - borderline result Concentration issues Various interventions to improve reading (Lexia) Laid-back approach - lacks personal motivation Organisation issues Currently on green card after white mentoring card Can be argumentative Info from HOY and Pastoral	Below Average Stanine 3 12 82-88 Verbal deficit 8.00 Quadrant C - verbally weak, non-verbally weak
Access Arrangements	PASS
Extra time & laptop	Low self-worth and low perceived ability Poor attitude towards teachers and school Average general work ethic and confidence in learning Mean <i>PASS</i> score = 13.4



UNDERSTANDING PUPIL ATTITUDES AT TRANSITION

David Gower, Assistant Headteacher,
King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmunds

King Edward VI School became an 11-18 secondary school in September 2016, with the end of the three-tier, middle school system in Bury St Edmunds. With the arrival of 660 pupils all at once, largely from middle schools, we had to create a bespoke and one-off approach to transition, so it was not until the following year, with our first cohort of Year 7 pupils joining us directly from primary schools, that we considered a new approach to transition and the use of both *Cognitive Abilities Test* (an assessment of reasoning abilities) and *PASS* data.

Traditionally, our CAT testing had been completed in the first few weeks of September, with the results staying mostly within the Learning Support team. This meant the results were not widely accessed or understood by the majority of our staff – and this is something we wanted to change.

In July 2017, our soon-to-be Year 7 pupils joined us for the final week of the summer term to begin their King Edward VI School experience. During the week, Year 6 pupils completed CAT and *PASS*, which meant that every teacher of Year 7 was given a report on both sets of results for their classes at the beginning of the new academic year. On our professional development day, we ran training on making sense of the data and how it could be used to inform teaching ahead of meeting pupils for the first time.

Having never used *PASS* before, we were very interested to find out what the results would tell us. The information was shared with our pastoral leaders, our pastoral support workers and our tutors, along with information gathered from primary colleagues ahead of the transition process. Our house system and vertical tutoring mean that each tutor has a small number of pupils in each year group from Years 7 to 11 and thus they can give specific focus to their new starters in September.

Findings

At Key Stage 3, pupils receive termly reports that indicate their attitude to learning (where 1 is exemplary and 4 is disengaged) and the amount of progress they are making. The table below shows the information gained from *PASS* and from the first term's report.

	Group A	Group B
Number of students	104	75
% attendance	96.5	95.1
CAT Mean	105.3	98.2
Feelings about School	77.7	73.6
Perceived Learning Capability	61.4	55.6
Self-regard	60.2	50.4
Average 'attitude to learning' points	1.6	2.2

Group A shows the students with high attitude to learning scores and no detentions this year. Group B are those who have a lower attitude to learning and have accrued, on average, four detentions in the first two terms of the year.

Perhaps the results are not surprising. However, we are focused on ensuring that every student has a positive learning experience here and that our teachers build relationships from the start with our students. It has therefore proved very useful to have this *PASS* data, together with our attitude to learning points.

“ The findings allow us to target our thinking, resources and professional development more strategically in various ways. ”

With students taking *PASS* this year, and our subsequent collection of data on their attitudes to learning, we can think more critically about our approaches with future Year 7 cohorts as they arrive with us and spend their first year here. The findings allow us to target our thinking, resources and professional development more strategically in various ways:

- We can target the work of our attendance team and EWO early to work with individual students and families who might be at risk of having lower attitude to learning scores in Year 7
- We can deploy tutors and teachers more strategically to improve attendance and reduce the possibility of weaker attitudes to learning which might affect progress
- We can target small group transition work deliberately to support those with less positive feelings about school
- We can provide extra support for families where students come to us with lower perceptions of their own learning capability, and measure the impact of this work by seeing how much improvement there is in this group's attitude to their learning by the end of Year 7 compared to this year's figures
- We are more informed when talking to our feeder primaries about the progress of their students in their first year with us and can use the results of next year's *PASS* test to learn much earlier which students might have stronger and weaker attitudes to learning here.

