

Birmingham Primary Schools Wellbeing Census 2022

- Lay Summary

Why a Wellbeing Census?

In relation to young people's mental health - the **'treatment gap'** has been rapidly increasing over the last 25 years. This is the gap between levels of need and the availability of resources to support school-age young people with mental health and wellbeing problems. Long-standing research shows that 50% of mental health disorders emerge before age 25, and roughly 33% of these appear before age 14. Schools represent an ideal environment to provide educational interventions to improve the social and emotional health of young people, but schools need support not only to provide the interventions but also to systematically measure and understand the status and implications of young people's wellbeing in their settings.

Emotional wellbeing is a way of looking at mental health from a less medicalised perspective. The World Health Organisation defines mental health as not simply the absence of mental illness, but the fostering of wellbeing to enable thriving individuals and populations (WHO, 2022). Wellbeing is also critical to students attainment as research has established that:

- Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically.
- Effective social and emotional competencies are associated with greater health and wellbeing, and better achievement.
- The culture, ethos and environment of a school influences the health and wellbeing of pupils and their readiness to learn

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/370686/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf

Therefore, measuring wellbeing in secondary schools can be used as a practical indicator of both current and future mental health of students, giving schools the ability to consider and support their students wellbeing.

What was the 2022 Primary School Wellbeing Census?

Between April-July 2022 a "wellbeing census" was conducted in a sample of primary schools across the Birmingham LEA. The two measures used in the survey were:

The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (Liddle & Carter, 2015). The 15-item scale SCWBS has 5 response categories across 3 scales, positive outlook, positive emotional state, and social desirability with 2 scales (positive outlook and positive emotional state) summed to provide a single score ranging between 12-60. The items are suitable for younger children and are all worded positively making the measure more suitable for use with primary schools.

The School Connectedness Scale (Resnick et al., 1997). School Connectedness is assessed by 4 items across 5 response categories, summed to provide a single score ranging between 0-20, these questions are adapted from Resnick et al. (1997). School connectedness is an important belief that is associated with protecting pupils against a range of risk behaviours and poor academic achievement.

Simple demographics for pupils were collected around ethnicity, sex, school year, SEND status, free school meals and persistent absence. For inter-school comparisons we matched overall averages to publicly available school level, %SEN support, % Pupils with English as not first language and % FSM (average last 6 years) from Dfes (2021) and Local Super Output Area (LSOA) deprivation data from www.gov.uk (2019).

Measures are included in the appendix i.

We enabled digital delivery of the census through www.breathe-schools.co.uk, a platform that allows collaborative work to take place across a regional partnership of mental health professionals and individual schools. This was part of an ongoing programme creating resources and interventions for schools via another teacher focused website www.breathe-edu.co.uk.

For more information regarding the census and this report please contact c.palmer@warwick.ac.uk.

Who were involved?

26 primary schools collected data for 3,497 pupils between the ages of 8-10 years. The participating schools were made up of 26 Primary (20 maintained, 6 academies) and spanned across 3 primary consortia in the city North (8 Primary), South (11 Primary) and East (7 Primary).

The results are used to create wellbeing dashboards for each school to assist in the meaningful assessment of wellbeing in their school. An overall report is also created to disseminate across the partnership and those involved in the wider schools and youth mental health network.

Birmingham Schools Population

Birmingham's population estimates (ONS, 2019) report the demographics of Birmingham's 0-19 year old population as roughly 51% male and 49% female. For all ages the city reports to identify as roughly 58% White, 27% Asian, 9% Black and 6% Mixed Ethnicity or Other. Latest available statistics for average percentage of children in Birmingham schools that are eligible for free schools meals is reported as roughly 23% in both primary and secondary schools (Dfes, 2020). The latest available SEN data national percentages report 12.6% of pupils in primary schools and 10% of secondary pupils requesting SEN support (Dfes, 2019). Pupil absence data is not reported at an LEA level but latest available national percentages for persistent absenters were 8.4% for state-funded primaries and 13.7% for state-funded secondaries (Dfes, 2019).

Primary School Sample

Sex was reported as 52% Male, 40% Female, 7.2% unknown. 26% of pupils' ethnicities were missing, whilst remaining percentages compromised of 38.9% White, 20.3% Asian, 4% Black and 10.8% Mixed Race/Other. 20.9% of pupils were in receipt of free school meals, 8.3% were persistent absenters and 11% reported some form of SEND. There was a potential under representation in the sample of pupils from White ethnicities something that is mostly likely related to the large number of missing ethnicity data reported by schools, ethnicity data should be viewed with this in mind.

