

Whole-School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Social and Emotional Learning
Post-Primary – Additional SEN Guidance





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Introduction

This guidance aims to support staff in post-primary mainstream schools to consider the needs of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in developing approaches to introduce a whole-child, whole-school, whole-community approach to emotional health and wellbeing (EHWB). This guidance is supplementary to and should be used in conjunction with Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) post-primary guidance:

- Post-Primary Guidance on Developing a Whole-Child, Whole-School and Whole-Community Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing; and
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Post-Primary Guidance.

Pupils with a range of identified special educational needs access the Northern Ireland Curriculum and learn in mainstream education settings. Schools support pupils to be increasingly self-reliant in managing and communicating their needs on a day-to-day basis. Having a special educational need is likely to have an affect a pupil's sense of wellbeing.

Pupils with SEN may experience many challenges. They may have individual needs in relation to communication or processing skills, may experience anxiety or have needs around personal organisation and structure. Others may have difficulty managing the social demands of school life. For some, support for wellbeing may be required for a medical need such as diabetes or, if mobility is an issue, accessing school buildings. All pupils with SEN have more to consider day-to-day than the average pupil in a mainstream environment. For these reasons, the emotional health and wellbeing support given to pupils with SEN and how key staff around them co-ordinate are vitally important.

Schools will adopt whole-school approaches to emotional health and wellbeing, through:

- their ethos and values;
- the curriculum they provide;
- information sharing and messages;
- provision of services; and
- formal and informal initiatives.

Pupils with SEN may require additional tailored or differentiated support to access and engage with whole-school EHWB approaches.

A school's ethos and values will dictate and influence the place emotional health and wellbeing has in the life of the school. It is everyone's responsibility to promote and support wellbeing. It should permeate school policies. Approaches to pupils' emotional health and wellbeing should also be seen from a strengths-based perspective, as opposed to a deficit model.

This guidance consists of three sections, each focusing on considerations at different levels within school.

Section 1: Considering the emotional health and wellbeing needs of pupils with SEN provides a narrative to consider and reflect on the emotional health and wellbeing needs of pupils with SEN in mainstream settings. It is set within a policy context and links to the two main guidance documents for a whole-school approach, incorporating social and emotional learning.



Section 2: Planning for daily support for the emotional health and wellbeing experiences of pupils with SEN offers reflections for class teachers and middle leaders to consider how the supports and strategies put in place help pupils to understand, appreciate and manage their emotional health and wellbeing. It focuses on the social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies that young people should develop.

The **How can teachers support pupils' readiness for learning?** part of this section is particularly useful for teachers. The **How do strategies in place model and support development of SEL competencies?** part is aimed at SENCO or head of year leaders. The **SBEW** and **SEN Framework and Personal Learning Plans** parts are useful for middle leaders.

Section 3: Planning and Evaluation links overarching considerations from Section 1 to the eight principles of a whole-school emotional health and wellbeing approach. It is aimed at senior leaders in the school. It provides questions to support personal and collegial reflections on and discussion of planning and evaluation. We have included questions from the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Post-Primary to identify how specific actions for the EHWP needs of pupils with SEN feed into a school's wider development journey.

This section is aimed at senior leaders.



Section 1: Considering the emotional health and wellbeing needs of pupils with SEN

School should be a safe place

In CCEA post-primary whole-school guidance, emotional health and wellbeing is broadly defined as:

The positive aspects of mental health to include emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. (Page 4, [12 Ways to Support your Health and Wellbeing](#))

Each aspect of this broad definition is important to every individual's EHWP. For a pupil with special educational needs who is developing increasing independence in all aspects of their learning in a post-primary context, it is helpful to consider that their school experience should offer support for these aspects of wellbeing:

- Emotional – school is a positive experience where a pupil can feel confident;
- Psychological – structures in school support each pupil to experience being involved with others and to develop a sense of autonomy and control; and
- Social – opportunities for pupils to develop positive and functional relationships with peers and staff promotes a sense of belonging and supports their wellbeing

*'A young person who feels safe is more likely to have a greater sense of emotional health and wellbeing.'*¹

The guidance also emphasises that schools consider the interrelationship between these aspects of wellbeing alongside the young person's physical health and safety. While physical health, diet and nutrition are important factors for wellbeing, a focus for this additional guidance is that pupils know and feel that they are safe (page 6). Schools, as social places, need to plan and develop structures to ensure that pupils feel school is a safe place where they can increase their ability to deal with their social, emotional and learning needs. In a place of safety a pupil can explore, express and feel able to understand and develop their EHWP.

Pupils' personal SEL journey, communication and schools as social places

When planning support for the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils with SEN, teachers and school leaders need to consider the following points.

Personal SEL Journey

Each pupil has a personal SEL journey. Each young person is unique in their individual character and in how they think, process and express themselves. That is both the beauty and the challenge of social and emotional learning; it is inherently personal, but also relational.

The range of strategies and interventions to support the wellbeing of pupils with SEN should be based on understanding and meeting their individual needs, including the needs of those who are vulnerable. For some pupils, certain aspects of EHWP may need to be explicitly taught; others may need provision for personal or supported daily strategies.

