Teach First

Educating the Whole Child

Research Insights, 2023

Contents

Introduction 3
Executive Summary 4
What is Whole Child Development? 5
Why does it matter? 5
The Initial Research 6
Challenges 6
Theoretical frameworks for Whole Child Development 7
The four key principles 9
School level impact 13
Supporting teachers 17
Teach First and Whole Child Development 18
Programme development 18
Policy influence 20
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion 20
Conclusion 21
References 22

Introduction

We believe that every child deserves a fair education. We work every day with school leaders and teachers who are fighting to give every child the chances they deserve.

We are thankful to Porticus for the generous support they have provided us with since 2013. In 2019, we joined the IntegratED partnership set up by Porticus with the aim of embedding a holistic whole-child development approach within our education system. The partnership is working to reduce preventable exclusions and improve education, with each partner organisation focusing on an element related to their core business.

This remains very much work in progress, responding to the needs of schools and leaders as well as the challenges facing the education sector more widely.

This Research Insights report is designed for us to share what we have learnt about whole child development and its implications for teachers, leaders and those working across the education sector. It outlines both the underlying research and how we've sought to embed the principles of whole child development we have identified in our programmes. We hope it will inspire other training providers and schools to do likewise, and to similarly share what they learn through the process, catalysing dialogue across the sector about whole child development: what it is, why it's important, and how we can train teachers and leaders in ways that enable them to develop the whole child.

Executive Summary

Our initial research into Whole child Development (WCD) quicky led us to the conclusion that embedding a core set of principles within our teacher and leadership programmes would have the deepest and longest lasting impact on the social, emotional, academic and non-cognitive outcomes of young people. We have begun to develop a systematic approach to raising awareness and understanding internally, and to investigate the best ways to embed what we have learnt into our programmes.

In early 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant disruption to life and to schools. The long-term impact of the pandemic is yet to be quantified, but there is evidence that for many, particularly the most disadvantaged, the impact has been significant and negative (The Prince's Trust, 2022). The increased concern for pupil wellbeing alongside the persistent attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged pupils (Farquharson et al., 2022), has raised awareness of the importance of WCD approaches.

To summarise, the research showed significant and increasing evidence of the importance of a whole child approach to improving outcomes for children at school. Whilst there is no single agreed definition of WCD, we identified four key principles: cognitive, physical, social and emotional. These four facets of development, and wellbeing, are interconnected and each play an important role not only in determining positive outcomes for children and young people in education, but for the future adult life.

The links between physical wellbeing and positive mental health are well known and have been shown to improve academic outcomes (Public Health England, 2014). Emotional development is a central component of self-regulation, linked to our self-esteem and to the ability to learn and thrive (Muijs & Bokhove, 2020). Cognitive development is not synonymous with academic skills, but is about approaches to thinking, problem-solving and memory (Goswami, 2015). Metacognition contributes to an individual's ability to make decisions and to think critically about situations (Muijs & Bokhove, 2020; Whitebread et al., 2016).

What is Whole Child Development?

There is no single or straightforward definition of whole child development (WCD), but it is increasingly becoming an important element of education. Whilst there is general agreement regarding the importance of addressing more than just the traditional academic element of pupils' learning, there is less consensus around which other facets of pupils' development schools can affect and how. A huge range of terms has been used to describe aspects of whole child development in policy, research and practice. For example, social-emotional learning, non-cognitive skills, life skills, employability, and mindsets. This complicates both research activity and awareness-raising across the education sector and fails to capture the complexity of WCD.

Instead of seeking to build consensus around a definition of WCD, we believe it is more important to define the component parts of WCD, and how schools can develop their pupils holistically. We identified four major categories of development and wellbeing: physical, emotional (intrapersonal), social (interpersonal), and cognitive. We believe that these four categories encapsulate the areas in which teachers and schools can have the most impact on pupils.

By raising awareness of these principles and how they might influence the education system, and by embedding a whole child 'lens' into our programmes, we hope to support teachers and leaders to ensure every child has a positive outcome from school.

Why does it matter?

A whole child approach considers every aspect of a child's development and wellbeing as important: physical, cognitive, social and emotional. It also acknowledges that these facets are interdependent. There is significant and increasing evidence that a whole child approach can improve outcomes for children at school. This is because we cannot separate out physical and mental health and development. Success at school, and beyond, is not simply determined by grades, but by our ability to form relationships with others and to manage our own emotions and behaviours.

The attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged peers is widening (Farquharson et al., 2022). We are also seeing increasing reports of heightened anxiety and mental health challenges in children and young people, challenges which we know affect their experience of school and beyond into adult life (Crenna-Jennings, 2021).

Pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) not only attain less well on average at school in academic terms, but they are also more likely to suffer from poor mental and physical health (Farquharson et al., 2022). The disruption caused by the COVID pandemic has affected disadvantaged pupils far more than their non-disadvantaged peers. Almost 50% of disadvantaged pupils in years 10 and 11 have missed at least 10% of sessions compared to just 35% of their non-disadvantaged peers.[1]

If we want children to succeed, and if we want all children to have a fair education, then we need to consider their outcomes as a whole.