FINDING THE 'INVISIBLE' CHILDREN

Elizabeth Prescott, Deputy Headteacher, Gabalfa Primary School, Cardiff



Over the last few years, the positive wellbeing and mental health of pupils have been increasingly recognised as vitally important in ensuring high attainment and preventing disengagement. With some pupils, their discontent is clear – some shout it from the rooftops (sometimes literally) and others demonstrate quite obvious anxieties that raise alarm bells and cause schools to immediately respond to support their needs. But other pupils are not so obvious.

A pupil who comes to school every day, is well behaved, quiet but not overly so, keen to please and appears to be trying their best would understandably not cause concern for a teacher who has 30 pupils to worry about. This pupil may be the 'invisible' child; possibly a ticking time bomb with issues they do not verbalise in school but which may surface in some way, negatively affecting all who are in the vicinity at the time.

A school's priority needs to be to listen to its pupils. Pupil voice has also become increasingly emphasised over the last few years but it is not necessarily the pupil whose voice is always heard that is the pupil who actually *needs* to be heard. The *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* survey enables school staff to 'listen' to their pupils. The information and analysis produced by GL Assessment following the completion of the assessment by the pupils has enabled staff in Gabalfa Primary to identify the most vulnerable pupils. Many of these pupils were already known to us and we are comforted to see that we have already put support in place to cater for these pupils' needs. However, it is the 'invisible' children that *PASS* identifies that makes the main difference.

In Gabalfa Primary School, we have a wide range of support mechanisms for pupils, staff and parents:

- Place2Be offers one-to-one and group counselling with a trained counsellor (short and long-term), tailored to each pupil's needs
- The Nurture Group, run by trained HLTAs, uses Attachment Theory principles to develop social skills and emotional awareness
- Our highly trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) works with individuals or small groups to target specific areas of need to proactively reduce future difficulties
- Lego Therapy develops social and communication skills, encouraging pupils to talk together in a positive way; and
- Action for Children supports families in the community.

All this support costs the school money and is financed predominantly by the Pupil Development Grant. Understandably, it is of vital importance to

ensure the support is focused and provides utmost impact. *PASS* analysis enables school staff to refer pupils appropriately, offering support for specific needs and providing evidence of impact on pupil attainment and wellbeing.

“ Pupil voice has also become increasingly emphasised over the last few years but it is not necessarily the pupil whose voice is always heard that is the pupil who actually *needs* to be heard. ”

Our success stories are many. An example includes a well-behaved, cheerful Year 6 girl who was slightly underachieving but not to the point of being a major concern. Following the completion of *PASS*, analysis highlighted her as a possible vulnerable pupil with low self-regard as a learner and a poor attitude towards school. Armed with a greater understanding of this pupil's feelings, support could be offered to build her self-esteem and develop a more positive attitude towards school. This pupil achieved her ambitious targets at the end of Key Stage 2 and entered secondary school with increased confidence, receiving an attendance award in her first year.

Schools are often over-burdened with a huge amount of numerical data, providing delight to those who 'love a good spreadsheet' and terror to others. We must remember that pupils are not algorithms, performing formulaically because of their ethnicity or social background. The *PASS* survey recognises this and will continue to be a vital tool in supporting pupil wellbeing in Gabalfa Primary for years to come.





USING PASS TO SUPPORT STUDENT WELLBEING

Laurence Cole, Assistant Headteacher, and **Sean Jordan**, Senior Youth and Mental Health Worker, Greenwood Academy, Birmingham

Greenwood Academy is based in Castle Vale in Birmingham; a council estate that once housed 34 tower blocks and was the biggest in Europe. The area became the focus of a targeted regeneration initiative from 1993 to 2005, which led to a number of successes in terms of reducing crime rates and improving life expectancy and quality of life.

We're proud to serve the community, and the vast majority of our students are from the council estate. 70% of our students are on Free School Meals and, as many studies have shown, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have unsettled home lives. For us, we find the three core areas that we need to focus on are low levels of literacy, low aspirations, and complex social and emotional needs.

We need to be very careful not to make sweeping generalisations. However, FSM students often need support with their literacy skills as they haven't read – or been exposed to – higher level texts before they join our school. More commonly, though, they don't tend to read at home, so there's a bigger mountain to climb.

“ 70% of our students are on Free School Meals. For us, we find the three core areas that we need to focus on are low levels of literacy, low aspirations, and complex social and emotional needs. ”

For many students, no one in their families has ever gone to university, so many write it off as not being for them; it's quite common to hear them say that they're 'not the sort of student who goes to university'. The tragedy is that the majority of our kids would thrive there. It's a culture we're proactively changing.