¹ CCEA (2021:4), Post-Primary Guidance on Developing a Whole-Child, Whole-School, Whole-Community Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing



Fundamentally, schools need to support the EHWB needs of pupils with SEN to enable them to be in a place to learn. Schools may also need to make adjustments or plan for pupils to engage with wider EHWB curriculum or school-based initiatives.

Communication

Communication skills and strategies are fundamental to a young person's ability to express their EHWB needs. These skills and strategies help pupils to interpret and navigate others' interactions. For many pupils with SEN this is a significant part of navigating their daily lives.

It is important for teachers to consider how individual pupils express themselves. Each pupil will have ways in which they communicate, verbally and non-verbally, and some pupils will have communication needs directly related to their identified learning need/SEN. The environment, or different times and points in the school day, may influence how they communicate, including during structured and unstructured times. Individual pupils may also experience triggers that lead to a heightened emotional state.

Communication is a two-way process. As educators, we need to be attuned to this, be aware of and consider how we receive communication from pupils. In what ways are pupils expressing themselves? Are they taking in and understanding what and how we communicate to them? Are we taking in and responding to what they are telling us? Is communication between us effective? How is the environment, time or other strategies supporting or limiting communication? Many of these considerations are related to the extent to which a young person feels safe.

When in a heightened emotional state, a pupil's communication pattern may change. They may become more internalised and aspects of communication may change, including shifts in behaviour. Taking a trauma-informed and nurturing approach, teachers or school staff need to be mindful that all behaviour is a form of communication. Pupils with varied learning, communication, sensory or other needs, are always trying to communicate something to us. We need to observe and understand how they communicate, adapting structures and processes to enable effective and sensitive communication.





Schools are places of social interactions

Schools are social places. Pupils navigate numerous, diverse experiences each day, including back-to-back classes, transitions, different teaching styles and instructional communication. They also cope with a range of relationships, learning social rules and how to relate to each other, developing friendships and other demands. Each part of this, from being aware of their own disposition to navigating the school day, as well as tasks of scheduling and interacting with a range of people in changing environments, is challenging.

It is important to consider how a school's ethos, structures, plans, people, roles and approaches support pupils. Schools should provide an environment that promotes EHWB. Schools should consider how the functioning of our school systems and communication support pupils to navigate their day and develop SEL competencies with as much independence as possible.

Understanding vulnerability through an intersectional lens

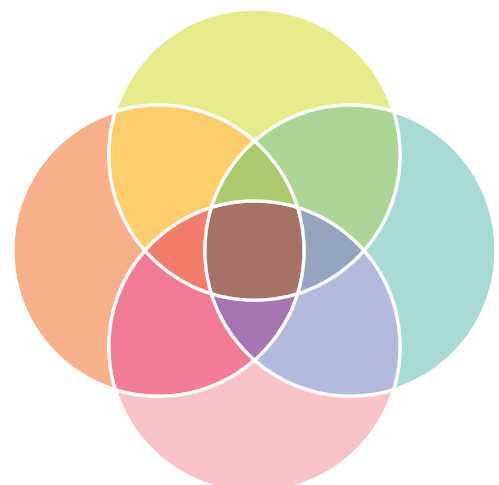
Some children and young people are more vulnerable and at risk of developing mental health problems than others. One of the main areas of risk to young people's mental health is having SEN. The post-primary guidance (pages 5–8) also identifies and discusses several other areas of risk, including:

- gender and age;
- sexual orientation;
- gender identity;
- living in poverty or deprived areas;
- internet and social media;
- transition from primary to post-primary;
- experience of trauma and/or adverse childhood experiences; and
- the impact of COVID-19.

Pupils with special educational needs may experience multiple vulnerabilities. Many pupils' lives may be affected by one or several of the areas of risk referred to above. All these factors are at play in real time and affect a young person's wellbeing and readiness to engage in learning.

Intersectionality describes how multiple, interconnected and interlocking systems can affect individuals. Teachers should consider what might marginalise pupils such as physical ability, gender, race, class or sexual orientation.

Intersectionality has been used as an analytical framework for understanding how an individual's identities, particularly social and political, combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. It is helpful to support thinking in this area². Considered in relation to vulnerabilities, an intersectional analysis focuses on subjective experiences within a holistic framework. This help us to acknowledge, understand and apply an individual whole-child-centred approach, as well as appreciate factors operating within systems around the child.



² Bešić, E. (2020), [Intersectionality: A pathway towards inclusive education?](#) *Prospects* 49, 111–122.



Teachers leading on EHWB need to consider the intersection of multiple potential vulnerabilities that can influence a young person. These may include:

- learning needs as identified in their Statement of Special Educational Needs; teachers will also need to be aware of how a pupil's primary learning need, for example communication needs, anxiety or social skills, influences their emotional health and wellbeing;
- medical or health-related needs, detailed on their Health Care Plans, that teachers may need to consider as either:
 - a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and associated learning needs identified in their Statement of Special Educational Needs; or
 - meriting consideration for support for EHWB, which are detailed on the pupil's Health Care Plan and recorded on SIMS as a medical need; for example, a pupil with diabetes will need daily flexibility as they manage their diabetes and may experience more absence due to appointments. In managing their diabetes, this pupil is already presenting with SEL competencies, but teachers need to give extra consideration to the additional responsibility this pupil has and how that presents;
- additional vulnerabilities that may be contextual or historical, for example early childhood or past experiences, or ongoing such as involvement of social services or family support;
- anything that may influence a young person in the current context, for example issues within a friendship or year group, events in the community, risk of exploitation or anxiety about other news events or information; or
- what influences a young person on any given day, for example something happening at home, a trigger or a change in the school day.

