There is now substantial evidence of the role wellbeing, resilience and mindset plays in raising student attainment and in this summary document we set out the actions schools might consider taking to raise attainment and further improve their performance.

**Executive Summary**

The narrow measure of student attainment as shown by GCSE performance has remained fairly constant over the last few years, with 55.4% of students achieving 5 A* to C grades, including English and mathematics in 2013/14. There remains a difference in performance between genders (largely explained by coursework) and an even bigger differential for disadvantaged students.

The Government has set its stall on improving academic performance, reforming the GCSE and A level curriculums and measuring progress and attainment across eight key subjects. They have also defined what they believe are ‘coasting schools’ and have set out their agenda to address this.

The key to sustainably raising student attainment is to improve the quality of teaching and the research suggests there are a number of factors that influence this.
Robert Coe, Cesare Aloisi, Steve Higgins and Lee Elliot Major, in their 2014 report, ‘What Makes Great Teaching’, suggested there are six key components to consider: Pedagogical content knowledge, quality of instruction, classroom climate, classroom management, teacher beliefs and professional behaviours.

The toolkit developed by the Education Endowment Foundation and The Sutton Trust set out the impact of different evidence based approaches, where feedback, collaborative learning, mastery, meta-cognition and self-regulation, peer tutoring and mentoring all scored highly.

Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, has also put forward what leads to higher attainment, as well as actions that schools should avoid. These are all evidence based and research informed.

He suggests areas leading to higher attainment include; teachers knowing how to best represent the subjects they teach (and not their subject knowledge); being able to link their subject to other subjects and lessons; being able to adapt to meet specific student needs: being able to create an optimal classroom climate where mistakes are welcome; monitoring learning and providing effective feedback; knowing that a typical lesson doesn’t go to plan and to prepare for it; knowing who and who isn’t understanding the lesson; believing all students can meet the success criteria set and having a passion for helping them to achieve it; and believing that intelligence is adaptable and not fixed.

Areas he suggests are a distraction and where a review of the available evidence shows little or no impact include; looking at providing greater choice of schools, new schools; different class sizes; tinkering with the curriculum; new buildings; enquiry to learn and learning style programmes; labeling students; providing greater finance over a certain funding level; extending the school day or school year; performance related pay; embracing new technologies; changing initial teacher training; and providing more teaching assistants.

What we do see from the evidence is that two things really make the biggest difference, and the relationship between teacher and students (and the teachers ability to get their message across) and the ability and willingness of students to learn.

However, taking a close look at what is happening within schools and the education sector shows some significant challenges. Growing numbers of mental health disorders in students and staff, rising anxiety and stress, the number of teachers leaving the profession or expressing a desire to, greater difficulties in teacher recruitment, teacher’s concerns over their workload and life balance, and evidence to show that student anxiety leads to lower performance.

Despite the increased focus on raising attainment, the required results are not being widely achieved, while other challenges continue to grow?
We believe there is a different and simpler answer for many schools and one also informed strongly by evidence and research.

If a significant number of teachers are turning up to school with one of more of the issues we have already highlighted: stress, anxiety about workload, mental health disorders, lower engagement or energy (and as a result possibly poorer physical health), worries about life balance and the changes they face then how is this likely to be showing up in their teaching and in their students?

And no matter what direct actions we take or pressure we place on them to improve their teaching, this is unlikely to change while the underpinning issues remain. In fact placing greater pressure on them is likely to create a continuing downward spiral for many teachers.

The answer to creating sustainable improvements in attainment, through improved teaching and learning, is to take a whole school approach to raising wellbeing, building those skills that better allow people to overcome adversity (resilience) and to develop the right positive and growth mindset in teachers and students.

The evidence for this is compelling and set out later in this paper.

It is recommended that schools implement this through a five level approach.

1. **Leadership.** Setting out the behaviours, policies and practices that will be needed and ensuring buy-in from all senior leaders. The results will not be achieved without ensuring that how things are done in the school develops staff and student wellbeing and the wider skills needed.

2. **Planning.** Too much of what schools do is short term and not given the time for benefits to come through and so what is needed is a clear plan that is implemented carefully and in manageable chunks over time. This plan should be for at least three years in outline and for one year in detail and should also include what will be removed from workload anytime something new is added.

3. **Staff training and development.** Staff have to feel good about coming to school and be role models for their students. Supporting them in better managing their wellbeing, developing skills to meet and overcome adversity and in developing a growth mindset is key.

4. **Students.** Teaching specific social and emotional learning, skills to overcome adversity and the development of a growth mindset have been shown to raise attainment. Equally important is the selection of the right passionate teachers to deliver these lessons.