Coming from a disadvantaged area also brings with it many complex social and emotional issues. We see a lot of apathy towards education – a number of students aren't naughty but they don't particularly care about doing well at school. They want to have a career and they want to have enough money to make a success out of their lives, but they haven't necessarily put all the pieces of the puzzle together. Getting a good education is an essential part of that so we work hard to communicate that message.

Being proactive

Three years ago, we appointed Sean as our youth and mental health worker – a senior position that forms the central focus of all our work around mental health. Sean has responsibility for the students with social, emotional and mental health issues and children with ADHD, and he also co-ordinates all outside agency support, including the school nurse, young carers, family support services and addiction services.

We arrange for all at-risk students to take a mental health questionnaire, which is specifically designed to identify students who may have high anxiety and/or depression. We then roll out the *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* assessment to all of our students.

PASS is a 20-minute psychometric tool designed to highlight students' feelings about themselves as learners and their feelings about school. The results enable us to build a complete picture of a student's motivation, attitude and engagement at school. The results are standardised so we can also see how our scores compare to the national average.



Addressing anxiety and self-regard

PASS has given us a good indication about where our students' barriers might lie – and big barriers are their Self-regard as a Learner and Perceived Learning Capability.

Anxiety is a big area of concern across our student population. It will always be there, of course, but a lot of work is done to lower students' anxiety levels so they don't work themselves up. When they leave in Year 11, we want them to gain good GCSEs and get through the process without much anxiety.

To take just one example, we're working with a student at the moment who has low scores on the Self-regard and Perceived Learning Capability factors – but she's attended 40 extra lessons this term already so is clearly putting in the effort. However, she still doesn't think she's doing enough and is heaping far too much pressure on herself.

We are working with her to take the pressure off and relax a bit. We are reassuring her about her ability and how her hard work is paying off, but it's more than that. We need her to eat well, drink well and sleep 8-10 hours a night. All of these things will boost her wellbeing.

Addressing social and emotional needs

Peer-to-peer relationships are a hugely important part of life for all teenagers. Friendship groups can provide encouragement and support, but they can also cause a great deal of angst. It's a particularly big issue in Year 11, but we want to proactively address it as a preventative measure rather than a reactionary one so we hold a weekly group for four girls at a time, specifically to trouble-shoot friendship issues.

“ Data gives us a way in so we can focus the conversation and start to ask the right questions. It could only be an hour's process but can make a huge difference to a student's experience of school. ”

In each session, we sit down with a cup of tea and talk about a specific topic, such as appearance, exam stress or relationships with peers. We use them as coaching sessions, asking, for instance, 'If you were in Year 7 now, what advice would you give yourself?' We also use Year 11 case studies to provide them with role models. It's hugely powerful when they know the students we're talking about and their successes are within reaching distance.

Of course, we also need to think of the kids who suffer in silence. If a student has a mental health issue, they can be afraid to talk and, similarly, people tend to want to shy away.

We deliver huge mental health campaigns throughout the year – raising the profile of mental health awareness weeks and delivering dedicated lessons. We also promote online resources and external support too, such as Bully Busters, Forward Thinking Birmingham and Childline, so they can talk to trained external support agencies away from school and in confidence.



Using the data to make a difference

We pinpoint students whose PASS scores highlight concerns and we meet with them individually. Data gives us a way in so we can focus the conversation and start to ask the right questions. It could only be an hour's process but can make a huge difference to a student's experience of school.

PASS data is also shared with the Senior Leadership Team – it's important for them to all see the key trends across year groups and across the school. And, of course, all the results do is create questions that you then need to answer.

The colour-coding of the results table makes it very easy to see the key areas of concern, as well as the positives. It can be easy to be drawn to the reds and the ambers, but we also need to celebrate the greens. It's so encouraging to see the students who value their time at school and who are already developing into confident, happy learners. It's also great to see that one of our most positive factors is Attitudes to Teachers, which shows the respect the students have for our staff.