It is also appropriate to consider what a young person's everyday-life experience may be. All pupils, including those with SEN, need to know, recognise and understand what is generally considered to be healthy and stable experiences of positive emotional health and wellbeing and healthy relationships. Pupils affected by trauma or adverse childhood experiences may have a different, perhaps distorted, perception of positive emotional health and wellbeing. However, pupils can only work from the place where they are. For some young people, during or after experiencing trauma, moving from a baseline position to a healthy, positive place may take years.

Reflection/Action

Understanding vulnerability through an intersectional lens

This reflection helps you to undertake an intersectional analysis of a pupil's needs and the support they require. Use these questions to reflect on a pupil with special educational needs who also requires, or required, support for their emotional health and wellbeing.

Pupil's personal SEL journey:

- What are the pupil's special educational needs or medical needs? Are primary and secondary needs detailed on their Statement of SEN, Health Care Plan or Personal Learning Plan?
- How do the pupil's learning needs influence their emotional regulation and readiness for learning?
- What are the pupil's strengths, character traits, abilities and interests?
- What are the pupil's strengths in terms of their awareness of their learning needs and how they approach and manage these?



Additional vulnerabilities:

- Are there other vulnerabilities that may influence this pupil?
- How do you know or not know? Has this pupil mentioned anything? Is there information in the pupil's statement or pastoral record? If you don't know, how might you find out?

How is the situation for the pupil currently?

- Are there issues going on within the year group or friendship groups that are affecting this pupil?
- Is there anything in the local community or the news that is likely to be causing stress or concern for the pupil?
- What supports and strategies are in place to help this pupil communicate any needs or concerns?

Pupil's day-to-day experience:

- Are there any single incidents or patterns of experiences in school, for example a change in the school day that causes difficulty for the pupil? A transition from home to school?



Section 2: Planning for daily support for emotional health and wellbeing experiences of pupils with SEN

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The Post-Primary Whole-School EHWP Guidance has been written in conjunction with guidance on developing a whole-school approach to social and emotional learning (SEL). Planning and implementing support for social and emotional learning is one of the main ways schools can promote pupils’ emotional health and wellbeing.³

SEL recognises that pupils learn in a social context: in the company of others, in school with their teachers and peers, at home with the encouragement of family members, as well as when they are alone with time to think and reflect. Learning is also affected by their emotional state. Pupils need opportunities to understand their current emotional state and how this may be affecting their learning. If they are content and calm, they are more able to engage with their learning; if they are stressed or worried, their readiness for learning will diminish. Pupils’ motivation, commitment, success and achievement in learning can be affected by their social relationships with others and their own emotions⁴.

This guidance focuses on how the school, as a social context, is helping pupils with SEN to understand, appreciate and manage their own EHWP. Teachers, including form tutors, learning support co-ordinators and subject teachers, play a crucial role in developing strategies and structures that help pupils with SEN to understand and manage their own EHWP.

The CCEA SEL Competency Framework⁵ outlines five SEL competencies:

- self-awareness;
- self-management;
- social awareness;
- relationship skills; and
- responsible decision making.

Based on the CASEL model⁶, many of the terms and language used in the competencies align to the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

SEL Self-Awareness	SEL Self-Management	SEL Social Awareness
Identifying emotions	Impulse control	Understanding emotions
Accurate self-perception	Stress management	Empathy/Sympathy
Recognising strengths	Self-discipline	Appreciating diversity
Self-confidence	Self-motivation	Respect for others
Self-efficacy	Goal setting	
	Organisational Skills	

³ CCEA (2021:3), Post-Primary Guidance on Developing a Whole-Child, Whole-School, Whole-Community Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing

⁴ CCEA (2021:3), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Post-Primary Guidance

⁵ Ibid p. 6–7

⁶ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [What Is the CASEL Framework? – CASEL](#)