Primary Schools Mental Wellbeing and School Connectedness

Assessing wellbeing by primary, average wellbeing was reported to be the highest in the East consortia 43.9 whilst a significant finding, differences in scores were small with between North (-1.7) and South (-2.2). Wellbeing by school type found primary academies in the sample to have higher average wellbeing 43.4 but again this was a small difference of only -1.4.

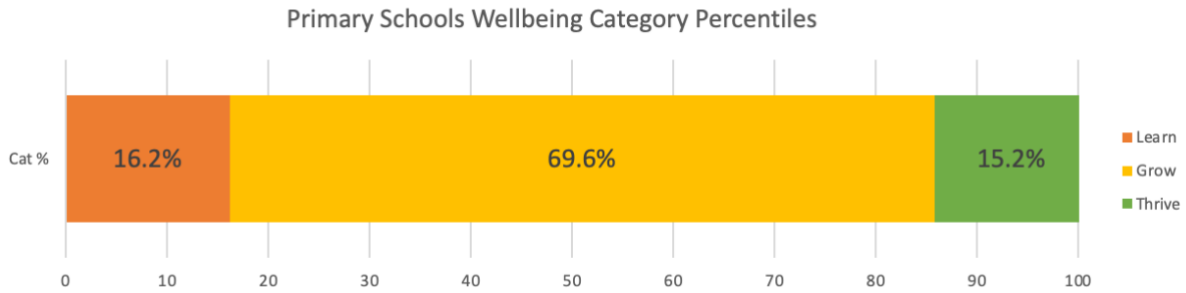
Primary School Variables	Frequency	%	SCWBSTotal Mean	Std.dev	School Connectedness	Std.dev
North	1025	29.3	42.2	7.8	15.4	3.9
South	1715	49	41.7	7.9	15	4.1
East	757	21.6	43.9	8.2	16.4	3.7
Academy	757	21.6	43.4	8.3	15.9	3.9
Maintained	2740	78.4	42	7.9	15.3	4

Overall average wellbeing score for primary school pupils was 42.3 a drop of -4.2 compared to last 2021 census data (46.6). Overall average school connectedness for primary school pupils was 15.4 representing a slight drop -1.1 compared to 2021 census data (16.5).

Female pupils reported similar average mental wellbeing 42.2 as male pupils 42.7. Pupils with SEMH needs reported slightly lower wellbeing on average 39.6 than pupils reporting no SEND 42.4 which was approaching a meaningful change -2.8. The SEMH group also reported lower wellbeing than any other category of SEND. No other significant differences were found between any demographic group and no relationship was found between school year and wellbeing. A positive relationship was found between wellbeing and school connectedness.