Parental engagement is a vital part of the school's support system. Sean positions himself as the young people's voice – and he's not shy about sharing with parents what their kids think. We work closely with parents and, if the children give their consent, he shares PASS data with them too. If we're giving students a message at school, it is a huge help if the parents also reinforce it at home.



THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE



Bill Fletcher, Principal of Cliftonville Integrated Primary School, North Belfast

In my opinion, resilience – that ineffable quality that allows someone to bounce back when things don't go their way – is one of the most important traits a young person can have. As an educator, it has always been in the back of my mind that while schools carry out plenty of cognitive and academic assessments, it is very difficult to measure and track a child's resolve in the face of challenge.

In reality, social and emotional factors are now essential elements in education and an important consideration in a child reaching their potential. Getting it right at primary level sets the scene for future success, too. If a child's attitude to themselves or their learning is low and goes unchecked at a young age, the likelihood is that it will further deteriorate once they move to secondary school and have to cope with the different pressures and challenges that can bring. To illustrate, I was once told that every £1 invested in supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing saves £17 on interventions in the future.

“ Teachers see the advantage of having a tool that helps them spot issues that might not be immediately apparent in the classroom. ”

My priority is to teach children to stretch themselves and achieve all they can, rather than give up at the first hurdle. This is one of the reasons I especially like *PASS*. It gives you a snapshot of a child's attitude and highlights issues that could be holding them back, such as low confidence in a child who appears to be doing well academically. Teachers see the advantage of having a tool that helps them spot issues that might not be immediately apparent in the classroom, and we also involve mentors from outside agencies where necessary.

Ideally, schools and parents should be working together to instil resilience. However, at a school I previously worked at, where deprivation was high, we found that parents sometimes unwittingly placed artificial ceilings on their children's aspirations.



“ Explaining the links between academic, social and emotional success, as well as what parents can do to help, was really useful. ”

PASS offers a way to communicate a different message and help strengthen our parental partnership when it comes to aiming high. It can be difficult for parents who have not had the best experience of education to help their child academically, but there is plenty they can do to ensure their self-confidence and wellbeing at school.

We've previously held parents' evenings where we have given each family an envelope containing all their child's scores, including *Progress Tests in English* and *Maths (PTE and PTM)*, *Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4)* and *PASS*. Explaining the links between academic, social and emotional success, as well as what parents can do to help, was really useful. It ensured a great turnout on the night and feedback was fantastic. It was also a good opportunity to run through the 'Big Five' ways in which parents can support their children (see the table below).

Our aim as a school is to ensure children are unafraid to make mistakes and have the work ethic and confidence they need to carry them through life. These are traits extremely close to my own heart. As a child, there were many in my class who were brighter than me but, with my parents' support, I had resilience, tenacity and a will to succeed. Without these, I wouldn't be where I am today.



The Big Five

At Cliftonville Primary School, parents are told about five key ways to help support their children's wellbeing and resilience:

- 1 Never miss an opportunity to tell your child how brilliant they are
- 2 Explain how important it is to never give up. Try and try again until the job is complete
- 3 Constantly remind them to be focused in class. Concentrate and listen to the teacher
- 4 Talk about how important education is and never let them miss a day of school
- 5 Encourage them to be ambitious and to be the best they can be.

GRIT AND 'DIRT': DIGGING DEEP TO FIND OUT WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON WITH STUDENTS

Linda Gilmore, Improving Learning Standards Co-ordinator and Head of Science, Tandragee Junior High School, County Armagh



Like any school that is part of a tiered education system, one of the challenges we face is adding value in the few years children are with us before they move on to their senior school at age 14. From the very first time we used *PASS*, we were hooked on the depth of insight it gave us into our students - information it was nigh on impossible to get elsewhere.

Over five years of monitoring the data *PASS* has yielded, we've learnt how important it is to root up large scale patterns across our school as well as delve into smaller trends apparent in specific groups. For example, time has shown consistently high, positive attitudes towards teachers, which we are very proud of.

More concerning has been our students' self-regard, which just as consistently hovers around the 60% mark in the top satisfaction category. According to the *PASS* analysis in Northern Ireland, as well as across the UK as a whole, this is a much wider concern, too - 18% of students across Northern Ireland exhibit low self-regard. Other categories, such as general work ethic, vary drastically from cohort to cohort, as well as within year groups.