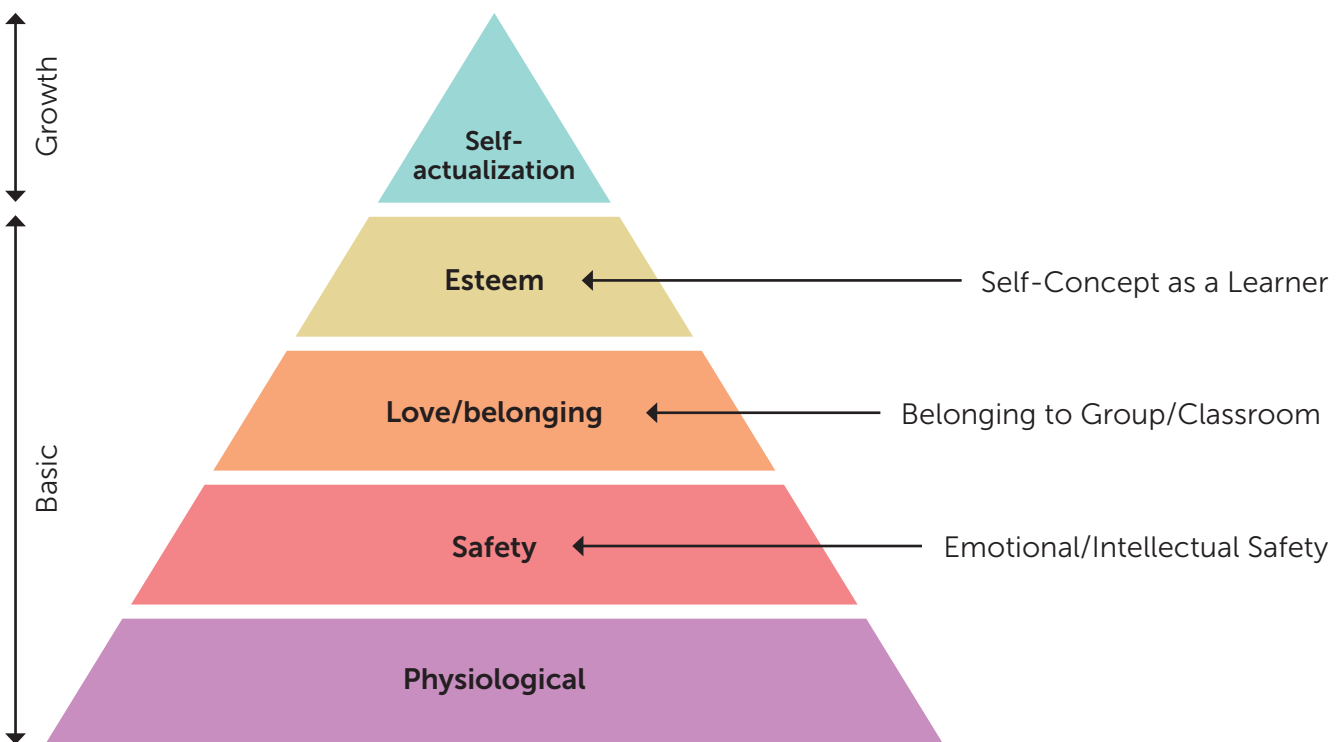


SEL Relationship Skills	SEL Responsible Decision-Making
Communication	Identifying problems
Social Engagement	Analysing solutions
Relationship Building	Solving problems
Teamwork	Evaluating
	Reflecting
	Ethical responsibility

Reflection/Action

How can teachers support pupils’ readiness for learning?

Most teachers will be familiar with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. It contends that children cannot learn and develop until their basic needs have been met. These ideas permeate our daily class contexts. To meet pupils’ basic needs, many schools now have breakfast clubs and pupils have water bottles to avoid dehydration. Although the expectation that teachers will meet every need in unrealistic, it is worth considering how practice best supports the needs that pupils have in class.



Based on image from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MaslowsHierarchyOfNeeds.svg>



Reflection/Action

How does Maslow's hierarchy and the interpretation given above tally with the main considerations outlined in Section 1 of this guidance?

Safety

A young person who feels safe is more likely to have a greater sense of EHWB.

Personal SEL Journey

Each pupil has a personal SEL journey based on their own character, needs and life experiences.

Communication

Pupils communicate their needs in different ways. We need to be receptive to this and proactively communicate with them.

Schools as social places

Schools are social places whose ethos, structures, plans, people, roles and approaches all offer opportunities for pupils to develop SEL competencies.

Understanding the intersectional nature of vulnerability

Some pupils may experience multiple vulnerabilities in addition to learning needs. All these factors are at play in real time and affect a young person's wellbeing and readiness to engage in learning.

What does safety mean to some of the pupils with SEN you teach?

Do you agree with the idea that a pupil's learning is compromised if certain needs, including EHWB needs, are not met?

If so, in what ways do you see this played out in your classroom?

How is learning compromised if these needs are not met?

Do you notice any differences that pupils with SEN experience in readiness for learning? Are these obvious?

How familiar are you with strategies your school has put in place to support the EHWB needs of SEN pupils?

If these supports weren't in place, how would it change those pupils' engagement with learning?

What should the teacher's role be?

What do you do in your own practice that you feel makes a difference?

What is in your personal toolkit of strategies to support pupils' EHWB? For example: check-in at start and end of lesson or calming music.



How do strategies in place model and support development of SEL competencies?

As pupils engage with school and progress through many transitions during their school day, the centralised support and strategies for pupil wellbeing, put in place at a leadership level, can influence their experience across subject lessons and affect their wider experience of school. Middle leaders, such as SENCOs and Heads of Year or teachers with responsibility for pastoral care, can collaboratively put strategies in place that support the wellbeing of pupils with SEN and provide individual supports where required.

The questions below help SENCOs or heads of year responsible for pastoral care to consider how the support they provide for the diverse needs of individual pupils with SEN in mainstream settings models each of the five competencies.

Please use these questions to enhance your thinking and considerations in this area. Note that some questions may be more relevant to individual school context than others.

Reflection/Action

How do the structures and supports we are putting in place for pupils with SEN or EHWP needs let children experience and develop skills in the five competencies?