[1] https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2021/12/exploring-persistent-absence/ [accessed 12/12/2022]

The Initial Research

Challenges

Research on such an expansive (and popular) topic is not without its challenges. Education research, in general, can be tricky; studying teaching and learning is very different than conducting experiments in a laboratory environment. Further, discussions around a whole child approach in education have been occurring for quite some time, creating a robust, if sometimes confusing, body of literature.

The challenges in researching this topic primarily fall into five categories:

1. **Varying definitions and terminology in the field**

There is a wide range of 'camps' related to whole child development, each with its own vocabulary and nuanced definitions of the whole child approach. This complicates not only research activity but also the ease with which we can discern significant and relevant studies in this field. Language is important in the consistent communication and transparency of meaning. An important first step is acknowledging and being aware of the range of vocabulary associated with WCD, with the next step being to work towards language that is shared and consistent across disciplines and areas of activity.

2. **Assignment of value to immeasurable variables**

Related to the 'terminological menagerie' of WCD, the research around the topic has been complicated by the assignment of meaning and value to personality traits and dispositions, as well as to concrete, developmental, and teachable skills and competencies. As Jones and colleagues conclude, 'these types of constructs become viewed as interchangeable' (Jones et al., 2019). This has diluted the impact that existing research has had on classrooms and schools.

3. **Lack of effective measurement**

As a result of many of the aforementioned challenges, there is a lack of consistently used, reliable and valid evaluation tools for measuring elements of WCD. 'Despite this preponderance of evidence supporting the need to foster young children's positive social and emotional development, the development of psychometrically valid measures that are aligned for use within assessment and accountability systems has lagged' (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016:2).

4. **'Messiness' of schools and classrooms**

Educational research centred on understanding the impact of teaching or training programmes on teachers' and students' learning, cannot always manipulate (at least ethically) or control for all variables that are associated with pupils' whole child outcomes. There are often changes in the population, and processes that are reasonable control. Consequently, research on the effectiveness or interventions/ teaching on child development, is challenging.

5. **Lack of empirical evidence – primarily correlational effects**

Further to the previous point, many studies produce only correlational data. Empirical evidence is scarce as direct causal effects are difficult to ascertain. Moreover, even causal relationships cannot be considered deterministic due to the malleability of constructs.

Theoretical frameworks for Whole Child Development

There are a number of established frameworks that have had an influence on the understanding and implementation of whole child approaches.

Several have adopted similar approaches to the concept of whole child development. Among these are:

- the Whole Child Initiative developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- the SHANARRI framework (the wellbeing component of Scotland's Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) initiative)
- research from the Learning Policy Institute and UNESCO
- Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

ASCD launched its Whole Child Initiative in an 'effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children'. It focuses its definition around 5 key tenets:

1. Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle;
2. Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults;
3. Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community;
4. Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults;
5. Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment (ASCD, 2012).

The SHANARRI framework

This is an aspect of Scotland's Getting it Right for Every Child policy which highlights the importance of wellbeing.

The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected and can realise their full potential.

Eight factors, often referred to by their initial letters – SHANARRI[2] – are the wellbeing indicators intended to make it easier to discuss any need for support:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Achieving
- Nurtured
- Active
- Respected
- Responsible
- Included

Learning Policy Institute

Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey provide a learning science perspective on what it means to teach to the 'whole child':

A whole child approach to education is premised on the fact that children's learning depends on the combination of instructional, relational, and environmental factors the child experiences, along with the cognitive, social, and emotional processes that influence one another as they shape the child's growth and development. Although our society and our schools often compartmentalize these processes and treat them as distinct from one another—and treat the child as distinct from the many contexts she or he experiences—the science of learning and development demonstrates how tightly interrelated they are and how they jointly produce the outcomes for which educators are responsible.

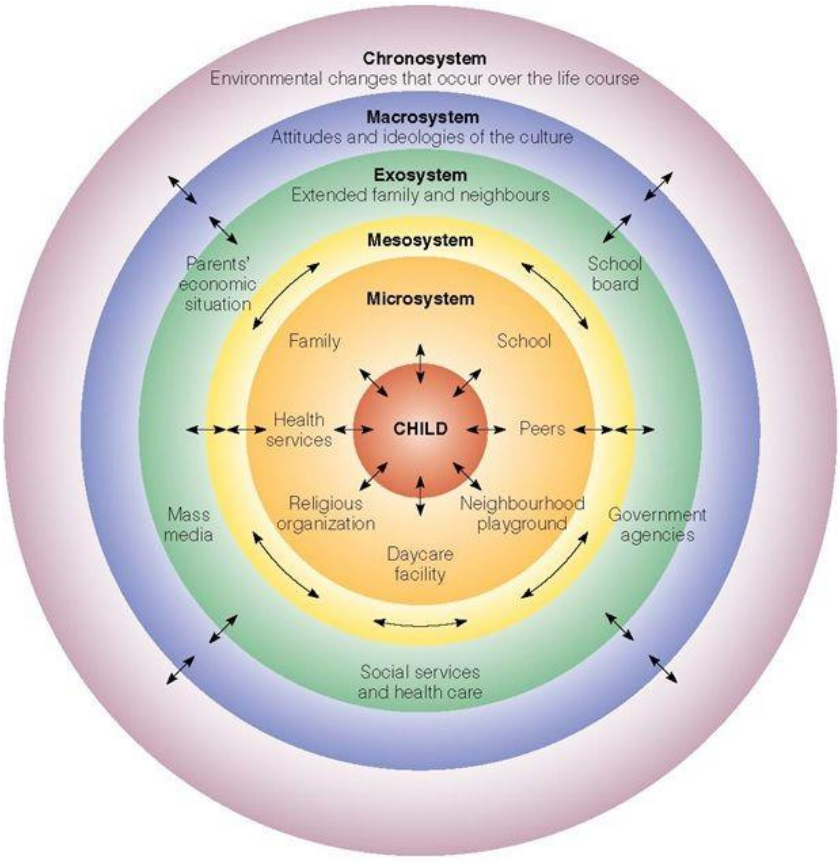
(Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018)