5. **The wider community and particularly parents and carers.** Moving from involving parents and carers in school life to truly engaging them in supporting the learning of their children at home has a significant impact on attainment.
While the evidence for improvements in attainment for each of these levels is not always measured in the same way, meaning that it isn’t easy to aggregate benefits, we estimate that implementing this five level approach could raise attainment for students by over 40% (depending on their starting point, their existing skills and the level of support they currently receive).

In addition Professor Katherine Weare, from Southampton University, and a strong advocate of a whole school approach, suggests that taking this action could also see a 75% reduction in many of the mental health, behaviour and other connected issues that schools see.

This approach also fits strongly with the recommendations from the report Successful Futures, an Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales carried out on behalf of the Welsh Government, by Professor Graham Donaldson CB in February 2015.

In this he acknowledged the need for the curriculum to balance subject knowledge with the skills needed for young people to meet the needs of today and challenges for tomorrow, including those skills required in the workplace.

The report set out the purposes of education in Wales as being that children and young people develop as:

✓ 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.
✓ Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

It also recommended organising the curriculum into six Areas of Learning and Experience, with one of these being a clear focus on health and wellbeing, as well as the need to develop creativity, innovation and confidence as part of a second area, Expressive arts.

To meet the education purpose set out, and to successfully teach the areas of the curriculum will be very challenging for any teacher whose own health and wellbeing is not as it should and could be. In addition the report talks about the capacity needed in schools for the curriculum to be implemented effectively and there is a clear need for the whole school approach advocated if this is to be successful for Wales.

The evidence is compelling and this paper sets it out in greater detail and recommends how schools can use this approach to sustainably raise student attainment in their school.
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Student Attainment, Teaching and Learning

First we will consider the current levels of attainment and the more usual actions schools take to raise it. For the purpose of this paper we will take attainment as a universal measure for those at the end of key stage 4, who have moved through our education system. The table below shows the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more grades A*-C GCSEs, including English & mathematics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils with FSMs</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Pupils</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Pupils</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Point Gap</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
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Results improved slightly in 2013/14, though the gap with England remains. There is also a variation between genders, with the gap between girls and boys remaining significant (in favour of girls) but closing slightly in 2013/14. This is expected to close further with a greater emphasis on the final examination over course work.

This is despite the fact many schools are using more evidence based interventions for their teaching and learning, for example the teacher toolkit developed by the Education Endowment Foundation and The Sutton Trust. This provides guidance on the evidence for specific interventions and suggests that those with the greatest impact include: feedback, collaborative learning, mastery, meta-cognition and self-regulation, peer tutoring and mentoring.

More detailed analysis of the results shows significant differences in school performances, both in terms of the actual results and their value added. What might be some of the determinants of this?

One key factor is teacher quality and we define effective teaching as that which leads to improved student achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success. When assessing teacher quality research suggests there are six components to consider.¹

1. (Pedagogical) content knowledge (Strong evidence).
2. Quality of instruction (Strong evidence).
3. Classroom climate (Moderate evidence).
4. Classroom management (Moderate evidence).

5. **Teacher beliefs (Some evidence).**

6. **Professional behaviours (Some evidence).**

Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, has also put forward extensive evidence based and research informed practices that schools should consider when looking at improving student outcomes and particularly at an enhanced role for teachers as they become evaluators of their own teaching.\(^2\)

His research suggested that expert teachers

- Identify the most important ways to represent the subjects they teach and know how to organise and use their content knowledge. The teachers’ subject matter knowledge itself did not improve student achievement.
- They have to be able to relate the current lesson to other subject areas and adapt the lessons according to students’ needs.
- Create an optimal classroom climate for learning, in which errors are welcome and learning is seen as good (because many pupils don’t like to make mistakes in front of their peers).
- Monitor learning and provide effective student feedback.
- Know that a typical lesson never goes to plan and they are skilled at monitoring the current status of student understanding.
- Seek out evidence of who has not learned, who is not making progress, and they problem solve and adapt their teaching in response.
- They see student progress as feedback about the effect they are having on learning and they regularly gather information to know who does not understand.
- Believe all students can reach the success criteria.
- Believe that intelligence is changeable rather than fixed and show a passion that all students can succeed. In one study of the students of over 3,000 teachers (The Measures of Effective Teaching Project sponsored by the Gates Foundation), students overwhelmingly stated that the teachers of classes with the most student achievement gains were the teachers with the most passion (as defined by seven adjectives starting with ‘C’ – teachers who care, control, clarify, challenge, captivate, confer, and consolidate).
- Influence a wide range of student outcomes not solely limited to test scores.
- Influence students in a wide range of ways: encouraging students to stay in school, helping them to develop deep and conceptual understandings, teaching them to develop multiple learning strategies, encouraging them to take risks in their learning,

\(^2\) http://visible-learning.org
helping them to develop respect for themselves and others, and helping them develop into active citizens who participate in our world.