Self-awareness

- How does a pupil with SEN identify and, if necessary, share how they feel and how this might affect them or their learning during the day?
- What structures, for example daily check-in, are in place to support pupils' emotional literacy?
- In what ways does the school support pupils to have the confidence to articulate and take steps to meet their own needs in response to their self-awareness?
- How do we acknowledge emotional self-regulation? How do we support pupils to acknowledge that they are developing self-awareness and have managed themselves well? How can we encourage them to build on this?

Self-management

- What options and supports, such as opportunities for daily check-in or agreed use of time-out cards, are in place for pupils to manage their EHWP needs?
- How does scheduling and the structure of the school day support pupils? For example, are there dedicated drop-in times and places where a teacher or learning support staff are available?
- Do teachers trust pupils to use their own judgement and have the self-discipline to access breaks, time-outs or other strategies to support emotional regulation? How is this agreed and how are all teachers made aware?
- Is there a nurture room or agreed safe space a pupil can access when feeling overwhelmed?
- How do teachers collaborate with pupils to reflect on and review their individual supports, as well as goal setting for ongoing self-management? How is feedback gathered?
- Does self-management form part of their Support Plan? Are the parallels between a pupil's EHWP needs and supportive strategies documented in their Personal Learning Plan (PLP)?
- In what ways are targets and goal setting for learning and emotional regulation and self-management planned and reviewed?
- Are strategies and supports developed through a process of co-design, involving pupils and parents? How does this take place?



Social awareness

- How is emotional literacy taught in school? How does this approach ensure that pupils with EHWP or special educational needs can fully access the curriculum?
- How do pupils develop understanding of what a good example of emotional health and wellbeing is? Do they have opportunities to reflect on this?
- Is diversity of social presentation understood and respected? For example, are neurotypical and neurodivergent presentations respected?
- Do staff have a clear understanding of the presentation needs and challenges of a young person with autism? Do they understand that the presentation of autism is very individual, that there is not a checklist and that adults need to actively get to know and understand the pupil?
- What actions has the school put in place to ensure all staff and pupils are taught about social presentation?
- How are staff informed of or supported to know the needs of individual pupils that they may only teach for a couple of periods a week?
- How are all pupils taught how to understand, respect and respond to difference? How do pupils develop understanding, empathy and awareness of the affect their actions and words can have on others? How does this feed into school policy such as equality, diversity or anti-bullying? How does the school embrace diversity and promote inclusion?

Relationship skills

- Do staff use and model effective communication with each other and pupils? How do you know? What arrangements are in place to encourage reflection about this?
- Do we build relationships with pupils which give them the confidence and consistency that they need, can expect and rely on? What evidence is there for this?
- What provision is made for developing understanding, awareness and support among peers?
- Is supporting pupils' EHWP needs a team effort? If so, how do we show the impact of this?
- When relationships break down, what reparation processes, for example restorative approaches to conflict or post-incident learning (PIL), are in place?

Responsible decision making

- How do we work with pupils to identify progress, review difficulties and anticipate new situations and change?
- Is the reflection and evaluation of the support put in place for pupils a shared process? What evidence is there for this?
- How are pupils supported to develop awareness and skills for experiences outside of school? Emotional health and wellbeing spans all these spaces and experiences.



Social, Behavioural and Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW)

Evolving discourse finds it is worth considering the distinction between emotional health and wellbeing and specific social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs.

Everyone has emotional health and wellbeing needs. These are felt, accentuated in relation to varied factors and, for the most part, self-managed. Recently, there has been increased emphasis on ways to support our own wellbeing, for example through mindfulness or recognising the value of spending time outdoors.

The Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework, alongside Whole-School and SEL guidance, demonstrates the need for approaches to wellbeing to be mainstream in the educational setting. Many schools already use the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing approach – Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Give – developed by the Public Health Agency. They provide a simple evidence-based model for designing, building and maintaining a whole-school ethos that actively supports Social Behaviour and Emotional Wellbeing. This additional guidance further recognises the need for supporting the EHWPB needs of pupils with SEN who are learning within mainstream education settings.

However, it is also important to recognise that Social, Behavioural and Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW) is an identified special educational need. For some pupils, SBEW may be the primary need. Under the reclassification of SEN categories in the revised Code of Practice, Social, Behavioural and Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW) replaced the previous Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), highlighting a wider understanding and emphasising the fundamental importance of children's emotional health and wellbeing and its inextricably important link to behaviour. It is therefore understandable that some pupils will, for various reasons, develop notable presentations of behaviour for which a school may require specialist support.

The SEN Code of Practice enables schools, in collaboration with the pupil and parent or carer, internal EA services and external agencies, as appropriate, to develop a tailored individual support plan such as a Personal Learning Plan or Individual Behaviour Plan (PLP/IEP). The aim is to reduce or remove barriers to learning and support a young person's social and emotional development, taking into account any additional medical and care needs, where appropriate.

The EA Post-Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions service takes referrals with an emphasis on working to develop in-school support for pupils with social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs through a range of interventions, including pupil observation, assessment of need, consultation with the school and behaviour coaching support. Targeted advice, including a telephone helpline and staff training, is offered in line with strategies the school develops and actions at the relevant stage of the SEN Framework.

