

## Guidance Notes

Prepared by Thrive in response to the Department for Education paper entitled

### Mental Health and behaviour in schools

#### Departmental advice for school staff

June 2014

#### Key points from the guidance

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In order to help their pupils succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.</b> There are a variety of things that schools can do, for all their pupils and for those with particular problems, to offer that support in an effective way.</li> </ul> | <p>The Thrive Approach and Thrive-Online (TOL) provides support for all children through Whole Group Screening (WGS) and for individual children with specific needs through individual assessment and action planning on TOL.</p> <p>Thrive Licensed Practitioner training builds understanding and capacity within staff groups, enabling them to address the emotional needs/development of key children in school.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Where severe problems occur schools should expect the child to get support elsewhere as well,</b> including from medical professionals working in specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), voluntary organisations and local GPs.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>                        | <p>There will always be children with complex needs who require more specialist support. Thrive can help ensure that school staff are able to do all they can to address these needs before requiring a specialist referral.</p> <p>Thrive's development of training for Health Professionals will ensure a common language and understanding across professions.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Schools should ensure that pupils and their families participate as fully as possible in decisions</b> and are provided with information and support. The views, wishes and feelings of the pupil and their parents should always be considered.</li> </ul>   | <p>Thrive is a consent-based assessment tool which requires parents to give permission before an assessment is carried out. The practitioner training places an emphasis on engaging parents actively in the process and supporting them through Home Activities plans where appropriate and possible. In addition to this, Family Thrive is a programme that has been developed to work directly with parents. School staff are also supported through the Talking to Parents Continuous Professional Development (CPD) course.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Schools can use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to help them judge whether individual pupils might be suffering from a diagnosable mental health problem</b> and involve their parents and the pupil in considering why they behave in certain ways.</li> </ul>                    | <p>The Thrive Approach works well alongside and enhances SDQs. Thrive assessments are detailed and specific. They include an action planning function which suggests activities that can be used immediately, while helping Licensed Practitioners to understand what a child's behaviour is communicating in relation to their emotional stage of development. Practitioners can then adjust their behaviour to meet the identified need.</p>   |

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• **There are things that schools can do – including for all their pupils, for those showing early signs of problems and for families exposed to several risk factors – to intervene early and strengthen resilience,** before serious mental health problems occur.

Thrive specifically addresses whole school approaches to children's emotional wellbeing and development. It can be used from babies to adulthood, so covers the whole educational age range. It absolutely supports and enhances Prevention, Early Identification and Intervention strategies. It also works in partnership with parents, the importance of which is emphasised throughout this guidance.

**There are national organisations offering materials, help and advice. Schools should look at what provision is available locally** to help them promote mental health and intervene early to support pupils experiencing difficulties. Help and information about evidence-based approaches is available from a range of sources.

We are a national organisation which responds to need at a local and personalised level. The Thrive Approach integrates findings from the neuroscience of emotional development; child attachment theory; child development models and the role of creativity and the arts in emotional development. Further information on the Thrive Approach Research and Evidence Base, which includes empirical data evaluating its success within schools, is available here: [www.thriveapproach.co.uk/a/api/resource-file/?resource\\_id=273](http://www.thriveapproach.co.uk/a/api/resource-file/?resource_id=273)

#### Section 1: Factors that make children more resilient

1.3. Seemingly against all the odds, some children exposed to significant risk factors develop into competent, confident and caring adults. An important key to promoting children's mental health is therefore an understanding of the protective factors that enable children to be resilient when they encounter problems and challenges.

Thrive actively supports the development of problem solving skills in children and young people and helps them to manage stress by modelling and supporting their capacity to think through situations and difficulties both on an emotional level and in terms of everyday situations, in and out of the classroom. Thrive-Online enables school staff to identify children who have not had sufficiently robust experiences at 'Being', 'Doing' and 'Thinking' stages of development that are key to establishing a healthy stress management system. Using the individual assessment tool, Licensed Practitioners are able to revisit children and YP's earlier developmental experiences and develop individual actions plans that target specific areas of need.

1.5 The role that schools play in promoting the resilience of their pupils is important, particularly so for some children where their home life is less supportive. School should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems.

The Thrive Approach offers Whole School Inductions and Whole Staff Training Modules to actively embed a common ethos and understanding in all staff which affects all children, creating an environment of safety. A safe environment enables children to access learning (backed by neuroscience) and the four key circuits within the limbic brain. Thrive whole group approaches support the development of safety, belonging and group identity both at a class level and at a school level. The Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) used by Thrive trained staff help them to ensure pupils feel heard and valued and that their feelings and thoughts are validated.

