

This essay will include a little background information about schooling, discuss the importance of mental health and wellbeing for children and young people and why schools and local authorities should provide their students with opportunities to develop better wellbeing and life satisfaction (Bilton, *et al* 2002). More children and young people are being affected by mental health and emotional and behavioural issues which need strategies, greater understanding and knowledge about such issues and prevention methods (Sutton, 1999).

Bilton, *et al* (2002) describe education as being the next most important social institution for a child after the family, and after the Second World War mass schooling was thought to be the solution to many social problems, such as theft, as it would provide the working class with the same opportunities to succeed as those who were wealthy. The 1988 Education Reform Act produced a greater competition between schools by creating league tables, offering more money to schools with higher ranking and although money couldn't buy a child a place within a school, a selection process would take into account the 'ability' and behaviour of the child and those classed as time consuming or costly would be rejected, which contributed towards a greater divide within the class and placed higher expectations upon students (Bailey, 1995). During the recession, the focus for education was quickly redirected towards the economy and how it would help revive it, changing education into a more negative approach which was very critical and no longer about equal opportunities but about common standards (Bilton, *et al*, 2002).

School Minister Nick Gibb expresses three main purposes to education are 'empowering young people to succeed in the economy, participate in culture, and leave school prepared for adult life... so that every young person has the opportunity to reach their potential' (Department of Education, 2015) yet for some children and young people coping with the pressure of school can be overwhelming (Young minds, no date) and many are struggling to cope with exam stress, which can affect pre-existing mental health conditions and can also lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, panic attacks, self-harming or suicidal thoughts (NSPCC, 2017).

One in ten children aged 5-16 are affected by a mental health problem (Public Health England, 2016) and many schools partner with local agencies and programmes to support their students, yet most interventions in schools are reactive instead of preventative (Vostanis *et al.*, 2013).

Within early years there is a greater focus on children's wellbeing and outdoor nurseries, Bradford (2012) describes one of the main focusses within early years settings is to encourage the creative process of every child and not the outcome as this gives each child the opportunity to express their ideas, their world and learn how to adapt within their surroundings (Bradford, 2012). In the Early

Years Foundation Stage the four guiding principles are ‘to recognize each child is unique, who can be strong and independent through positive relationships, learn and develop well in enabling environments and to recognise that children learn in different ways and at different rates’ (Department for Education, 2017, p.6). Starting school is a key life event for a child, produces uncertainty and increases their levels of stress which for healthy children will help develop and strengthen their immune system and stress reactivity but for a child who has already been exposed to stressful situations this event could cause much distress and produce a negative effect upon their health (Turner-Cobb, 2014). Main theories developed by Bronfenbrenner and Maslow, still relevant today, express the importance of wellbeing in children and young people because wellbeing in childhood lays a foundation for their adult life and investing in their wellbeing as they grow will contribute and help children and young people participate in society (Aldgate, 2010).

Bowlby’s theory of attachment is still very present today within child development studies and discusses the importance of positive and consistent responses from the caregiver to create a bond that will have an effect upon the child’s wellbeing and will influence their future social and emotional behaviour (Aldgate, 2010). Attachments are important at a young age to establish security, belonging and the ability to feel comforted which will have an impact upon future development and reflected by how they see themselves and others (Holmes, 1993).

Friendships are also important and matter to children. They help develop moral sensibility and as Piaget believed, conversations and disagreements between peers about the social world plays a big part in child development as it ‘marks the beginning of a new independence from their parents’ (Dunn, 2004 p.7). Therefore, as children start to develop as a social person and engage more within their microsystem it is important that good communication and effective engagement is established between their parents and teachers placing the child’s wellbeing at the centre (Buchan, 2013) and although the main focus of schools is for their pupils to achieve the system requirements and expectations, it is also a social setting where children learn to develop social skills and to engage with others (Meadows, 2010) offering opportunities for friendships but also rejection and loneliness (Dunn, 2004).

There are many risk factors that may affect a child’s wellbeing including relationships and their family’s circumstances, social structures such as poverty and the safety of their community (Rosa and Algate, 2000) and subjective wellbeing helps ‘provide a unique, holistic perspective on children’s satisfaction with life as a whole, or in specific areas of their lives’ (The Children’s Society, no date, p.4) with competence, self-awareness, identity, self-esteem, and social support playing a big role (Symonds, 2015). Self-esteem helps avoid mental illness, such as depression, but very high self-esteem

can encourage harmful behaviours (Symonds, 2015). ‘A child’s capacity and drive for learning is underpinned by emotional security and esteem’ (Buchan, 2013 p.58) and there is high correlation between having attachment security and being able to regulate emotions (Pallini *et al*, 2018). Building resilience is having the ability to cope with stressful events and is an important factor when considering mental health and emotional wellbeing (Public Health England, 2016) and children and young people are always looking for indicators that show their maturity and for some transitions between schools can help become more socially mature but for others it can cause disengagement and antisocial behaviour (Symonds, 2015)

Child and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is the term used for ‘all services that work with children and young people who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing’ (NHS, 2016) and an effective approach to helping children and young people with mental health issues is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which ‘aims to help you understand how your problems began, what keeps them going and learn how to change unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving’ (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2018), Psychological therapy and in some cases medication (Public Health England, 2016).

The World Health Organisation (2014) defines mental wellbeing as:

‘a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community’.

The Mental Health Foundation (2018) in addition describe good mental health as ‘able to play a full part in your family, workplace, community and among friends’ and the Public Health England (2015) state that mental wellbeing is inevitably linked to emotions, physical health, social inclusion and sense of belonging. Mental health then encompasses many elements within life, and early intervention will help children and young people from falling into crisis and will reduce future costs by avoiding expensive and longer interventions later on during their life (Public Health England, 2016, Wolpert *et al*, 2013).

Currently Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education currently is non-statutory therefore it is undermined and not given the same interest as other subjects but statutory status would provide teachers with correct training and the expectations of the subject would be elevated (PSHE Association, 2017). A report from Ofsted (2013) states that 42% primary schools and 38% secondary schools required improvement for PSHE education with many teachers lacking expertise and work was assessed with lower standards. However, from September 2019, every primary school in England

will be required to teach 'relationship education' and secondary schools will be required to teach 'relationship and sex education' which is a step forward and will help students' mental health and personal safety 'while preparing them for life and work in a changing world' (PSHE Association, 2017 p.5).

Life satisfaction is

Conclusion

There are many ways to cope with life situations and it is appreciated that schools will not be able to treat each one individually with a specific intervention but

The Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) was a research programme created to inform future implementation and although the evaluation was mixed it found impact and importance for earlier intervention (Wolpert *et al*, 2013).

what is lacking is a core structure that is well coordinated and more research is needed into strategies that work well and engage in promoting and preventing mental health (Vostanis *et al.*, 2013).

Finishing with this quote from Corsaro (2015, p.6 and p.368):

'Adults most often view children in a forward looking way, that is, with an eye to what they will become... rarely are they viewed in a way that appreciates what they are – children with ongoing lives, needs and desires. Enriching the lives of all our children will produce better adults and will enable them to participate actively and fully in their own childhoods and contribute to the quality of our adult lives'.