



The BERA Guide
to Mental Health
and Wellbeing
in Schools

Exploring Frontline Support in
Educational Research and Practice

EDITED BY

Michelle Jayman
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The BERA Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools

“This is a timely contribution to a post-Covid world where schools in particular are struggling to restore equilibrium for their pupils. Teachers, School Governors and Health professionals who work with CYP will greatly benefit from this book as well as academics whose research centres upon school-based intervention. The book is helpfully presented in two parts, the first addressing relevant theory and policy related to the mental health and wellbeing of CYP and the second offering informative case studies of how health promoting frameworks can operate in schools. Furthermore, the editors are all well qualified to comment on the current state of play in education.

I would highly recommend this book to both my academic colleagues and to the teaching professionals that I know and work with as a Primary School governor.”

– Madeleine Ohl, Professor of Child Mental Health and Wellbeing, University of West London

“Addressing the pressing concern of deteriorating mental health among children and adolescents, the book offers a timely and insightful exploration of how to best support the mental wellbeing of young people in today’s world. The authors, all possessing significant expertise and experience in psychology and education, particularly mental health, wellbeing, and inclusion in educational settings, shed light on the urgent need for effective interventions, emphasising the importance of collaborative and multi-disciplinary approaches.

The book’s comprehensive approach encompasses theoretical frameworks, policy analysis, and practical case studies, which showcase innovative practices and interventions; it provides readers a detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities in promoting mental health within educational settings and offers a wealth of actionable strategies for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals alike. The authors recognise the importance of embedding the student voice within whole school approaches and highlight the interconnectedness between staff wellbeing and pupil mental health. By addressing barriers to successful implementation, such as funding constraints and insufficient training, the authors offer valuable insights into how schools can create supportive environments for both students and staff.

This book provides evidence-based insights and practical guidance for fostering resilience and wellbeing in educational settings; therefore, it serves as a valuable resource for anyone invested in the mental health of children and young people and underscores the collective

responsibility in creating supportive environments where all children and young people can thrive.”

– Dr Annita Ventouris, CPsychol, AFBPsS, FHEA,
School of Life and Medical Sciences, University of Hertfordshire

“This is an excellent book for anyone who is a part of a school community and would love to contribute to its development. The authors are experts in mental health and wellbeing, and they provide us with several different lenses to look through to the issues i.e. children and young people, their parents, teachers and school leaders. It is a timely book that offers highly useful strategies and practical suggestions to the whole school community in terms of supporting both mental health and wellbeing of all involved. I have used some of its suggestions in my teaching and some when parenting! If you are a stakeholder in school education right now, you will find this book very useful indeed.”

– Pınar Robinson-Gümüş, ITE Programme Leader,
University Centre, St Helens College

“Mental health difficulties in children and young people are continuing to increase at a time when specialist resources are under great strain, which means that non-specialists need to (and can very ably) provide support to the children they come into contact with. This is particularly true in the school environment. School staff may feel that their primary role is to instill academic learning in their pupils, but the reality is that children’s emotional wellbeing needs to be addressed if they are to successfully learn. This book addresses a number of issues around that wellbeing and how school staff can support children’s mental health. It takes complicated and, often, quite scary issues, and demonstrates how the right approaches, such as a trauma-informed or compassionate one, can encourage children to speak up about the difficulties they are facing and get the support they need. It normalizes experiences that children can find frightening and suggests practical ways of giving children the confidence to share their problems with an adult. It also explores the expanding world of online support that older children, in particular, might find useful. It brings together a wide selection of the most up-to-date research in order to inspire and build confidence in those in the front line.”

– Bronach Hughes, MBE, Pyramid Project Co-ordinator at the
University of West London



The BERA Guides

Critical Insights into Educational Research and Practice

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Published in partnership between the British Educational Research Association and Emerald Publishing, *The BERA Guides* are short, research-informed yet accessible introductions to key, interdisciplinary topics impacting education research and practice.

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Exploring Frontline Support in Educational Research and Practice

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To Marcus, Jay and Danny for your inspiration and
unwavering support

-MJ

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About the Editors

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Jonathan Glazzard is the Rosalind Hollis Professor of Education for Social Justice in the School of Education at the University of Hull. His current research focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ and disabled youth. Recent publications have focused on mental health, educational and life transitions and early reading development in children. Jonathan's research focuses on mental health, wellbeing and inclusion in education. His recent papers include exploration of head teacher resilience, teacher and child mental health. Jonathan is a Co-convenor of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Special Interest Group, Mental Health, Wellbeing and Education.

Anthea Rose is a Research Fellow at the Lincoln Academy of Learning and Teaching (LALT), University of Lincoln. She is currently working on evaluating the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP). She also leads the local Lincolnshire

evaluation of the Uni Connect programme, funded by the Office for Students (OfS), which aims to raise the aspirations and attainment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Anthea specialises in qualitative research methods and has a particular interest in social justice and issues around equality, gender, mental health and wellbeing and the impact of government policy on education practices and has published widely. Anthea is also a Co-convenor of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) mental health and wellbeing special interest group.

