

From The Nurturing Schools Network and Family Links.

What should our schools be focusing on in order to prepare young people for the future?

School staff and school policies should be focused on developing not only the academic areas of their children's education but equally their children's social and emotional literacy.

Embedding key aspects of social and emotional health into their own practice, specifically teaching children skills such as empathy and resilience and modelling this for the children in their care, creates a secure emotional platform from which children can fulfil their potential.

Key knowledge and skill includes

- Giving effective praise.
Schools should be encouraged to understand what effective praise is and why it is important. Praise should be specific and focus on process and progress, rather than on 'innate' skills, this type of praise encourages a Growth mindset and aids children in developing their resilience to challenges and a problem solving attitude.
- Pupils should be encouraged to take responsibility for the outcomes of their choices and develop strategies for understanding cause and effects.
Having clear and appropriate consequences for choosing not to abide by the class/school agreements helps students understand the impact of the choices they are making and develop a sense of responsibility as well as agency that will support good decision making into adulthood.
- Developing the skill of responding with empathy to difficult feelings whilst maintaining clear boundaries about the behaviour. Responding with empathy strengthens the relationships, and enhances students' ability to name their own feelings and self-regulate, reducing the likelihood of these feelings leading to problematic internalising or externalising behaviours.

Should schools play a role in developing skills, or should subject knowledge be prioritised?

Social and emotional skills should be developed in conjunction with subject knowledge. It is not a case of either or. The research by Katherine Weare below, as well as many other examples, show a clear correlation with emotional health and the ability of children to be successful in school and in adulthood.

Professor Katherine Weare, Emeritus Professor at the University of Southampton.

It can be tempting for schools under pressure to see work to promote wellbeing and address mental health problems as a luxury or optional extra. This however runs contrary to the strong evidence on the links between well-being, learning and school improvement, evidence which has recently been brought together by Public Health England.

Some indicative evidence from this briefing confirms:

- *Children with greater well-being, lower levels of mental health problems and greater emotional attachment to school achieve higher grade scores, better examination results, better attendance and drop out less often*
 - *Social and emotional skills are a more significant determinant of academic attainment than IQ.*
 - *The strong correlation between the quality of PSHE in a school and the school's overall effectiveness.*
- Schools can be confident that a focus on well-being and mental health not only enables them to provide healthy and happy school environments for pupils and staff and prepare the citizens of tomorrow with sound*

character and values, but also directly supports their more immediate mission: the promotion of effective learning.

(What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools? Partnership for Well-being and Mental Health in Schools 2015)

Gutman & Schoon 2013 in their review, "The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people" state that non-cognitive skills are associated with positive outcomes for young people, according to a large body of research. Factors such as self-control and school engagement are correlated with academic outcomes, financial stability in adulthood, and reduced crime. Within school, effective teaching, the school environment, and social and emotional learning programmes (SEL) can play an important role in developing key non-cognitive skills.