

HeadStart Kent - Whole School Approach

HeadStart Kent have developed a unique approach to supporting and training schools to develop whole school approaches to mental health wellbeing, based upon their own [Resilience Toolkit](#). The Toolkit was developed by HeadStart Kent and [evaluated by the University of Greenwich](#), and is structured around the eight principles in Public Health England's [Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing – a whole school and college approach](#). These eight principles are:

1. Curriculum learning to promote resilience, social support and emotional learning
2. Enabling student voice to influence decisions
3. Staff development to support their own wellbeing and that of students
4. Identifying need and monitoring impact of interventions
5. Working with parents and carers
6. Targeted support and appropriate referral
7. An ethos and environment that promotes respect and values diversity
8. Leadership and management that supports and champions efforts that promote emotional health and wellbeing.

Throughout the toolkit an emphasis has been placed on the role of resilience for children and young people's mental health. Schools are provided with a [Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing Record](#), a tool which helps schools to plan and monitor their progression throughout the three stages of the toolkit:

Stage 1: Assess

The culture, ethos and environment of the whole school is reviewed, and school leaders identify the school's 'resilience team'. Members of the resilience team should represent different roles and have different sets of knowledge within the school, and must be able to effect everyday change and carry out actions identified. It is recommended in the toolkit that the resilience team should involve:

- A member of the senior leadership team
- A lead governor for wellbeing
- Class teachers
- Pastoral staff
- Teaching assistants
- PSHE staff

The importance of having senior leaders involved is emphasised, and schools are asked to determine how to involve students, parents and the wider community.

Once established, the school must consider Public Health's 8 principles, and evaluate how well the school is achieving against each principle.

[Stage 2: Planning Actions and Outcomes](#)

Discussions and findings from Stage 1 are used to establish who is responsible for actions and agree upon outcome measures to support ongoing assessment of their work. This stage is estimated to take between 3 to 6 months. The 'Leadership and Management' principle is considered first, with criteria for this principle including:

- 'A leader Governor in place who is knowledgeable and helps champion emotional health and wellbeing in all aspects of school life'
- 'a member of SLT who leads a resilience team to focus on emotional health and wellbeing for young people and the wider school community'
- 'The school improvement plan, policies, systems and activities in the school support emotional health and wellbeing to remain high on the agenda and there are structures in place to integrate, sustain and monitor the impact of this work'

Schools discuss additional measures to be implemented to achieve each principle, and consider the expected impact and how it might be measured or evidenced. Once all principles have been discussed and reviewed, schools populate their Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing Records with their planned actions. Stage 2 is complete when schools have considered all eight principles, identifying actions and outcomes; and reflecting on and action planning on gaps identified in Stage 1.

[Stage 3: Reviewing Impact](#)

Schools reflect on the actions they have taken to develop a Whole School Approach, evaluate their impact and explore ways of continuous development and improvement. This stage involves reflection and analysis and review of implementation against each principle, and any necessary further action to achieve the criteria. Individual pieces of evidence are presented and recorded, which may include attendance data, behavioural information and self-reporting by students. Schools should identify any further activity that they could do to improve their school's resilience and emotional wellbeing.

'You can always talk to someone in this school. You can talk to them about anything.

I trust them' – Kent school pupil

The Award for Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing

Once schools have completed the Kent Resilience Toolkit and can evidence the 8 principles, they can apply for the [Award for Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing](#). The award process verifies and validates the school's work, and is awarded by HeadStart Kent. Schools can apply to the award through the HeadStart Kent [website](#). A minimum of three pieces of evidence are needed to confirm how they meet the requirements in three areas: student voice, parents and carers, and environment. These three principles match the key focus areas of the HeadStart Kent programme as whole. Evidence that schools can provide include:

- Student voice meeting minutes
- You said/we said cards
- Student council members and meetings
- Testimonials from young people and parents
- Notice boards that young people have developed themselves and put up

'It's having that language of resilience in learning, which crosses over to the resilience in emotional wellbeing as well. So that, in itself, has really helped to have that commonality of language' – School staff member

Impact and Outcomes

'[The safe space has] made a massive different to the behaviour in the school, as well, about how children are helping themselves get into a better place' – School staff member

'I feel like we do really make a difference, not just academically, but personally, emotionally, socially' – School staff member

Evidence of best practice exists by and large where school staff from different areas of the school, parents, carers and young people are all involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the toolkit. Having recognised staff 'champions' of resilience and wellbeing is also viewed as an important driver for whole school change.¹ Feedback gathered by HeadStart Kent also states that the sharing and clear communication of good practice across the school is important, and that schools should actively seek the views and feelings of young people and respond by tailoring support to their needs.² All schools in Kent have free access to the Schools' Wellbeing Toolkit, and can sign up for training and additional guidance on how to implement it in their school through the [Kent School Health Service](#). As of 2020, 43 Kent schools had successfully evidenced having embedded resilience approaches and principles throughout their school practice, culture and environment, and received the Award for Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing.

'The toolkit is a fantastic resource for the whole school to be involved in. The chapters enable the school to focus on a specific area and then highlight what needs

¹ HeadStart Kent. (2020). A whole school approach: how does it help to build the resilience of young people? Retrieved from <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/HSK-Whole-School-Approach-Report-FINAL.pdf?mtime=20200311164903&focal=none>.

² Ibid.



to be done to improve that area. You can plan who is responsible for it, how it will be achieved and the timescale. [...] As a result of the toolkit, the whole school has had an input into making the school staff and pupils more resilience. A real asset for any school if it was to implement a whole school approach' – Senior assistant headteacher
in a Kent school