“The remarkable feature of the evidence is that the greatest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers”

John Hattie

Yet if expert teachers are to do all the above they need to also feel good about themselves and their role.

Hattie also sets out the evidence for what he believes doesn’t work in education and this is worth considering against the actions that schools take to raise attainment.3

1. A focus on **appeasing parents** through providing greater school choice, and debates around class size are, he believes, a distraction. There is greater variation of quality within schools than between schools and when a students’ prior achievement or socio-economic background is considered, the evidence shows little difference in achievement between most schools. The evidence also suggests that teachers don’t tend to change how they teach when working with smaller groups, in fact they tend to talk more and question less.

2. A need to **fix the infrastructure** - If only we had more effective curricula, more rigorous standards, more tests and more alternative-shaped buildings. However, what schools tend to do is:

   - Tinker with the curricula and not ensure it meets the needs of a wide range of students, whose performances may differ by a number of years progress.
   - Fail to get the balance in lessons right between shallow and deep thinking, spending too much time on acquiring new facts, and not enough on how to apply what is learnt.
   - Implement programmes such as enquiry based learning, learning styles, individualized instruction and student control over learning (all shown to have small effects, not because they won’t work, but because we do not help students to have a proper understanding of them first).
   - Fail to change teaching practice when moving to new buildings that provide greater opportunities, such as open plan spaces. Many studies and meta analyses have demonstrated little impact and largely because no investment is made in preparing teachers for these new environments.

3. A desire to **fix the students** - if only we had better, well-prepared students!

   - With the money spent on early years education we should be marveling at students increased readiness to learn reading and number skills when starting

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schools. But analyses show that by the age of 8 it is difficult to know who did what in their early years education.⁴

- We tend to label students if they don’t thrive in their early school years, which may be down to a need for parents and teachers to be able to explain unusual behaviour or to access additional funding. However, while many of these issues are real and, for example, individual interventions and drugs for children with ADHD may calm them, there is no necessary corollary that they will then learn. In fact labeling students has been shown to lead to major decreases in achievement gains compared to similar students not labeled.⁵

- Using learning styles has become more popular but there is very little evidence to suggest that when teaching is matched to style there is enhanced learning. Teachers should use various methods of teaching but there is no support for classifying students and matching teaching to that style.

4. **Fix the schools** - If only schools had more money and autonomy, they would be better schools!

- Linked with providing parents with greater choice is the desire to create new schools. Charter schools in the US and more recently free schools in the UK have been introduced with a fanfare, and yet after small initial improvements, the effect of charter schools, across three meta-analyses based on 246 studies is a minuscule.⁶

- To what extent should teachers have autonomy or like other professions, such as doctors, should they be required to follow professional and evidence based practice?

- There is little evidence that providing greater financial resources, once a certain level of funding has been achieved, has any great impact on student progress and attainment. The greatest impact is seen where the funds, outside those necessary to staff and maintain the school, are spent directly on teacher expertise and effective student resources.

- Allowing schools to extend the school day or year. A correlational analysis of the hours of instructional time and student achievement of the 2012 PISA scores across thirty three largely developed countries makes it clear that merely adding more time to the day, or days to the year, makes little difference.

5. **Fix the teachers** - If only teachers had better initial training, were paid for performance and adopted new technology.

- We constantly emphasise the teacher is key and that teacher standards must be raised. While this may be correct in many ways, teachers cannot do it on their own. They need support, to collaborate with others in and across schools, to

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develop expertise, good systems to work with and they need excellent school leaders. Yet more often the debate is about improving teacher education, introducing performance pay and other such distractions.

- Changing initial teacher training. While there is often a focus or clamour to continually address this area, the studies that are available show teacher education programmes have among the lowest overall impact of all the influences on student achievement. The biggest impact is in their first year in the classroom, followed by the second year and after this there is little impact.

- Performance related pay. Despite the intuitive feeling that incentivising performance will lead to improved teaching, there is little evidence despite the many implementations of performance pay, that this model has made much, if any, difference to student learning. If anything, the effects can be the opposite to those desired: teachers in performance-pay systems tend to work fewer hours per week and are involved in fewer unpaid cooperative activities. Their stress levels increase, and their enthusiasm decreases. Perhaps the solution is to introduce better pay for increased expertise rather than for performance.

- The impact of technology. Larry Cuban 2003 concluded that technologies will never be used in any transformative sense until we change our teaching methods. We tend to use technology to consume more facts and knowledge rather than seeing it as an aid to teaching for enhanced knowledge production.