[2] https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/wellbeing-indicators-shanarri/ (accessed 13/09/2022)

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory sees child development as a complex system of interrelated relationships. Each level is affected by the surrounding environment, from the immediacy of family and school settings to broader social customs and laws. Using this model means looking closely at the child and their immediate environment, but also how they interact with the wider environment (Guy-Evans, 2020).

According to Bronfenbrenner's model, the microsystem is the most influential level and it is here that we see school play an important role. In this microsystem are bi-directional relationships where the child is both influenced by other people and they themselves influence others, for example parents, teachers and peers. In the mesosystem we see microsystems interacting, such as parents with teachers, and school peers and siblings (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).



(Source: Guy-Evans, 2020)

The four key principles

Teach First promotes an approach to education that supports whole child development through four interdependent facets: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive.

1. Physical development and wellbeing

Physical development can be thought of as the process of developing both gross and fine motor skills from birth onwards. It is also about growth through childhood and the changes associated with puberty. These will vary for every individual child as a result of both genetics and environment and will have a bearing on the individual's ability to engage in a range of physical activities and experiences.

Physical wellbeing goes beyond general health and fitness or activity levels, to encompass nutrition and sexual health. Physical activity has been linked to improved educational outcomes, as well as personal growth and development, as well as mental wellbeing.

Public Health noted a range of evidence supporting the impact of physical health, including:

- a UK study identified that the amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity pupils engaged with at age 11 had an effect on academic performance across English, maths and science at age 11, 13 and final GCSE exam results.
- the percentage of time girls spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity at age 11 predicted increased science scores at 11 and 16 years.
- pupils engaging in self-development activities (including sport, physical activity) achieved 10-20% higher GCSE.
- a whole-school approach to healthy school meals, universally implemented for all pupils, has shown improvements in academic attainment at key stages 1 and 2, especially for pupils with lower prior attainment England.

(Public Health England, 2014: 8)

Mind suggests that physical activity can support a range of mental health improvements, including better sleep, happier moods, managing stress, anxiety or intrusive or racing thoughts. It can bring better self-esteem, reduce the risk of depression and help you connect with people (Mind, 2019).

Neuroscience also supports the importance of exercise in educational success. In a 2014 Educational Endowment Foundation report focused on neuroscience and education, exercise was among the topics most developed and with the 'most promising evidence about their impact on educational outcomes.' The report stated:

There is a strong basis in the neuroscience literature for justifying an exercise intervention, and many studies exploring the effects of exercise on academic achievement. The mixed results of these academic studies, however, suggest that some factors influencing outcomes are yet to be identified and there is a need to design future interventions carefully with this in mind.

(Howard-Jones, 2014: 4)

In general, ensuring the physical safety and well-being of children was a subject in the literature that was connected among schools, teachers, families, and communities. Further, physical activity and health have correlations to academic success and improved teaching and learning (Shankar et al., 2017).

2. Emotional development and wellbeing

Emotional development, how we understand ourselves and 'operate', is central to whole child development. The ability to control our feelings, and behavioural self-regulation are closely related to our self-esteem and self-regulation, all of which particularly affect children's ability to learn and thrive.

But this intrapersonal dimension is not simply how we feel about and within ourselves. It also

includes how we are able to consider those feelings in others through empathy. The SEAD guide defines emotional development as "how we come to understand our own and others' feelings and develop our ability to 'stand in someone else's shoes' and see things from their point of view" (Department for Children, 2008). It is through this development that children are able to grow a sense of self and a sense of being in the world (Clarke et al., 2015; Corcoran et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Mcneil et al., 2012).

In education, emotional development might be seen in the development of resilience and self-regulation, both of which play an important role in educational outcomes. It is also central to robust mental health. Metacognition has an emotional dimension, as it involves developing self-awareness about learning and directing purpose (Muijs & Bokhove, 2020; Quigley et al., 2018). This may work in tandem with growth mindset theories which emphasise the importance of students believing they can get more intelligent by working harder. Whilst there is no evidence to support the use of specific mindset interventions as having an impact on outcomes, there is some evidence to suggest that mindset interventions could challenge the threat of stereotypes that contributed to underperformance (Aronson et al., 2002).