[Post-Primary Behaviour Support & Provisions | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://eani.org.uk)
[PPBSP SEN Resource File pdf.](#)



SEN Framework and Personal Learning Plans

The SEN Framework offers a responsive SEN and Inclusion Framework for children. It focuses on listening to the views of the child and on children, young people and parents taking part in decision making. A Personal Learning Plan (PLP) is statutory for every pupil identified as having SEN. A PLP is the main planning document for those pupils, focusing on building their access to the curriculum. It provides:

- an ongoing record of special education provision that a pupil with SEN receives, additional to or different from whole-school educational provision; and
- a practical working document that should be meaningful and accessible to all those teaching and support staff working with the pupil.

A PLP should include information about the pupil with special educational needs' specific learning difficulty (and, if relevant, their disability) and how it affects them in school. A PLP is an important place to identify ways in which a pupil's SEN relates to their EHWP needs, for example anxiety or the need for supports such as time-out or sensory input, as well as outlining strategies and provision that have been developed with the pupil.

Seeking the views of the child guidance that accompanies the SEND Framework emphasises 'supporting pupils to participate in making decisions which can enable them to manage their own educational experience'. Parallel to this is a need for pupils to be proactive in developing self-led ways of managing their own EHWP, so they are ready to learn and access the curriculum.

Guidance states that pupils need support and should have opportunities to increase their levels of responsibility and express their views. This can happen when schools:

- have a respectful ethos in which all staff are committed to working in partnership with pupils to seek their views and develop their ability to participate in making independent decisions;
- recognise that pupils with SEN can make a unique contribution and should be given the resources, training and opportunities to develop skills to express their views confidently on managing their SEN; and
- appreciate that pupils with SEN have a responsibility to engage in this process to shape their own learning and personal wellbeing so they can reduce their reliance on others.

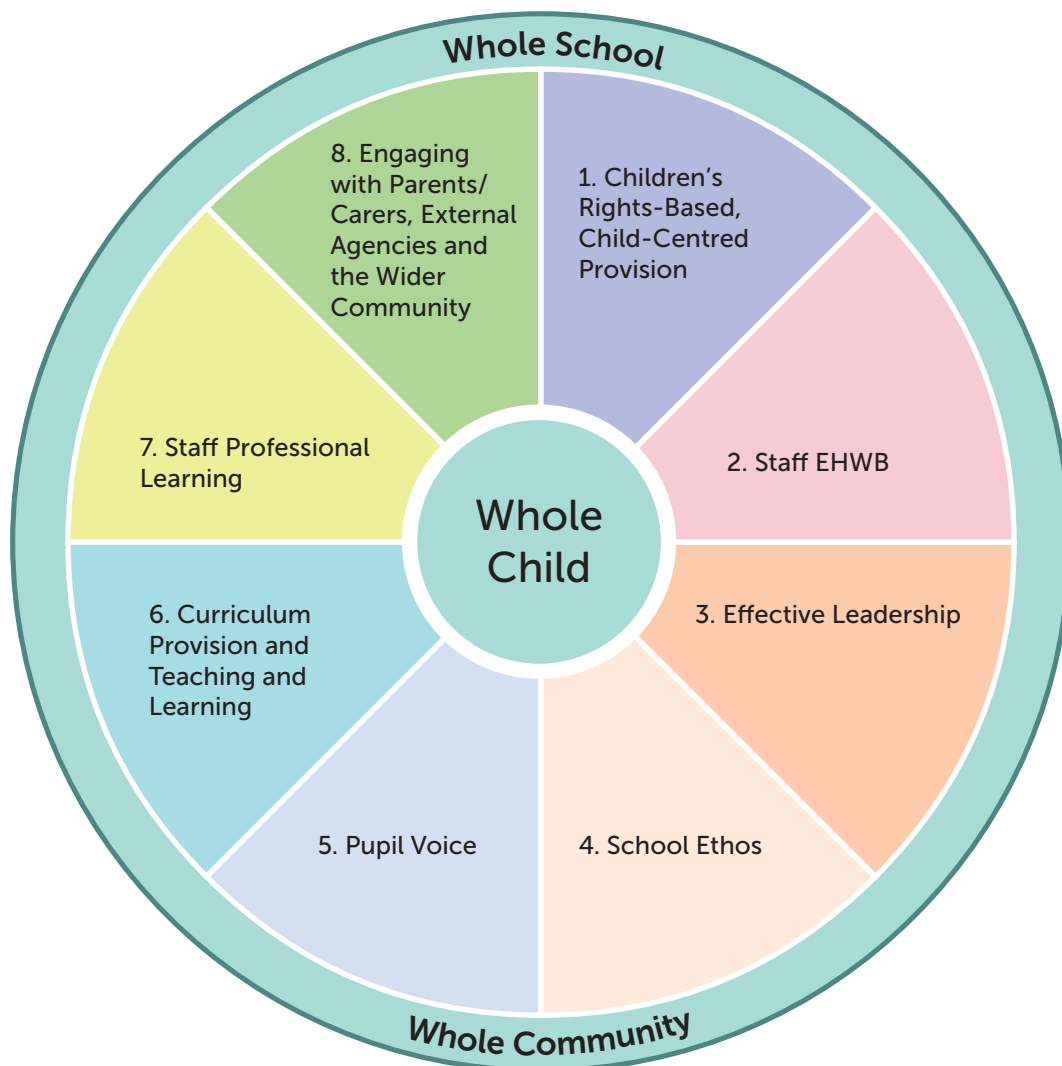
Reflection/Action

- How effectively does our school's Personal Learning Plan proforma support an individual pupil's EHWP needs?
- To what extent is EHWP consideration integral to the planning and review processes for pupil PLPs?
- The primary purpose of the PLP is to focus on the interventions or supports in place for a pupil and to record and monitor progress. If one strategy is especially relevant for that pupil, how are interventions that support a pupil's EHWP recorded on the PLP?