- More non-teacher adults or assistants in schools. While teachers tend to report their value, claiming they reduce their stress, increase job satisfaction, reduce workloads, improve student outcomes and allow them to improve the quality of their teaching, the evidence suggests otherwise. A systematic study of teaching aides, noted they had tripled in the UK in the last 10 years and could find no effect on students confidence, motivation, attention, independence, relationships with peers, work-completion rates or in following instructions. In fact those students receiving the most support from aides made the lowest progress. Reasons for this included separating the students with greatest need from teachers expertise, the greater likelihood of aides providing answers, aides explanations being less accurate and their greater focus on task completion.

Given this evidence presented by Hattie for what isn’t working and the distractions these actions cause to schools, there are many things that schools should stop doing.

Considering the evidence presented we can see that the most effective action for raising attainment relates directly to the teacher, the support they receive and the willingness and ability of the student to learn.

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Student and Staff Wellbeing

Yet the current headlines suggest all is not well for teachers and students. Examples include

• A 2015 survey of 3,500 members of the NASUWT teaching union, which shows more than two-thirds of respondents considered quitting the profession in the previous year. Workload was the top concern, with 89% citing this as a problem, followed by pay (45%), inspection (44%), curriculum reform (42%) and pupil behaviour (40%). In addition 83% had reported workplace stress, 67% said their job has adversely impacted their mental or physical health, and almost half reported they had seen a doctor because of work-related mental or physical health problems.

• The analysis of the claims of a major insurer covering schools for claims of members of staff taking time off work showed that 55% of its 1,800 schools made stress-related claims in 2014. It also revealed academies experienced the highest proportion of lost teaching days as a result of stress. According to the company's analysis of 138,500 absence days taken by 31,900 staff within the education sector, 3.5 per cent of school staff take a stress related absence every year. The average length of a stress related absence is 26.9 working days, over twice the length of an average staff absence, which is 13 working days.

• The Department of Education watering down their response to the 2014 consultation on workload and removing mention of their promise to discuss future changes and moving more towards simply promising to consider the impact of policy changes on schools and give schools more notice – a minimum of one year.

• 2015 surveys by ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) and Teach First have both indicated a challenge for schools in recruiting teachers. The percentage of respondents to ASCL reporting difficulty recruiting to core subjects was 86%, and for non-core subjects 62%, while the demand placed on Teach First doubled over the previous year.

• Figures from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers and taken from information published by the Department of Education suggest nearly four in every ten new teachers leave the profession within 12 months. In addition their recent survey of 889 students and NQTs found that 73% had seriously thought about quitting the profession and 79% felt they didn’t have a good life balance. Workload was sited as the biggest cause of these responses and Nicky Morgan, the Health secretary has suggested some simple solutions, for example stopping e-mails or marking after 5pm. However, this needs a systems change from the top and will not be delivered through poorly thought through and planned changes.

• It is estimated that 3.3% (about 290,000) children and young people have an anxiety disorder, 0.9% (nearly 80,000) are seriously depressed, 5.8% (just over 510,000) have a conduct disorder and 1.5% (just over 132,000) have severe ADHD. Some of the children will fall into more than one category and the estimate for all children affected by some form of mental disorder is 9.6% of the total or nearly 850,000 children and...
young people.9

• There is little up to date reliable data to show how the above statistics have changed over the last 10 years. It is important to note the rate of change over previous periods with the number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubling between the 1980s and the 2000s10 and the proportion with a conduct disorder more than doubled between 1974 and 1999.11

• More recent surveys suggest further growth in mental health disorders with some estimates as high as 1 in 4 young people.1213

• Those students who are anxious or worry about their exam performance do worse in exams and those who have developed or been taught skills that provide ‘academic buoyancy’ and are therefore less anxious and worried do better.14

In addition to the above concerns for schools, there are other ongoing reforms that are being managed, such as the changes to GCSE and A level exams and the move to progress and attainment 8.

Teachers were largely not consulted on these changes and not involving people in changes that affects them is one of the six major causes of stress identified by the Health and Safety Executive.

So if a significant number of teachers are turning up to school with one of more of the issues highlighted above: stress, anxiety about workload, mental or physical health issues, worries about life balance and the changes they face then how is this likely to be showing up in their teaching and in their students?

We highlighted above the rise in mental health and anxiety in students and school leaders and teachers do have concerns about this.15 So will tackling wellbeing for teachers and students, together with teaching those skills that will enable them to live happier and more successful lives (character and resilience) help those schools that want to raise attainment?

9 These figures are estimates based on the based on the prevalence rates found the latest ONS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey, published in 2004 and demographic data from the 2001 census – taken from Young Minds.
12 Report on mental health in Northern Ireland from the Children's Law Centre and Save the Children and endorsed by 58 groups including Barnardos and the NSPCC
13 861 staff surveyed by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
14 David W. Putwain, Anthony L. Daly, Suzanne Chamberlain, Shireen Sadreddini. Academically buoyant students are less anxious about and perform better in high-stakes examinations. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 2015; DOI: 10.1111/bjep.12068
15 The Key summer report showed that in a survey of 1,180 school leaders in England 67% had a significant concern for their pupil's mental health, which was the highest score from a range of concerns they had for pupils.
There is clearly a need for action and what might be alternative and effective ways of

1) Improving teaching (and the support teachers receive to enable them to improve their practice).