Metacognitive strategies, taught in collaborative groups, are seen by the EEF as having a potential impact of 7 months additional progress, although they note that it can be difficult to achieve in practice (Muijs & Bokhove, 2020). Whilst resilience has been studied in the children suffering major traumatic events, it is only recently that resilience in education has been researched. An Australian study (Holdsworth et al., 2018), found that resilience has three key attributes: a sense of perspective, staying healthy, and social support. The study didn't seek to consider educational outcomes, but they did find that fostering resilient environments for students, helping them to experience and learn from failures in a safe setting, providing high quality feedback and next steps, as well as access to extra-curricular activities, helped.

3. Social development and wellbeing

Social development is 'how we come to understand ourselves in relation to others, how we make friends, understand the rules of society and behave towards others' (Department for Children, 2008:5). A Harvard Study of Adult Development found that the quality of our relationships above all other factors, affects our health, happiness and longevity.[3] But further studies demonstrate the key protective factor for children of the ability to connect to school – it lowers the likelihood of later health-risk behaviours, and enhances positive educational outcomes. Weak relationships in the classroom can even have a negative impact on outcomes and reinforce educational disadvantage (Loe, 2019).

Significant to this dimension of whole child development is how individuals develop and maintain relationship as well as the ways in which interactions within society are important to one's own individual growth. Through this engagement and interaction, children's intrapersonal development is complemented by an understanding of oneself in relation to others (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Feinstein, 2015.) Martin & Dowson, 2009 draw on a wide range of evidence to support the proposition that relationships are a critical factor in young people's engagement and motivation at school, and therefore on their attainment. Individuals learn about themselves and how to fit in from social interactions, and as a result develop beliefs and values consistent with their relational environment. A focus on relationships throughout the school has a positive ripple effect impacting on not only on wellbeing but also the motivation and performance of both students and their teachers (Martin & Dowson, 2009).

In schools, this can often be seen through the 'pygmalion' effect, whereby positive expectations of a student by a teacher can leader to improved

[3] https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/ (Accessed 12/09/2022)

performance, where as the reverse was also true, the 'gollem' effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992).

... positive relationships are connected with good mental health, which itself is linked with physical wellbeing. So it is appropriate to make health education universal alongside relationships and sex education.

Damien Hinds, Education Secretary, 2019[4]

'Children need to know how to interact well with others, what is involved to establish and maintain friendships, how to operate in a group and what is involved in resolving conflicts' (Roffey, 2012:155). The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning was introduced to schools in the UK in 2005 (primary) and 2007 (secondary). Evaluation of the project in primary schools showed improved ability to control emotions such as anger and an overwhelming majority of staff involved agreed that the programme promoted the emotional wellbeing of children (Hallam, 2009).

A similar programme in the US (Social and emotional learning, SEL) found raised achievement scores, improved social behaviours and more positive views (Roffey, 2012). However, delivery of programmes is central to effectiveness: high levels of control and didactic pedagogies did not change behaviour. The way staff relate to each other also provides a model for how students behave:

It comes from the staff first - you can see the staff getting on, and having a bit of fun...so (students) know that we're all friends, and that's an example of good behaviour (teacher, primary school)

(Roffey, 2012:156)

4. Cognitive development

[R}ecent developments in brain science are leading to a view of human cognition as essentially embodied – a perspective on thought, problem-solving and memory that couples these 'higher-level' accomplishments much more tightly with supposedly 'lower-level' processes of perception and action.

(Goodyear & Carvalho, 2014)

Cognitive skills differ from academic skills, which focus on content learning and mastery. For distinction, the EEF offers the following definitions of cognition and metacognition:

Cognition is the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning. By cognitive strategies, we mean skills like memorisation techniques or subject-specific strategies like making different marks with a brush or using different methods to solve equations in maths... cognitive strategies are fundamental to acquiring knowledge and completing learning tasks. (Quigley et al., 2018:9).

Metacognition is about the ways learners monitor and purposefully direct their learning. For example, having decided that a particular cognitive strategy for memorisation is likely to be successful, a pupil then monitors whether it has indeed been successful and then deliberately changes (or not) their memorisation method based on that evidence. By metacognitive strategies, we mean the

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-pupils-will-be-taught-about-mental-and-physical-wellbeing (accessed 12/09/2022)

strategies we use to monitor or control our cognition... (Quigley et al., 2018:9).

Cognitive (and metacognitive) skills contribute to an individual's ability to make decisions, to develop an understanding of learning, and to think critically about situations.