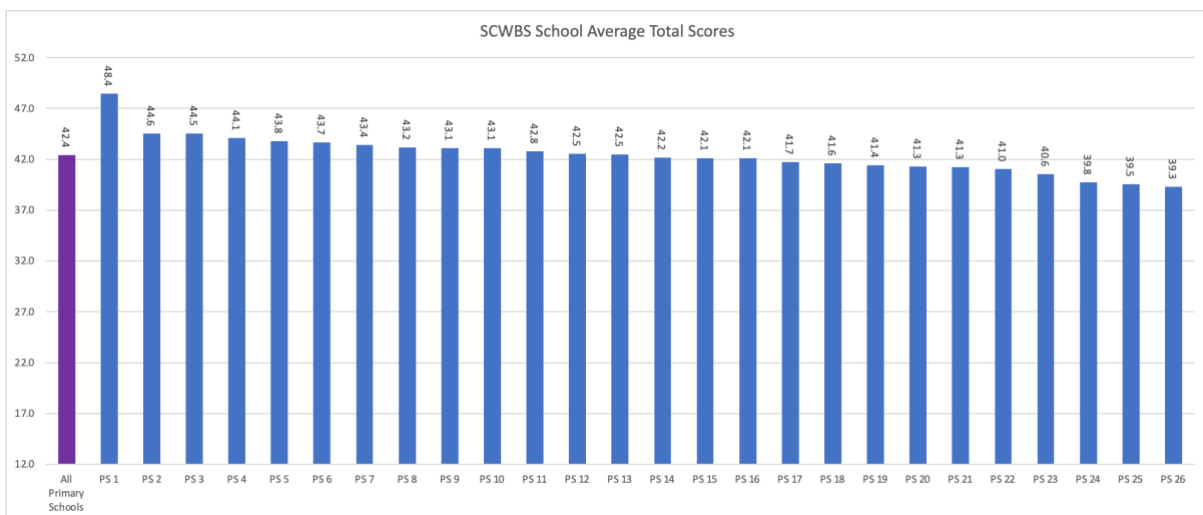
Primary School Variables	Frequency	%	SCWBS Total		School	
			Mean	Std.dev	Connectedness	Std.dev
Overall	3497	100	42.3	8	15.4	4
Male	1822	52.1	42.7	7.9	15.1	4.7
Female	1424	40.7	42.2	8	15.9	3.8
Sex not known	251	7.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Year 4	1016	29.1	42.7	7.9	15.9	3.9
Year 5	922	26.4	43	8	15.4	4
Year 6	895	25.6	41.87	8.1	15	4
School year unknown	664	19	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	1361	38.9	42.1	8	15.2	4.1
Asian	709	20.3	43.4	8.2	16.2	3.7
Black	139	4	42.5	8.2	15.6	4.1
Mixed	378	10.8	41.9	7.9	15	4.2
Other	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ethnicity not known	910	26	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
No SEND	2707	88.8	42.4	7.9	15.5	4.3
All SEND combined	395	11.2	41.6	8.5	14.9	4.4
Communication & Interaction	187	5.3	41.8	8.7	15.2	8.7
Cognition & Learning	125	3.6	42.5	7.6	15.4	4.1
SEMHS	75	2.1	39.6	8.9	13.4	5
Physical or Sensory	8	0.2	42.3	11.8	15.7	3.2
Other Difficulty/Disability	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
In Receipt of FSM	730	20.9	42.4	8.3	15.5	4.1
Not in receipt of FSM	1481	42.4	43.1	7.8	15.8	3.9
FSM not known	1286	36.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Persistent Absenter	290	8.3	41	9.1	15	4.4
Below PA threshold	2160	6.8	42.7	8	15	4
PA not known	1047	29.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

A common way to categorise this data is to use + or -1 standard deviation from the mean to define three categories of mental wellbeing “Learn”, “Grow” and “Thrive” (equivalent to low, medium and high mental wellbeing). Using this method, 68.6% (2399) of all scores fell between 34.3 and 50.2 (Grow), 16% (563) of pupils reported total SCWBS scores lower than 34.3 (Learn) and 15% (535) of pupils reported scores higher than 50.2 (Thrive). This gives us an idea of how many pupils appeared to have markedly lower and higher levels of wellbeing being compared to majority.



Inter-primary school analysis

The inter-school average wellbeing score was 42.4. Schools displayed some variability between wellbeing scores with range of 9.1 pts between the school reporting the highest (48.4) and lowest (39.3) level of wellbeing, however this was due to one school reporting considerably higher wellbeing than other schools. Comparing school-level data to Dfe data a negative relationship was found between wellbeing and % FSM, this means schools with a higher % FSM at school level typically reported lower wellbeing. No relationships were found between Dfe data and school connectedness.



Primary teachers' wellbeing

Overall average primary school teacher wellbeing was reported as 46.7. Whilst no meaningful or significant differences were found between groups there were meaningful differences in wellbeing scores when compared to teachers that preferred not to share their demographic information.

Categorising data into our three categories of mental wellbeing **“Learn”**, **“Grow”** and **“Thrive”** (equivalent to low, medium and high mental wellbeing). Using this method, 69.5% (189) of all scores fell between 38.5 and 54.6 (Grow), 13% (37) of teachers reported total WEMWEBS scores lower than 38.5 (Learn) and 16.9% (46) of teachers reported scores higher than 54.6 (Thrive). This gives us an idea of how many teachers appeared to have markedly lower and higher levels of wellbeing compared to majority.

What this tells us

Our findings indicate that primary school wellbeing had decreased since the previous year. This was a significant change and therefore represents a real decrease in wellbeing between the samples. Our average wellbeing score for 2022 was similar yet slightly lower to scores reported in a 2015 study of wellbeing in schools (Liddle & Carter, 2015).

There were no large differences between groups for wellbeing, however those reported as having a SEMH SEN reported an average lower wellbeing that was one of the larger differences reported when compared to those reporting no SEND. SEMH pupils also reported lower levels of school connectedness. Wellbeing appears to have a positive relationship with school connectedness, and whilst without further data we cannot be sure whether increased wellbeing causes increased school connectedness or vice versa, school connectedness is often cited as a driver of wellbeing (Waters & Cross, 2010) so attempts to improve how connected pupils feel to their school is perhaps likely to increase wellbeing.