Section 3: Planning and Evaluation

This additional guidance offers a narrative to fully consider the EHWB needs of pupils with SEN. Any planning, evaluation and action process should sit within the wider whole-school approach to EHWB. The whole-school EHWB guidance comprehensively details eight principles of a whole-school EHWB approach, (page 13) as well as key points for effective practice for each principle (pages 32–40).

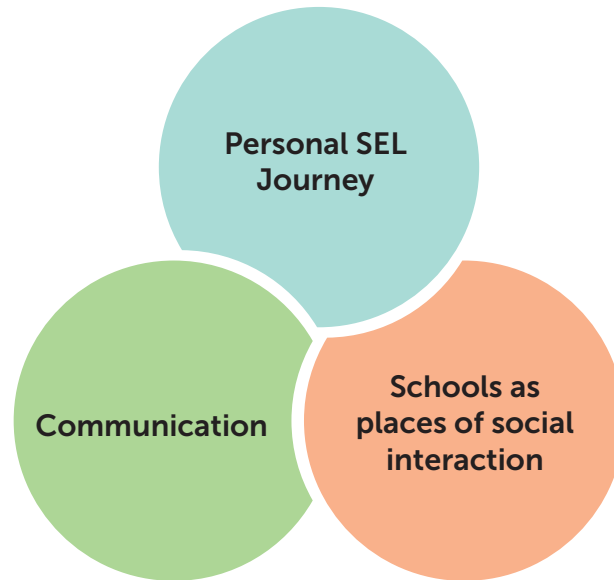


This section provides reflection questions, organised around the three overarching considerations referred to earlier:

- a pupil's personal SEL journey;
- communication; and
- the school as a social place.



Each question has a number in brackets to connect it to the eight principles of whole-school EHWB planning. Although all the eight principles are relevant to this guidance, the principles of Children's Rights-Based, Child-Centred Provision and Pupil Voice are integral to support for SEN pupils' EHWB needs.



Reflection/Action:

How do our school systems and communication support pupils to navigate their day and develop SEL competencies with as much independence as possible?

Personal SEL journey

- How are the EHWB needs of pupils with SEN identified and recorded? How do these processes serve the individual needs of the pupil and planning or record keeping? (1, 5, 6, 8)
- Do staff members have a responsibility for supporting individual pupil SEN or EHWB needs? How is this decided? Do identified staff reflect the year group, SEN and pastoral structure of the school? (3, 4)
- How are pupils involved in articulating their needs and identifying and developing strategies that support them? (1, 5)
- How are strategies that were developed in a pupil's primary school experience maintained and developed at post-primary? (1, 5, 8)
- How is a working understanding of the pupil's needs and strategies in place shared between all staff who teach and have responsibility for the pupil? (6, 7)



Communication

- What communication strategies best suit individual pupils? For example, do some pupils prefer to have one-to-one time with a pastoral teacher on a regular basis? Or is there a space and time for pupils to talk with teachers on their own terms? (1, 5)
- How approachable are staff? (3, 4)
- Are verbal, visual or unobtrusive communication strategies, such as personalised time-out passes, support so a pupil does not need to speak about EHWP in front of peers or safe place stickers, available and used effectively? (1, 6, 7)
- Is communication a two-way process? Are there any gaps in communication? (5, 8)
- When strategies are put in place for individual pupils, how are these communicated to and understood by all that pupil's teachers? (1, 5, 6)
- How does communication with parents and carers take place? (8)
- How is relevant or sensitive information about a pupil's EHWP needs shared and recorded? (3, 6, 7, 8)

Schools as social places

- How does the school model and support the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils with SEN? (2, 3, 4)
- Are all teachers aware of and active in their role of modelling practices that support EHWP? How do you ensure that your own EHWP does not negatively affect the pupils you teach? (2, 3, 4)
- Are supports in place for pupils with EHWP needs and SEN to check-in daily to have ownership of their own emotional regulation? (1, 5, 6)
- How can a pupil access immediate help, if needed? (1, 5)
- How are pupils made aware of and supported in case of changes such as change of routine or venue, transitions or a sudden change experienced by a pupil? (1, 3)
- Does the physical and visual space support pupil wellbeing, for example do pupils know where they can go to find help, a quiet place if they need some time out or to access time-out passes? (1, 4, 5)
- How are teachers supported to have time to have purposeful conversations to support shared evaluation and planning for the EHWP needs of pupils with SEN? (6, 7)
- How effectively does our school use partnership working opportunities to support good practice and extend opportunities for pupils with SEN? (8)



Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework

Schools use the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF) to support evaluation and action-planning processes. Developed by ETI, the framework is designed to enable organisations, teams or individuals to start or continue the process of self-reflection. This leads to improvement and encourages a holistic approach to self-evaluation.