2) Improving students’ ability and willingness to learn.

There is little point in repeating so much of what is already going on and it is important that schools avoid the distractions we have highlighted. What is currently being done in many schools hasn't led to the much sought after improvements in attainment and at the same time the health and wellbeing of staff and students appears to be falling.

Is there a connection between the two? In the remainder of this paper we set out what we believe schools should consider as their main focus and set out further evidence for the approach we recommend.

The Role of Wellbeing, Resilience and Mindset in Raising Student Attainment

We think the answer to raising attainment may be simpler than the actions many schools are currently taking suggests.

If we accept that what goes on in the classroom has the most significant bearing on attainment and the evidence already presented suggests this, then what is most likely to have a long term impact.

We have so far used a narrow definition of attainment as evidenced by exam results at age 16, as a barometer for school performance. Attainment should also mean assessing whether each student has made the most of their individual talents and abilities and whether they are happy and fulfilled in what they do now and the likelihood they will be prepared well for their lives.

There is currently no recognised measure for student achievement against their capabilities and while we do measure progress from when they start school, this is still not a true measure of potential. There is also no universally used or even regularly used measure of wellbeing (though valid and reliable instruments do exist).

Yet if we are to improve teaching in every classroom and the ability and willingness of students to learn, then staff and students have to be in the right mental and physical health, have the skills that are likely to mean they will manage adversity well, have a positive growth mindset, understand what success might look like for them and also feel good about being in school.

Staff members also need to be highly effective role models (because students will copy
what they do more readily than what they say\textsuperscript{16} and students have to understand the relevance of school.

We therefore believe that for us to improve performance for the long term we must focus on those areas that will most impact performance in the classroom and this has to come from a whole school approach to improving wellbeing, and specifically teaching those skills that will build resilience and develop a growth mindset. By wellbeing we mean\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Emotional wellbeing}, which includes feeling happy and confident and not anxious or depressed.

\textbf{Psychological wellbeing}, which includes the ability to be autonomous, problem-solve, manage emotions, experience empathy, be resilient and attentive.

\textbf{Social wellbeing}, which includes having good relationships with others and not having behavioural problems, for example being disruptive, violent or a bully.

It’s therefore essential to see and understand the importance of the health and wellbeing of teachers and other staff. It’s one thing to teach social and emotional wellbeing to students, but if the teacher isn’t experiencing it, for whatever reason, then their students will pick this up: it’s not just theory and concepts. Students do as teachers do, not as they say.

So for example:

- Stressed teachers => stressed students
- Worried and anxious teachers => worried and anxious students
- Low-performing teachers => low performing students

Can you expect a teacher who is feeling overwhelmed or overly stressed to teach effectively: if the much needed skills are not working for the teacher, then how will the student see their usefulness and want to learn?

\textit{If we can't look after the people who look after the children, who is going to look after the children?}

So perhaps something different is needed or at least a different perspective.

Teachers do not have to add a whole set of techniques or structure to their already large workload to engage students' healthy states of mind. We realise a teacher's primary job is to teach, not to become an administrator, social worker, or psychologist as well. Certainly,

\textsuperscript{16} When teachers’ words and deeds conflict, children will always follow actions over instructions, academics at Boston University have found.

\textsuperscript{17} Definitions taken from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on Social and Emotional wellbeing for young people. NICE advice [LGB12], September 2013.
the job of a teacher becomes much more difficult if we expect them to take on the additional tasks of being a surrogate parent or counsellor.

What we’re talking about is subtractive, not additional. It’s when excessive thought falls away that we see clearer, more calmly and become resourceful.

As people experience worry or stressful thinking, their resourcefulness and performance declines. This is true for teachers, parents and students alike: how we think is identical but what we think about is unique as we all have free will.

Sports people at the top of their game, when they are in flow, have very little thinking going on, hence it’s called free flowing, or freethinking. This is the most creative and resourceful state we experience, when possibilities abound, when we have the ability to see new and fresh things, and to respond to challenging circumstances in a resourceful way.

Traditional approaches that aim to get people to take action, do so through asking them to think more in order to achieve a more free flowing state. But this is a contradiction.

If we express this mathematically:

Additional approach: 1 + 1 = 2, or thinking + managing thinking = over-thinking and overwhelm

Subtractive approach: 1 – 1 = 0, or thinking – thinking = free flowing

It’s a small shift in mindset that yields big changes in behaviour, whereas trying to change behaviour by changing behaviour doesn’t yield significant results – evidence suggests usually no more than an effect of 5% - and in these cases the change of behaviour has actually come from a change of mind.