Looking at an inter-primary school level we found that one school reported significantly higher wellbeing than other school and four schools where wellbeing was somewhat lower than the inter-school average. Our data here is hoped to inform local mental health strategy teams who can provide support and guidance to these schools alongside materials and digital lessons that all primary schools can try and implement in their schools to improve wellbeing (available at www.breathe-edu.co.uk).

This was the first year teacher wellbeing data was collected which makes comparisons difficult. What was of particular interest here was that quite significantly low wellbeing in every demographic group was reported by those preferring not to disclose demographic data. This might suggest teachers with low wellbeing had some concerns around being identified via their demographic data. This was not possible due to the anonymous nature of the data however it might have been perceived as covering all possibilities to not submit demographic data. This would imply there is potentially still a stigma and concern for teachers in how wellbeing data might be used by employers.

References

- Dfes. (2019). *Department for Education Schools Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk>
- Dfes. (2020). *Department for Education Schools Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk>
- Dfes. (2021). *Department for Education Schools Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk>
- Liddle, I., & Carter, G. F. A. (2015). Emotional and psychological well-being in children: the development and validation of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 31*(2), 174-185. doi:10.1080/02667363.2015.1008409
- ONS. (2019). *Birmingham Population Estimates 2019*. Retrieved from
- Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., . . . Shew, M. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Jama, 278*(10), 823-832.
- Thapar, A., Stewart-Brown, S., & Harold, G. (2021). What has happened to children's wellbeing in the UK? *Lancet Psychiatry, 8*(1), 5-6.
- Waters, S., & Cross, D. (2010). Measuring students' connectedness to school, teachers, and family: Validation of three scales. *School Psychology Quarterly, 25*(3), 164.
- WHO. (2022). The Global Health Observatory. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>
- www.gov.uk. (2019). *English Indices of Deprivation 2019*. UK Government Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Appendix i

Primary Demographic (reported by schools)

Demographic data will be collected by school administrators/school champions from existing data available to schools.

Ethnicity (2011 Census)

Sex (2021 Census)

School Year

Percentage of Pupil Absence

SEND Type

Free School Meals

Primary School Pupils (reported by pupils)

The schedule for the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (Liddle & Carter, 2015) (SCWBS) contain the following questions and an additional 4 questions on school connectedness (each coded by 1-5 Likert scale). Each survey is voluntary, pupils can digitally withdraw from the survey prior to beginning and submitting their answers.

		Never	Not that much of the time	Some of the time	Quite a lot of the time	All of the time
Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale -						
1	I think good things will happen in my life	1	2	3	4	5
2	I have always told the truth	1	2	3	4	5
3	I've been able to make choices easily	1	2	3	4	5
4	I can find lots of fun things to do	1	2	3	4	5
5	I feel that I am good at some things	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think lots of people care about me	1	2	3	4	5
7	I like everyone I have met	1	2	3	4	5
8	I think there are many things I can be proud of	1	2	3	4	5
9	I've been feeling calm	1	2	3	4	5
10	I've been in a good mood	1	2	3	4	5
11	I enjoy what each new day brings	1	2	3	4	5
12	I've been getting on well with people	1	2	3	4	5
13	I always share my sweets	1	2	3	4	5

1 4	I've been cheerful about things	1	2	3	4	5
1 5	I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5

Primary School Pupils (reported by pupils)

School Connectedness question are adapted from Waters and Cross (2010) and contain the following questions and an additional 3 questions on school connectedness (each coded by 1-5 Likert scale)

Additional questions of school connectedness (Adapted from Waters & Cross 2010)						
1 6	I feel proud to be a student at my school	1	2	3	4	5
1 7	I feel like I belong at my school	1	2	3	4	5
1 8	I enjoy coming to school	1	2	3	4	5
1 9	I have meaningful relationships with teachers from my school	1	2	3	4	5

Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) (Liddle & Carter, 2015).

The SCWBS is 15-item holistic, positively worded scaled used to measure emotional and psychological wellbeing in younger children aged 8 -15 years. It is a standardised tested measure that has been specifically made by educational psychologists. The scale covers areas of wellbeing such as: optimism, cheerfulness and relaxation, satisfying interpersonal relationships, clear thinking and competence. The questions are scored with a five-point response scale 1 to 5 and contains three sub-scales: Positive Outlook, Positive Emotional State and Social Desirability. A comprehensive report of the measure can be found here: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/faq/scwbs_children_report.pdf