Teachers who use metacognitive approaches to instruction can support students to develop independent learning skills, with personalised learning strategies and learning goals. They can support students to self-assess their understanding and approaches to learning, and help them to develop the ability to monitor their own progress to achieve those goals. Modeling and coaching can teach students to use a range of learning strategies that activate background knowledge, plan, and create explanations to improve understanding. Metacognitive approaches will help students to evaluate their own work, seek out additional insights, as well as to revise and improve their work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The EEF estimate that metacognitive strategies can lead to 7 months additional progress for students if properly implemented (source). The potential impact is very high, particularly for disadvantaged students, but less is known about how to apply them effectively in the classroom. Scientists are united in their belief that content knowledge is crucial to the development of critical thinking skills. According to Willingham, programmes in schools intended to teach critical thinking skills have had limited success as they are subject specific rather than general. Willingham points to examples that demonstrate critical thinking is a skill that can be taught in schools, but there is less research on how that skill is transferred to another problem or topic, thus 'our goals for student critical thinking must be domain-specific.' (Willingham, 2019: 6).

As cognitive skills encompass executive function, then we must bear in mind students with SEND and how they can be supported. In 2017/18, in the Early Years, only 24% of students with SEN achieved a good level of development compared with 77% of non-SEN students. At KS2 this was 21% compared with 74%, and at KS4 the average attainment 8 score for students with SEN was 27.2 compared with 49.8 and progress 8 was -0.61 compared with 0.08 (DfE, 2019c).

School level impact

Non-cognitive skills are related to academic outcomes, but the nature of this relationship is not well understood. A review by Gutman and Schoon (2013) found that developing non-cognitive skills in school had a bigger impact on academic outcomes, than programmes run outside of school (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). The DfE Character Education Framework Guidance (2019) also highlights the importance of clear leadership in schools to support the development of the pupils' non-cognitive skills, such as resilience and self-regulation, alongside a well-designed curriculum that considers the ability of every child to participate (DfE, 2019a).

Evidence of effectiveness

Overall, evidence on the effectiveness of programmes designed to strengthen whole child outcomes is equivocal.
However, there literature does suggest some approaches - when well designed and implemented - can have positive impacts, including on:

- academic learning
- staff well-being
- pupil well-being
- the development of social and emotional skills and attitudes
- mental health problems
- improving school behaviour
- reductions in risky behaviour

(Weare, 2015:2)

Successful programmes appear to have common characteristics:

- **Whole school approach, embedded in the academic programme**
  A whole school approach goes beyond the teaching and learning in the classroom to pervade all aspects of school life. This includes the culture, ethos and environment; the health and wellbeing of students and staff; use of the curriculum to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes about health and wellbeing; partnerships with families and the community to promote consistent support for children and young people's health and wellbeing (Public Health England, 2014:10).

- **Evidence-based and well developed evaluation**
  A number of systematic reviews have noted that the most effective programs are evidence-based and have developed comprehensive and complete evaluations (Corcoran et al., 2017).

- **Provision of explicit teacher guidelines through teacher training**
  Teachers are the core agents of change in schools, but to be able to deliver effective programmes they require adequate confidence and skills. For effective implementation, professional development and capacity building is needed at both pre-service and in-service training (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

- **Well-defined goals and coordinated activities**
  A comprehensive review of school-based and out of school programs found that those that were transparent and explicit about their goals and clearly aligned a range of well-developed activities to those goals demonstrated the clearest impact on students (Clarke et al., 2015).Supporting teachers and schools

Whole child development is a joint effort amongst teachers, school, parents and families, communities, and governments to develop consistent messages and trajectories of support as well as safe, healthy and nurturing environments (ASCD, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Schools

Schools can have a powerful influence on child development, including well-being, a sense of security, and positive relationships. In order to optimise those and other developmental effects, schools must focus on creating an environment conducive to the support and growth of the factors most needs by the students and staff it houses.

'[The school] environment was identified as offering the potential for all children to have an equal opportunity of accessing the resources to build and strengthen their intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness, management and skills' (Smith & Hamer, 2019).

Schools also work within an accountability and statutory framework that identifies relevant aspects of whole child development responsibility. From 2020, the delivery of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education will be compulsory in the majority of schools (DfE, 2019b). The DfE guidance outlines age-appropriate content that will support the development of many aspects of personal development identified within the Whole Child Development approach, including mental and physical wellbeing and how respectful relationships with others might be part of this. Within the Ofsted framework (Ofsted, 2019), schools are judged on the behaviour and attitudes of students with regard to their learning. Consideration is also given to the quality of the relationships between learners and staff and how positive and respectful the culture of the school is felt to be. Further judgements are made on personal development and the curriculum beyond the academic, including the support for character development, on which further guidance has been provided by the DfE (DfE, 2019a).

From a cognitive science perspective, Osher et al (2018) share this perspective on the role of schools in supporting a positive whole child approach:

> *A developmentally rich context can provide safe, secure, enriching opportunities and developmental relationships with adults; direct targeting of self-regulation; executive function; and social and behavioural skills, opportunities for practice and reinforcement of these foundational competencies, and opportunities to take on leadership roles and participate in collaborative and productive peer interactions. Structural and social features of schools and early childhood educational settings that provide a developmentally rich context can enhance developmental range, buffer the effects of stress and trauma, promote resilience, and accelerate the development and integration of affective, cognitive, social, and emotional processes.* (Osher et al., 2018)

In general, the literature agrees that a positive, developed, and thoughtful school environment is essential to providing the foundation for a meaningful whole child approach to teaching and learning.