When looking to change of behaviour, it is a consequence of either

No change of mind = no change in behaviour or Change of mind = change in behaviour.

So given that how parents, pupils and students see things, is more important to learning than what they see, it makes sense to take a whole school approach, building resourcefulness and resilience within all involved in the development of children and as a result:

• Teachers become better teachers.
• Children become better children.
• Parents become better parents.

This approach is also needed if Wales is to close the gap and successfully implement the recommendations from the report of Professor Graham Donaldson CB. Presented in February 2015 and titled ‘Successful Futures - Independent Review of Curriculum and
Assessment Arrangements in Wales’, this set out some far reaching recommendations and changes needed in the curriculum.

It set out a clear purpose for education in Wales, as being that children and young people develop as:

- 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.
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

This sets out the need to achieve a clear balance between teaching subjects and developing those skills that will enable students to make the most of their potential and be better prepared for life and work. Both are important for long-term attainment and for developing independence in students so they can take greater responsibility for their own learning, enjoyment and performance, which are all important intrinsic motivators.

To deliver this outcome and successfully teach across the six proposed areas of a new curriculum, teachers will also need these skills and importantly also be independent and responsible for their learning, enjoyment and performance. Without this and a strong personal wellbeing the identified educational purpose and recommended changes are very unlikely to gain a foothold.

The report proposes the curriculum is split into six Areas of Learning and Experience, which are:

- Expressive arts
- Health and well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, literacy and communication
- Mathematics and numeracy
- Science and technology

The specific skills we recommend being taught to students in the section below (under The 5 Level Approach) will provide great support in achieving the aims of the new curriculum.

The aim of the Expressive Arts wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience includes providing opportunities to explore thinking, refine, and communicate ideas, promote exploration of issues of personal and cultural identity, gain confidence and become more resilient.

The aim of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience includes helping
students to build the knowledge, understanding and skills that will enable them to develop positive and appropriate relationships, dealing with the difficult issues and decisions they will face, learning to live independently, taking part in team endeavours; mentoring and supporting others.

The aim of the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience includes students being able to listen attentively and speak lucidly and understandably or to use non-verbal communication effectively, all crucial attributes in learning and life more generally. Developing oracy, the capacity to develop and express ideas through speech, is also of central importance to both thinking and learning.

All these areas are catered for through our approach and using our teaching resources with students as part of a whole school approach. This includes developing their own coaching skills (planning, goal setting, questioning, listening, and feedback) and ability to influence and speak publically.

Finally, teachers will be expected to shoulder responsibility for implementing the changes and to create the capacity to do this, so a focus on their wellbeing is paramount, as is the development of a long term plan and highly effective implementation, which also needs to address the things that will not to be stopped. The approach we suggest in the next section will be very supportive of these aims.

So how might this be best delivered into schools?

The 5 Level Approach

We have set out the evidence that the best ways to raise attainment are through

- Better teaching in the classroom,
- Providing teachers and other staff with the right support; and
- Helping students to be willing and able learners, which has to involve parents and the wider community

And the evidence also shows the importance of taking a whole school approach, rather than a piecemeal one. In many studies, including those looking at the delivery of social and emotional learning into schools, increases in attainment have been greater where it has been everybody's business.\(^\text{18,19}\)

This needs to cover leadership (behaviours and school practices), staff, students, parents and the community.

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\(^{18}\) Catalano et al (2002) ibid
Whole school approaches can be a challenge and the effects diluted.\textsuperscript{20} This can be particularly true in secondary schools and whole school approaches need to have the buy-in from the senior leadership team and must be delivered realistically and over time.

By whole school approach we mean one that pervades all aspects of the life of a school including: culture, ethos and environment: the health and wellbeing of staff and students: leadership practice, the school’s values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment: using the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge, attitudes and skills about health, wellbeing, resilience and mindset: partnerships and proactive engagement with parents and cares, relevant agencies and the wider community.

Schools often look for quick wins and easy solutions and do not give ‘initiatives’ the planning or implementation time needed to deliver the results needed. So our recommended approach starts with making sure the senior leadership team have a full understanding of what is being proposed, are all committed to the solution and then work with their middle leaders and the wider community to create a long term strategic and operational plan. They have to start small and be consistent in adding the building blocks to deliver the required results.

Our five level approach encompasses, (1) Leadership, (2) Planning, (3) Staff, (4) Students, (5) Parents and the wider community. And so any plan should include:

- A review of the current leadership behaviours and school policies and practices (culture) to support wellbeing and teaching and agreement of the gap from where they are now to where they need to be and setting out specific steps and actions to close this.
- A specific focus on staff wellbeing and teachers professional development. This and the leadership behaviours, policies and practices will need to address the six main factors causing stress identified by the Health and Safety executive, which are
  - Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
  - Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
  - Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
  - Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
  - Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
  - Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

• Staff training on building skills to enable them to better manage adversity, including managing stress and anxiety (wellbeing, resilience and mindset).