Aimee Quickfall is the Head of Teacher Education at Leeds Trinity University, UK. She works across the postgraduate and undergraduate teacher training programmes with some of the most interesting and exciting people on Earth. Before working in teacher education, she was a primary teacher for 12 years, working in every year group from Nursery to Year 6. She was an Early Years Leader at a large village primary school in Lincolnshire, as well as working across the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2 in a school in Nottingham. Aimee's research interests include teacher careers and life stories, teacher and trainee teacher wellbeing and workload.

About the Contributors

Jay Ayliffe studied History and Politics at the University of Cambridge and was awarded the Florence Ethel Gwyn Scholarship. After graduating in 2022, he was recruited as a Young Person Co-researcher on a participatory action research project with a team from the School of Psychology at the University of Roehampton. Following this, Jay spent the next six months travelling in Southeast Asia. Initially, he spent a month volunteering as an English Teacher in two schools in Nepal, then moved on to travel and teach in Thailand and Cambodia. Jay completed his journey in Vietnam, running a marathon in aid of education charities before returning to the UK. He is currently employed as a Researcher for a social research agency in London.

Naomi Field is a Drama School Teacher with over 20 years' experience working with both secondary and primary-age children. Over this period, she has held senior pastoral roles. During her teaching career, Naomi has held a strong interest in what educators can do to help pupils develop a set of skills that promote psychological wellbeing and equip them to cope with the challenges of growing up and moving into adult life. While Head of Year 7, Naomi was particularly struck by the impact of transition for children with emotional regulation difficulties and the associated negative outcomes on learning and social development. This motivated her to work part-time in a primary setting to observe more closely the social and emotional progress of children during the primary years. Naomi is currently applying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

Maria Gudbrandsen is a Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Roehampton, with a speciality in Neurodevelopmental Disorders, as well as individuals with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome.

Her current research interests are wellbeing and mental health in SEND, as well as syndromic autism symptomatology across individuals with underlying genetic copy-number-variants. Maria's focus is on current barriers and facilitators to assessment and support, as well as the development of early interventions for wellbeing and mental health in the 22q11.2 deletion syndrome population.

Ann Howden is a Qualified Teacher and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) at the Royal Ballet School, London. Ann has over 25 years' experience working in schools at both primary and secondary levels in the UK and abroad. She has a wealth of experience supporting pupils with a range of additional needs, as well as their families. Ann regularly collaborates with other professionals working with children and young people with SEND to provide holistic support.

Megan McEwan is a Counselling Psychologist and has worked in both mainstream secondary and primary school settings. She also works in the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service with young people experiencing moderate to severe mental health conditions, and as an assessor for Autistic Spectrum and Attention and Hyperactivity Disorder. She recently completed her Doctoral Research on young people's experiences of disclosing their voice heard in an educational setting. Her research interests include the role of shame in exacerbating mental health conditions and the relationship between self-compassion and personal development.

Foreword

Too many children and young people (CYP) experience a probable mental health problem. There are escalating issues linked to this such as non-attendance, managed moves, and the increased use of alternative provision in our education system at present. Thus, this book is extremely timely, much needed and provides critical exploration of the many complex and multi-faceted issues which are at play and impact on the opportunity of CYP to have good mental health and wellbeing in education.

In this book, informed and knowledgeable contributions are gathered that give us insights into the way these CYP and wider wellbeing issues in schools are being supported. The book offers a high-quality exposition of the debates that are occurring within the fields of education, health, and social care around the mental health of CYP. It also provides practical solutions as to how we may shape the timely support and meet the escalating need of these individuals and their families.

The book is comprised of two sections which integrate theory and practice. The first section is a timely focus on ‘Child and adolescent mental wellbeing: Theory, policy and critical issues for education’. This presents a highly important theoretical framework and policy context which is later explored in the case studies in the second section. Critical debates are often not a strong feature of many empirical studies in this area of research; thus, this book provides a much-needed bridge between this and the practice-based literature in the field at present.

A major and cross-cutting feature of this book is the critical exploration of the problematic nature of developing effective whole school approaches (WSA) in settings. This starts in chapter 1, where the author considers the changing and challenging expectations on schools to offer frontline support for CYP in the context of the ever-evolving constraints in the sector.

The complexity of the mental health crisis is investigated, and connections are made to wider systemic issues within society. It is a must read for anyone who is involved in developing a settings-based philosophy to mental health promotion via a multi-levelled and layered approach, alongside needing to know the challenges and constraints that they may face on the way.

This book is full of treasure, rich in critical appraisal and evidenced-based practice to improve the solutions that educators are seeking to develop to allow their CYP to thrive and survive in our present educational landscape. It will help you consider the best practice to develop in a setting to allow you to grow individuals who are emotionally and mentally strong. I can commend this book to the reader as an essential component to developing your onward journey in your own professional area of improved mental health for all.

Bev Peartree, Associate Professor,
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