“ Add the word 'yet' to any negative self-perception a student might have, to promote the opportunity for growth and transformation, e.g. 'I can't do it ...yet.' ”

To address these issues, we have taken steps to shift our students into a 'can-do' gear and make them feel safe to try again if they fail at a task on their first attempt. That's why we've embedded 'grit' in to the curriculum as a positive trait that is based on passion, perseverance and motivation, which we reinforce in assemblies and lessons. Walk into

any of our classrooms now, and you will see wall displays bearing the message that success is about the journey as much as the destination.

'Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time' (DIRT) has also been successfully introduced into lessons such as science, giving students the chance to consider what they've learnt and what they need to do to keep progressing.

To break down attitudinal barriers, we've adopted an approach which gained recognition with Rita Pierson's TED talk and launched a programme where teachers choose a couple of students to 'champion'.

This is an opportunity to mentor children who might have gone unnoticed without *PASS* scores flagging up their limiting self-perceptions, and it's a great way to unpick anything that could be holding a child back. Students have responded really well, often using it as a chance to open up about things that have been worrying them.

One of the questions we constantly ask ourselves is why does the achievement of an entire cohort, a small group or an individual student suddenly dip? Is social media to blame? Too much gaming? Not enough sleep? Or are students disaffected or pessimistic about their ability to shape their future? The truth is, we don't always know.

As with many complex issues, there isn't a simple solution. However, *PASS* gives us an inside glimpse into what is happening and, as it's something we can share with parents, we're able to work together to grow learner confidence and help children flourish.

Top tips to improve self-regard

- Provide mentoring. Whether it is individual or in small groups, spend time with the children and be their champion. Refer back to the *PASS* data - you can't really know your students without this
- Change their mindsets. Add the word 'yet' to any negative self-perception a student might have, to promote the opportunity for growth and transformation, e.g. 'I can't do it ...yet.'
- Promote grit. Teach perseverance as a learnable skill, one that can be developed at home and at school
- Leave time for DIRT. Having a Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time at the end of lessons can really improve a child's learning.





MAKING PUPIL WELLBEING A PRIORITY IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Ashley Bennett, Assistant Headteacher, Ysgol Emmanuel, Rhyl, Denbighshire

At Ysgol Emmanuel in Rhyl, we believe the primary purpose of education is to awaken a love of learning in young people and to give all pupils the ability and desire to carry on learning throughout life. We are a large Welsh primary school located on the coast of North Wales in an area of high social deprivation. Some of our children face a variety of social and economic factors that can impact on their general attitude towards school, learning and, in some cases, life. Consequently, a key priority for us at Ysgol Emmanuel is to ensure that our children are 'happy' and 'want' to learn, whilst having enough resilience to do so. Put simply, 'health and wellbeing' is the ethos of our school.

As a learning environment, we appreciate the importance of assessment to monitor academic progression. However, as a nurturing environment with a drive for developing independent and confident learners, we just as importantly recognise the priority for pupil wellbeing and for identifying attitudes towards school, learning and life.

Here in Wales, we are currently undergoing an educational reform thanks to the 'Successful Futures' report, which puts the Donaldson pedagogy at the foundation for a curriculum. The report bids to develop ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical informed citizens of Wales and the world; and healthy, confident individuals ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society. It places a heavy emphasis on health and wellbeing, which form one of the report's six pillars of learning and experience.

While the new Welsh curriculum is still developing and will not be statutory until 2020, as a school we have fully adopted the four key aims of delivering teaching and learning which promote the principles of the Donaldson ethos.

While we have been able to revolutionise our curriculum in all areas, the concept of creating 'healthy and confident individuals' who are 'ambitious and capable learners' raised a key question to myself as Assessment Lead as well as the senior management team: how do we, as a school, measure the impact that this curriculum and ethos has on pupil attitude and resilience? More importantly, how can we identify those who need further support in order to achieve this?

As we're part of Denbighshire Local Authority, this question was answered. As a county, all schools complete *PASS*, both at primary and secondary level. So, back in September, our staff rolled out *PASS* from Reception to Year 6 and then

eagerly awaited the outcome. As we opened the data sheet with interested breath, a spectrum of green, orange and red became visible.