• Adopting coaching as the main methodology for leadership and learning conversations across the school, to create independence and allow problem solving across the whole school. This to include teaching students this important skill as we have found it to be of significant help and particularly for those students with poor behaviour or performance.

• The delivery of specific lessons for students on social and emotional learning, on developing skills that will mean they are better able to manage adversity, develop a growth mindset and those employability skills they will need for work and life. Sufficient time must also be given for student learning to be applied and practiced. These are all part of a 53 lesson curriculum we have developed for schools called Successful Lives.

• Selection of the right staff and training so they can effectively deliver the above lessons for students.

• Gaining buy-in from all staff that they have to be role models for their students, in all lessons and in their behaviours and actions around school.

• Setting out steps to engage with parents and the wider community, rather than just involving them (this includes making the school more of a welcoming place for parents and acknowledging that, in some case, staff thinking and prejudices will need to change. We also must acknowledge that 17% of the adult population isn’t numerate or literate and many remember poor experiences of their time at school.

• And very importantly the plan must contain what work will be removed from the school and what students, staff, teachers, and school leaders will stop doing.

There is a significant amount to cover, which is why it has to be long-term (likely to need an initial outline plan of at least three years, together with a detailed one year implementation plan) and delivered carefully in bite sized and effective chunks.

Many schools will already be delivering aspects of this approach, and any solution therefore has to be flexible and capable of being tailored towards specific needs.

The financial investment needed for support in helping to take these steps is likely to be small, and the biggest initial commitment will be finding the time for the leadership team to fully understand and buy into the approach and to write the initial plan, with the involvement of the whole staff. Schools collaborating and working together could reduce the financial and time commitment needed.
So why should school leaders make the time for this? The Benefits.

The focus in many schools on raising attainment continues to utilise methodologies that haven’t brought the results they need and many of these, as we set out earlier, prove to be distractions, with little evidence they will deliver big shifts, or help tackle the rising issues around mental health, wellbeing and behaviour.

Yet evidence informs us that by taking the whole school approach outlined, schools could expect some significant changes in outcomes.

- Leadership behaviours, school policies and practices that specifically support teachers and staff will enable them to feel in control of their work, manage the demands placed on them and feel more included in decisions affecting them.
- While research into the direct link between staff wellbeing and student attainment is a growing area for research, the most comprehensive report to date found that staff wellbeing accounted for a statistically significant 8% of the variation in SATs scores in primary schools and was also statistically significant in their value added measure. For secondary schools, after controlling for the effects of relevant variables (for example, percentage of pupils absent), they also found a significant and positive association between staff wellbeing and the percentage of students achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A – C, and the value-added measure based on progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.  

Robust, well-validated research in psychology and therapy supports the value of coaching and mentoring skills such as listening, building rapport, asking powerful questions, feedback and the value of the relationship. Productivity has been shown to increase significantly where coaching is deployed effectively and to be up to four times more effective than training. Finally, the responses of students to self and peer coaching show a wide range of benefits.

- Teaching programmes for students that explicitly teach social and emotional skills have been shown to deliver an 11% improvement in achievement tests. And at the same time they result in a 25% improvement in social and emotional skills, and a 10% decrease in classroom misbehaviour, anxiety and depression. Further more a systematic review of coordinated school health programmes (that promote health

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21 Staff wellbeing is key to school success - A research study into the links between staff wellbeing and school performance. By Professor Rob Briner and Dr Chris Dewberry, Department of Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck College, University of London, in partnership with Worklife Support
22 Smither (2011)
25 Durlak, Weissberg et al.’s analysis of 213 rigorous studies in schools running quality programmes
through explicit teaching in the curriculum and broader work to promote a healthier school environment) suggest positive effects on attainment.²⁶

✔ A number of specific competencies have a positive affect on academic achievement, including
  o Pupils who are confident about their learning and who have a ‘growth mindset’²⁷ (they believe their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work) persist when faced with challenges.²⁸
  o Pupils who can set goals, manage stress and organise their schoolwork achieve higher grades.²⁹
  o Pupils who use problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles do better academically.³⁰

✔ Pupils with better health and wellbeing achieve better academically.³¹ ³² Academic success has a strong positive impact on children’s subjective sense of how good they feel their lives are (life satisfaction) and is linked to higher levels of wellbeing in adulthood.³³ And in turn children’s overall level of wellbeing impacts on their behaviour and engagement in school and their ability to acquire academic competence in the first place.