Questions have been developed for each phase of education, enabling staff to have in-depth professional discussions about specific aspects within the framework. The questions cover characteristics of effective practice and self-evaluation for three main areas:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of provision; and
- leadership and management.

Considerations of care and welfare, and safeguarding are also integral to the framework.

The reflection questions in the ISEF cater for the widest scope of the functions and services a school provides. The reflection questions in this guidance will support teachers to consider the details of EHWP support for pupils with SEN and identify how specific actions feed into a school's wider development journey.

The questions below come from ISEF: [Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Post-Primary](#). They can help you plan and evaluate the EHWP needs of pupils with SEN.

Outcomes for learners

Page 4: Standards attained

How do we know that the pupils with special educational needs in our school achieve the highest possible standards of work and learning?

Page 5: Progression

How do we ensure that the interventions we implement for individual pupils' impact positively on the progress in learning they make?

Page 6: Wider skills and dispositions or capabilities

- How do we provide sufficient opportunities, across the curriculum, for pupils to develop their wider skills, capabilities and dispositions further?
- How do we ensure that the confidence, self-esteem, self-awareness and sense of responsibility of pupils are developed sufficiently?
- How do we ensure that all pupils are developing intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, morally and spiritually?

Page 8: Quality of provision

Effectiveness of guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences

- How do we promote the welfare of the pupils and staff and meet the needs of all pupils in the school?
- To what extent do we implement a comprehensive range of policies that align with current DE guidance and best practice and best meet the needs of pupils, including appropriate access to internal and external services?



- How do we ensure a high quality, taught pastoral programme that meets the pupils' social, emotional and cognitive needs?
- How well and at what stage do we appropriately identify any special educational needs of pupils and provide clear and agreed education plans that will progress their learning and be enacted by all staff?

Page 14: Care and welfare

- How do we know that we provide a safe and secure environment for all members of the school community?
- How do we ensure that relationships are mutually respectful, open and trusting?
- How do we ensure that all pupils are receiving the support needed to overcome potential barriers to learning?
- How do we ensure that the personal development and preventative education curriculum is effective, flexible and responsive to the needs of pupils?

Signposting

The guidance invites teachers to consider the needs and provisions for pupils with SEN within overall EHWP planning. In recognising that the needs of individual pupils with SEN in mainstream settings are diverse, this section includes initial signposting to Education Authority services for different SEN and EHWP needs, as well as external organisations.

The Education Authority has dedicated teams that provide advice, support and training for the needs of groups or individual pupils. The services provided by EA are outlined in:

Statutory Services

EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision has information about all support services for different needs.

Education Authority

[Autism Advisory and Intervention Service \(AAIS\)](#)

[Behaviour Support and Provisions \(BS&P\)](#)

[Child Protection and Safeguarding Service \(CPSS\)](#)

[Educational Psychology Service](#)

[Language and Communication Service](#)

[Nurture Advisory and Support Service \(NASS\)](#)

[Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) Inclusion Service](#)

[Independent Counselling Service for Schools \(ICSS\)](#)

[Intercultural Education Service \(IES\)](#)

[Education Welfare Service](#)

CCEA

[CCEA Wellbeing Hub](#)



External Organisations

Many external organisations have specialist expertise in specific areas of SEN, and other vulnerability and risk areas. They offer specialist advice, often tailored to individual circumstances.

Autism

www.autismni.org

www.autism.org.uk

www.middletonautism.com

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Rainbow Project is a health organisation that works to improve the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ people and their families in Northern Ireland:

www.rainbow-project.org

Online safety

Educating, advising and engaging to improve safeguarding to keep children and young people safe: www.safeguardingni.org

Sexual trauma

A charity supporting people affected by sexual trauma: www.nexusni.org

LGBTQ+

Support Acceptance Information Learning: www.sailni.com

A portal for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people: www.lgbtqi.org

Young Carers

Improving life for children in the UK: www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Young adults leaving the care system

Voice of Young People in Care: www.voypic.org

Children and young people's rights, voice and participation

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People: www.niccy.org

Improving the prospects, health and wellbeing of young people: www.youthaction.org

Children's Law Centre: www.childrenslawcentre.org.uk

Bereavement

Cruse Bereavement Support for children and young people who have experienced bereavement: www.cruse.org.uk

School Health Services

[Belfast Health and Social Care Trust](#)

[Northern Health and Social Care Trust](#)

[South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust](#)

[Western Health and Social Care Trust](#)

[Southern Health and Social Care Trust](#)



Wellness

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership youth wellness web:

<https://cypsp.hscni.net/youth-wellness-web/>

Mental Health

Barnardo's offers a range of services across Northern Ireland, working broadly on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, care journeys, child sexual exploitation and supporting refugees: www.barnardos.org.uk/northernireland

Mentally healthy schools:

www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/mentally-healthy-schools/

MindEd Hub is an educational resource on children, young people, adult and older people's mental health: www.minded.org.uk/

Pure Mental is a youth-led charity campaigning for mental health education and early intervention in primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland: www.puremental.org/

References

Bešić, E. [Intersectionality: A pathway towards inclusive education?](#) *Prospects* 49, 111–122 (2020).