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| <p>1.8. The culture and structures within a school can promote their pupils' mental health through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a committed senior management team</b> that sets a culture within the school that values all pupils; allows them to feel a sense of belonging; and makes it possible to talk about problems in a non-stigmatising way.</li> </ul>   | <p>Thrive emphasises the importance of the commitment and involvement of the SMT. Thrive works most effectively in those schools where at least one member of a SMT has attended the practitioner training as well as staff who will be able to do direct individual work with children. Leaders who understand that Thrive is a whole school approach providing a common language and understanding of how to meet children's emotional needs provide the best approach.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>an ethos of setting high expectations of attainment for all pupils with consistently applied support.</b> This includes clear policies on behaviour and bullying that set out the responsibilities of everyone in the school and the range of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for children. These should be available and understood clearly by all, and consistently applied by staff</li> </ul> | <p>A central aim of Thrive is to identify those children whose stress management systems have not yet developed or are not secure. By drawing on neuroscience, attachment theory and the Thrive child development model, children are supported to be able to manage their own stress, thus enabling them to access their cognitive learning more consistently and easily.</p> <p>Bullying and the use of power in relationships is actively tackled in the Thrive Approach throughout KS1 with right time learning.</p> <p>Thrive has also developed a CPD course to be released in June 2015 which will increase Licensed Practitioner's capacity to work with children and young people who bully and intimidate others.</p> <p>Pupils' sense of belonging to school is a key determinant of their wellbeing and is higher in schools where children feel safe and have lower levels of bullying. Ensuring that children have a sense of belonging and safety is a fundamental value of the Thrive Approach.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>working with parents and carers as well as with the pupils themselves,</b> ensuring their opinions and wishes are taken into account and that they are kept fully informed so they can participate in decisions taken about them</li> </ul>   | <p>Thrive emphasises the importance of partnership with parents and actively involving them in supporting their child through a Home Activities plan. See info above re Family Thrive and Talking with Parents courses. The Thrive trained staff's use of VRFs validates children and young people's emotions, ensures they are heard and that their feelings form part of the Action Plan. The creative arts and play encourages a high level of engagement.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>continuous professional development for staff</b> that makes it clear that promoting good mental health is the responsibility of all members of school staff and community.</li> </ul>  | <p>Thrive is a licensed programme which has an annual CPD requirement for all licensed practitioners, thus ensuring they 'top up' on their knowledge each year. We are developing Regional Networks in localities which will be supported by the Regional Co-ordinators. This will provide an opportunity to share good practice and support development of Thrive at an authority wide level.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>clear systems and processes to help staff who identify children and young people with possible mental health problems;</b> providing routes to escalate issues with clear</li> </ul>  | <p>Thrive provides an approach that feeds into and supports SEN policies of any participating school. Schools are encouraged and supported to adapt behaviour policies to take into account children's stages of development. TOL provides a clear individual assessment and action planning process and PSHE screening and curriculum planning tool. The latter has been</p>   |

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referral and accountability systems. Schools should work closely with other professionals to have a range of support services that can be put in place depending on the identified needs (both within and beyond the school). These should be set out clearly in the school's published SEND policy.

used to inform planning and evaluation cycles by many Thrive schools. Thrive actively promotes positive engagement and partnerships with families, outside agencies, and the wider community to promote consistent support for children and young people's health and wellbeing with a shared knowledge, understanding and common language around individual needs.

- working with others to provide interventions for pupils with mental health problems that use a graduated approach to inform a clear cycle of support: **an assessment to establish a clear analysis of the pupil's needs; a plan to set out how the pupil will be supported; action to provide that support; and regular reviews** to assess the effectiveness of the provision and lead to changes where necessary
- a healthy school approach to promoting the health and wellbeing of all pupils in the school, with priorities identified and a clear process of **'planning, doing and reviewing'** to achieve the desired outcomes.

The Thrive Approach and Online Assessment Tool are models based on a 'Plan, Do, Review' cycle. Whole group screening checks children's emotional development against age appropriate expectations and allows for differentiated planning of the PHSE curriculum to meet the class's identified needs. Individual Assessments ensure a child's developmental and emotional needs are specifically assessed, an Action Plan of activities for professionals and family is then produced which can be implemented immediately and later reviewed to assess progress. The Approach provides data showing progress for individual children and for whole classes allowing for appropriate curriculum plans to be reviewed and updated regularly. An Impact Evaluation Toolkit is now available from Thrive to enable schools to measure the effectiveness of Thrive against attainment, attendance and disruptive behaviour incidents both in and out of class. See information above regarding the recommended whole school approach to implementing Thrive.

1.9: Schools with these characteristics mitigate the risk of mental health problems in their pupils by supporting them to become more resilient and preventing problems before they arise. In addition, schools should also have in place arrangements which reflect the importance of safeguarding.

Thrive makes clear recommendations regarding safety/safeguarding issues both on TOL and throughout all practitioner training courses. The common language of Thrive is now being used within safeguarding meetings and Action Plans can form part of a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or as part of the Early Help process.

## References

Rutter, M (1985) *Resilience in the face of adversity. Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder*. British Journal of Psychiatry. Vol. 147, pp. 598-611