Now with an Assessment Lead hat on, the data analysis started, as well as the questions – after all, all data does is pose questions! What became apparent through the *PASS* data were the headlines that could be made in relation to the different areas relating to wellbeing. What made some children, genders, FSM pupils or pupils with Additional Learning Needs have different attitudes towards areas such as 'self-regard'?

After many discussions at SMT level and then with teachers and teaching assistants, we came up with a battle plan. Those children who came out with an amber or red score in relation to areas such as 'self-regard' would be the children who would need our nurture-based interventions the most. After all, this is what the data was suggesting when combined with teacher judgement.

At Ysgol Emmanuel, we always look for best practice to support our learners. Recent projects, such as 'mindfulness' and 'growth mindset', have been developed across the school to promote health and wellbeing. These are now used by both pupils and staff three times a day within school. As a school, we are finding techniques such as these are helping to counterattack the amber and red colours from the *PASS* data and, more importantly, equip pupils with techniques that can be used across life to promote wellbeing.

Our skilled teachers and teaching assistants also deploy various nurture-based interventions such as 'Forest School', 'Coastal School', 'Dinoschool for self-esteem', as well as 'Seasons for Growth' to promote each individual's confidence within learning and themselves. These are targeted at those who are highlighted by the data and teacher voice.

Our qualitative data from pupil voice and formative assessment suggests that these interventions are helping to develop areas relating to self-worth. However, we look forward to the summer term when we will complete the second *PASS* data testing to compare the scores of individuals who were identified as needing support in these areas.



IDENTIFYING YOUNGSTERS AT RISK

Hilary Fine, Senior Publisher, GL Assessment



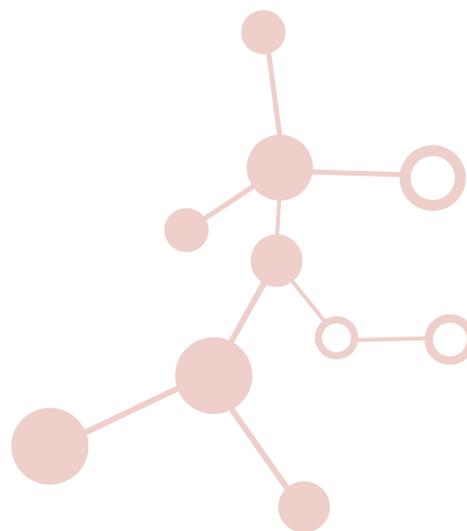
Our attitudes are formed by and affect how we feel, what we do and how we think. In school, a pupil's attitudes to learning can influence their whole experience of education and have significant effects on their overall levels of attainment, engagement and wellbeing.

As this paper has demonstrated, a significant minority of students in all four corners of the UK have negative feelings towards school and struggle with issues like self-regard and their perceived capabilities as learners. The correct use of assessment data can give schools insight into pupils' mindsets and help identify those who are troubled and whose wellbeing is likely to be at risk.

GL Assessment has worked in partnership with schools for over 35 years to develop a suite of assessments that support better outcomes for students. Our tests provide teachers with a comprehensive understanding of a student's ability, attainment and attitudes, as well as any barriers to learning they may have. They are built on the best academic research and have been extensively trialled to help teachers make quick and effective interventions.

Our *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* psychometric measure can help schools identify student satisfaction, the early signs of poor engagement and poor attitudes to learning which, if left unaddressed, can undermine student wellbeing. The all-age attitudinal survey helps detect possible barriers to learning, including issues around confidence, resilience, motivation, concentration, disaffection and alienation. It helps teachers pinpoint exactly who in the classroom is likely to be at risk, understand the root causes of why a pupil is disengaging and decide what strategies and interventions may be necessary.

Available in 24 languages, *PASS* does not involve curriculum-based material and does not need to take into account previous achievements or first language, making it ideal for use with children with EAL. By helping to raise standards of attainment and pupil wellbeing, *PASS* can dramatically improve learning outcomes for individual students, groups of pupils and the whole school.



For further information please visit gl-assessment.co.uk/pass. To contact your local area consultant to organise a school visit or a free quote please visit gl-assessment.co.uk/consultants or to discuss your specific requirements, call **0330 123 5375**.



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