A further article considering the implications of the science of learning and development for educational practice, suggests the following principles for schools:

1. School and classroom structures should be designed to create and support strong attachments and positive, long-term relationships among adults and children that provide both academic and social-emotional support for cultivating developmentally-appropriate skills, emotional security, resilience, and student agency.

2. Schools and classrooms should be developed as physically and psychologically safe, personalized learning communities where students feel they belong and teachers engage in practices that help them know their students well so that they can respond to children's specific needs, interests, readiness for learning, and opportunities for growth.

3. School practices should be designed to strengthen relational trust and promote cultural competence among educators, school staff, and families to provide deeper knowledge regarding children and greater alignment between the home and school.

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020)

As part of the larger ecosystem of whole child development, schools and school leaders have the opportunity to continue to grow that nurturing learning environment. Among other suggestions in the literature, schools are encouraged to: integrate whole child approaches into academic learning and curricular resources; provide teachers with professional learning experiences that align with its whole child approach; look for instruction practices that promote that approach; and connect whole child development to other school policies and procedures 'such as school climate, school vision and mission, or service learning' programmes (Yoder, 2014).

Teachers

Elements of Whole Child Development are embodied in the Teaching Standards to which all teachers must adhere. Different attributes can be seen implicitly across the different standards, with the clearest of these being:

5.3 - demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development.

(DfE, 2013)
Further points emphasise the importance of relationships and establishing a safe learning environment, as well as mutual respect.

Teachers play a critical role in students' development, and their relationships with the pupils in their classes is central to many components of whole child development. One aspect of this relationship-building is understanding the individuals in the classroom in order to most fully address their needs.

The report, How People Learn (2000), explains:

Students come to school with different experiences, so they present distinct preconceptions, knowledge bases, cultural and linguistic capital that teachers should learn about and take into account in designing instruction. Successful teachers provide carefully designed "scaffolds" to help students take each step in the learning journey with appropriate assistance. These vary for different students depending on their learning needs, approaches, and prior knowledge. Teachers' success with diverse learners is enhanced by their ability to address students' different ways of learning, knowing, and communicating.(National Research Council, 2000)

Again, Darling-Hammond et al (2020) offers evidence-based suggestions for principles of practice:
[T}he science of learning and development suggests the following principles for instructional practice:

1. *teaching should build on and expand children's prior knowledge and experiences… teachers should structure appropriately challenging activities that balance what a child already knows with what he wants and needs to learn, while introducing other rich experiences to support ongoing learning.*
2. *Teaching should support conceptual understanding, engagement, and motivation, by designing relevant, problem-oriented tasks that combine explicit instruction about key ideas – organized around a conceptual map or schema of the domain being taught – with well-designed inquiry opportunities that use multiple modalities for learning.*
3. *To enable students to manage their own learning and transfer it to new contexts, teaching should be designed to develop students' metacognitive capacity, agency, and the capacity for strategic learning. This requires opportunities for self-direction, goal-setting and planning, and formative assessment with regular opportunities for reflection on learning strategies and outcomes, feedback, and revision of work.*

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020:111)

Challenges

Adopting a whole child approach to teaching and learning is not a goal easily achieved. In addition to contextual difficulties that teachers and schools

may face, there are overarching challenges to implementing such an approach:

- *The development and implementation of these programmes is variably supported by evidence and can be challenging in an already demanding environment.*
- *While there has been some evidence of short-term impacts, sustaining those effects appears to be a consistent challenge for many programmes in this area.*
- *Measuring and evaluating the impact of these programmes is still problematic.*
- *Meaningful translation of Ofsted requirements and attainment targets continue to hinder the effective implementation of these programs* (Yeo & Graham, 2015:8)

Because teachers and leaders are essential in developing positive learning environments, both groups need (1) professional learning opportunities on how to develop and sustain positive learning environments and (2) an evaluation system that allows teachers and leaders to demonstrate their impact on the learning environments for students. When teacher and principal evaluation systems do not explicitly measure learning environments and the student outcomes related to positive learning environments, educators may not receive the feedback and support they need for developing safe spaces for all kids to learn. In addition, if positive learning environments and SEL are not treated as important initiatives, teachers push them to the side because their jobs are contingent on moving students forward on standardized tests (Bridgeland et al., 2015).

Supporting teachers

The implementation of any form of whole child development will be contextual, but the literature does suggest some ways in which teacher preparation and training programmes might be supported.

Developing teachers' social and emotional competence
Doing so has important consequences for their students' social and emotional development, as well as for the likelihood of teacher retention in their classrooms. Further, it provides a platform for teacher trainees to reflect on their own practice and development and the potential for modelling important behaviours and habits in the classroom.

Models and direct instruction for how to develop safe, inclusive and supportive classroom environment
The science of learning demonstrates that students thrive socially, emotionally, and academically in a safe and supportive learning environment.