✔ Pupils engaging in self-development activities (including sport and physical activity) achieve 10-20% higher GCSEs³⁴

✔ Positive relationships between teachers and pupils are critical in promoting pupil wellbeing. Having a sense of belonging to school and having good teacher-pupil relationships contribute to pupils liking and engaging with school³⁵ and the level of school engagement pupils feel with their schools is strongly associated with their attainment.³⁶

³² Suhrcke M, de Paz Nieves C (2011). The impact on health and health behaviours on educational outcomes in high income countries: a review of the evidence. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe
³⁶ Wang M and Holcombe R (2010). Adolescents’ perceptions of school environment, engagement,
A school’s commitment to pupil wellbeing, including a commitment to measuring their wellbeing, can be an important way of informing parents and local communities about how successful the school is. This has the potential to make a strong contribution to how schools are viewed by their local communities and by Ofsted as part of the inspection process.  

Parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children’s learning. Effectively engaging parents and carers in supporting their children’s learning at home has been shown to add up to two to three years progress to a student’s education over their school career. Parents who are more involved in their children’s schooling, regardless of parents’ gender or educational level, have offspring who do better in school, irrespective of the child’s gender, ethnicity or family structure.

Attempts by schools to engage parents in their children’s learning are unlikely to be successful if they represent a ‘bolt-on’ to mainstream activities. A parental engagement strategy should be integrated into a whole school approach and staff need training and coaching to effectively engage with parents and particularly when dealing with those who come from different backgrounds to their own.

Finally, Emeritus Professor Katherine Weare, in her review of the evidence relating to wellbeing, social and emotional learning, and mental health, suggests that a school could expect to see the removal of around 75% of the current issues in this area by taking a whole school approach. This assumes that the right staff is selected to lead in each of the areas and that it is planned and executed well.

It is also worth briefly looking at the wide evidence from outside schools of the impact wellbeing has on performance. There have been a number of reports that have shown there is a direct link between the wellbeing of staff and patient care within the NHS. Evidence from other businesses also demonstrates the significant impact it can have and the work foundation explored seven areas where improvements to employee health and wellbeing was likely to lead directly or indirectly to improvements in aspects of business performance. The evidence base for action in this area is growing and becoming compelling.


39 Professor John Hattie, First Steps: A new approach for our schools, CBI, November 2012

40 Bogenschneider 1999

41 Taken from Professor Weare’s presentation at the SSAT Mind the Gap Conference, May 2015.

42 One example is Exploring the relationship between patients’ experiences of care and the influence of staff motivation, affect and wellbeing - Jill Maben, Riccardo Peccei, Mary Adams, Glenn Robert, Alison Richardson, Trevor Murrells and Elizabeth Morrow.


44 The Business Case for Employees Health and Wellbeing - A report prepared for Investors in People UK, Stephen Bevan, April 2010
Measuring Success

If schools are to take action in this important area and to invest resources in a whole school approach then they should also measure and evaluate the impact of their actions.

The evidence base for the approach recommended is strong but there remain variables, the largest being the staff leading and implementing in each of the areas identified and the quality of planning and implementation. An effective evaluation process should be agreed as part of the planning stage.

There are a number of valid and reliable instruments that schools can use to measure staff and student wellbeing and evaluate action taken, though the choice for measuring other facets, such as resilience is more limited.

We would recommend the following measurement and evaluation tools for wellbeing and resilience.

For adult wellbeing the The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS).

For children’s wellbeing (aged 8 – 15) The Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale.

A number of local authorities also support the use of wellbeing surveys and it may be worth checking with your own to see if they have resources available. In addition the National Union of Teachers also provide a Wellbeing Ready Reckoner.

For resilience you may also choose to use the wellbeing measures recommended above and The Resilience Research Centre’s CRYM-28 resilience measure is also freely available.

In addition, for those students with more challenging behaviour or health, the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, for use by students, their teachers and parents, is something widely recognised and available for use.

Many schools will already be aware of and using measures or surveys to assess classroom climate and also elicit feedback from staff, students and parents and schools should continue to use their own internal data on attainment, progress, absences, exclusions, behaviour and attitudes to monitor progress.

The best choices for schools will depend on their current position, their plans and what they are already using but the important action is that schools put an effective measurement and evaluation process in place.
What next?

For schools looking to sustainably raise attainment, develop a self-improving system, and create independent learners, then the approach recommended here is one they should consider.

The evidence set out shows that a whole school approach to wellbeing, building resilience and developing a growth mindset provides a long-term solution to improving teaching and the willingness of students to learn.

To find out more about the services and resources we provide please get in touch.

Developing Potential is a not for profit company supporting schools to raise attainment through a whole school approach and has also developed the Successful Lives Curriculum to help schools develop important life skills in their students.

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