Support skills for integrating WCD into the academic programme
Modelling the approach of weaving in WCD skills through the academic offerings of teacher training courses themselves sets the tone for the individuals' practice after their experience in the training programme.

Focus on improving whole child dimensions of teaching and learning throughout the teacher preparation journey
Offering ongoing support and counsel for trainees helps to reinforce understanding of the requirements for successful whole child development implementation.

An effective whole child approach comes from supporting teachers' deep learning of the concepts and structures that support the healthy and holistic development of children. Rather than bespoke activities, it is more valuable to support the development of rich and complex schema that can be applied in practice and implemented in a variety of contexts.

Many teachers go into their profession with a passion both for teaching and a determination to do their best for their students. They often become disillusioned because of overwhelming workloads, pressure to 'teach to test' and the challenges of managing difficult behaviour (Galton & MacBeath, 2008; Roffey, 2012). The ethic of care can become lost in the day-to-day demands. This can lead to teachers saying that they care about their students but young people not experiencing this.

'Positive relationships in schools are central to the wellbeing of both students and teachers and underpin an effective learning environment. There is now a wealth of research on the importance of connectedness in schools and on the specific qualities of in-school relationships that promote effective education' (Roffey, 2012).

Caring teachers can provide a motivational trigger for both engagement with learning and pro-social behaviour.

Teach First and Whole Child Development

Teach First's commitment to the principles of whole child development reflects both their grounding in evidence of how they influence outcomes, and in our mission to make our education system work for every child. The attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged peers is widening. At the same time there are increasing reports of heightened anxiety and mental health challenges in children and young people, challenges which we know affect their experience of school and beyond into adult life (source). Character development and relationships education have always been the concern of schools, but they are now a statutory requirement. If we want children to succeed and if we want all children to have a fair education, then we need to consider them as a whole.

The education system deals with children in convenient age batch groups. What is important to remember is that children do not necessarily develop at the same rate. In the EYFS expected outcomes for the end of the year take little account of the fact that two children starting school may be almost a year different in age. This is particularly pertinent when stage-related expectations of behaviour or academic attainment are used. In many cases, it is not reasonable to expect a 4-year-old to be at the same cognitive development stage as a 5-year-old. The same is true when we compare children at the start of secondary school with those entering KS4. Changes in emotional and social development during puberty should be reflected in our approaches to understanding behaviour and motivation, as well as how we seek to understand social interactions.

Our work has focused on building understanding of the importance and value of the principles of whole child development, and making them more explicit in our programmes to support teachers and leaders at every stage in their career embed these principles in their work to support children. Our intent is that programme staff then build understanding of the importance and value of the principles of whole child development amongst teachers and leaders on our programmes. Our evaluation work indicates high levels of awareness amounts programme members, but also suggests that leaders are more convinced than trainees that their schools are supporting whole child development. This may reflect different understanding of what is meant by whole child development, or different perceptions of how it is implemented. We will explore this further. To find out more about how school leaders conceptualise and enact 'inclusive' practices, and what relatively more 'inclusive' schools do differently, we have partnered with the University of Nottingham to carry out a number of in-depth school case studies. We are seeking to, We will share the findings with the sector and integrate in to programme as appropriate as illustrative case studies.

COVID impact

The COVID-19 pandemic was hugely disruptive for education, both for pupil learning and teacher training. The long-term impact is still not known, not just on learning, but on the social and emotional development of children and young people. The overall happiness and confidence of young people have hit a nadir, with almost half of young people reporting experiencing a mental health problem (The Prince's Trust, 2022).

As Sir Kevan Collins, in the Education Policy Institute (EPI) annual lecture (30 November 2021) said:

> *It's the whole child and the whole learning experience that matters. The recovery is the recovery of childhood, not just education.*

Programme development

Early years and Primary

Our primary and early years training programme (new from 2021) is built upon the foundations of the Early Years Foundations Stage, drawing

explicitly on the prime learning areas: personal, social and emotional development, physical development, communication and language. These align almost exactly with the key principles of whole child development as adopted by Teach First. They provide a framework for the wider curriculum and explicitly demonstrate the integration of these areas in the development and learning of young children. The four key principles then provide an organising model for developing the trainees' understanding of how it relates to the wider school environment, and beyond. This same model informs the primary curriculum, looking at how the different elements evolve as pupils move up through the key phases and how teachers can make connections between the different influences on children's learning and development.

Secondary

Our new 2022 secondary Training Programme aims to build trainees' understanding of the importance of inclusive school environments and the active promotion of inclusion and equality in professional practice. All designers have received training on the principles of whole child development and the curriculum is being designed to enable a comprehensive WCD lens, aligning with and illustrating relevant elements of the Core Content and Early Career frameworks. We have also included a module on Child Development that incorporates the four elements of WCD and focuses on teaching trainees about child development and how this forms a crucial part of becoming an excellent practitioner.

'The young people in your charge will be going through different stages of physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. It is a misconception that most of this development happens before the age of five. Cognitively, children's brains are still developing and changing until adulthood (usually early 20s) and of course we know physical changes occur throughout childhood and adolescence.'

Dr Janet Rose, Principal of Norland College

This module contains a unit focusing explicitly on whole child development, and the four key areas, set within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory framework, and emphasising the interconnectedness of influences on development, wellbeing and learning behaviours. The unit provides opportunities for trainees to reflect on the implications of the learning content for their teaching practice and explores different situations where having a whole child development 'lens' can be beneficial for their practice in the classroom.

These introductory units lay the foundations for learning in further modules that look at school context and give trainees a foundational understanding of educational disadvantage and how it impacts pupils and communities. The course emphasises the importance avoiding a deficit mindset about disadvantage, and what this means for teaching in schools serving disadvantaged communities. In exploring classroom culture, trainees look at the theoretical underpinnings of behaviour management strategies including valuing the development of the whole child: the social, emotional and cognitive elements. They also consider inclusive teaching practices..

Leadership

Our reformed NPQs also put a whole child development 'lens' on relevant policies and practices in schools, for example in the specialist NPQ for leading behaviour. In the NPQH there is a dedicated unit, 'considering the whole child'. This encourages the exploration of the different relationships, partnerships and interactions that affect the working of a school and how these influence the development of the child. The unit also explores the importance of understanding families' needs and how they leaders can work with parents and carers to support the 'whole child'.

Our Leading Together programme also places positions whole child development as a 'lens' that school leaders can put on their school policies.. For example, the module on optimising behaviour introduces programme members to varying philosophical approaches to behaviour, and the module on using research encourages

programme members to ensure interventions are supported by evidence. We also provide research reviews from our evidence-informed Curriculum to support programme members. The Science of Learning brings together ideas around the self-regulated learner, linking cognition, metacognition and motivation - all key elements in WCD. There is also a focus on supporting pupil transitions between primary and secondary, and between key stages, which considers the emotional impact of change. Throughout, there is a focus on inclusion, looking at protected characteristics as part of supporting the whole child, and evaluating policies and practices across the school.

Policy influence

Teach First responded to the DfE consultation on proposed changes to the Behaviour in Schools Guidance and Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance. Our response was guided by the work we have done around Whole Child Development, in particular how a whole child lens could support teachers and leaders in understanding pupil behaviour and its link to development. We emphasised the importance of whole school responses that differentiate between the varied needs of individuals, rather than more blunt age-related expectations. We also responded to the DfE SEND Review, reflecting on the importance of prioritising evidence-based approaches to SEND provision in schools and in teacher training. The response also focused on the importance of improving the proportions of SEND pupils progressing to sustained destinations post-KS4.

Our policy work reflects our commitment to whole child development principles, and is aligned to our manifesto[5] calling for: increased pupil premium funding; ring-fenced funding for support services e.g. CAMHS and SEN support; reducing timetables for teachers in disadvantaged areas to recognise the additional challenges they face in supporting pupils; a more inclusive curriculum; and investment in careers education at primary and secondary level.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Our work on EDI encompasses all elements of Teach First's work but aligns closely with whole child development in a number of areas. We are seeking to ensure that both are embedded and integrated fully in our programmes and staff CPD offer. We recognise that incidents can arise in relation to equity and diversity, and can affect wellbeing. Research evidence on issues as adultification and the intersectionality of race and safeguarding has been added to our programmes. A Curriculum Review tool is also used to support designers in improving the representation of people with protected characteristics in content, to consider the accessibility of the curriculum content and include material on the values of respect and equality. These are elements that explicitly impact on the social and emotional development and wellbeing of pupils as well as supporting the provision of safe and inclusive spaces for learning. Sessions have been run for programme members on our NPQs and Careers Leader programmes on how to tackle racism, and there is a target to include at least one EDI related scenario in every module. We have developed a resource library for each module which provides case studies of inclusive leaders, empirical research and expert EDI organisations to provide further information.

Leading Together has introduced an EDI module examining what it means to be an inclusive school. At Foundation Level, the module includes a diagnosis of how inclusive your school is. In the Mastery Level, the module explores sector-specific theory further and best practice case-studies to identify actions following the diagnosis and refine inclusion practice moving forward.

We've embedded an asset model of SEND throughout all our content, e.g., EAL learners as multi-lingual assets in languages classroom. In line with Teaching Standards, a special course organised around the SEND Code of Practice, research informed interventions and messaging available to trainees on the programme, so they

[5] https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/Manifesto_v3_Aug2021.pdf

do not need to wait on diagnosis for pupils, they are empowered to act on need right away. Key messaging includes areas such as using person-first language vs identity-first and how to adapt language for parents and pupils. This has been duplicated from primary school content into secondary school content.

Additional work includes establishing 'speak up' - an efficient case management system for monitoring EDI incidents from all programme members, establishing procedures for managing cases, recording and tracking. This includes training for programme delivery colleagues.

Conclusion

This Research Insight highlights some of the research and work we have done to date around whole child development. It is not complete and remains a work in progress as we explore the best ways to support schools, teachers and leaders to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

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