

## Fostering Academic Resilience: A brief review of the evidence

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It is very clear that poor school outcomes can have catastrophic long term consequences, and there is growing recognition that schools should address ALL pupils' needs, for myriad reasons, such as:

- Gutman, Brown, Akerman, and Obolenskaya (2010 pv) writing “For the most part, emotional and behavioural difficulties followed by specific learning difficulties are the most frequent predictors of poor outcomes”.
- “Children who behave poorly and are excluded, those unable to attend a mainstream school and those disengaged from education are a relatively small proportion of pupils. However, they include some of the young people with the worst prospects for success in later life, and most likely to develop problem behaviours” (DCSF, 2007 p84).
- Overall, pupils with SEN achieve less at school academically, and only 16.5% achieve five or more A\*-C GCSEs by Key Stage 4, compared to 61.3% of their non-SEN peers (DfE, 2011).

***“Research has shown that a young person aged 13 or 14 experiencing five or more problems in the family environment – such as mental health problems, physical disability, substance misuse, domestic violence, financial stress, neither parent being in work, teenage parenthood, poor basic skills and living in poor housing conditions – is thirty six times as likely to be excluded from school and six times as likely to enter the care system or have contact with the police as a young person living in a family with none of these problems” (Layard and Dunn, 2009 p147).***

- “...in terms of later life, poverty in childhood is one of the five most powerful and consistent predictors of subsequent disadvantage” (Layard & Dunn, 2009 p133).
- The National CAMHS Review in 2008 reported that “Children and young people who live in families with a lone parent are also more prone to have a diagnosable mental disorder...Just as there are associations with family circumstances there are similar associations with educational attainment, absences from school, school exclusions, strength of friendship networks, physical health and offending behaviour” (DCSF, 2008 p6).
- In their book “The Spirit Level”, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) argue that in countries where income inequality is large, such as that seen in the United States and the UK, equates with poorer social relationships in communities,

worsened mental health, shorter life expectancy, worse physical health e.g. obesity, poorer academic performance and higher teenage pregnancy rates, which contribute to "...an inter-generational cycle of deprivation" (p121).

- Gutman et al (2010) found that 20% of boys between the ages of eight and ten who are from low socio-economic backgrounds, and are low achievers, experience declining or low levels of wellbeing during primary school.
- "At present, a child from a low income family is three times less likely than average to achieve good results at age 16" (dcsf, 2007 p76).
- "...children from families experiencing multiple disadvantages are: more likely to be rated by their parents as well below average in English and mathematics; more likely to have been suspended or excluded from school; more likely to have poor social networks; and more likely to have been in trouble with the police than children from families with fewer or no family disadvantages" (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007 p10). The Social Exclusion Task Force (2007 p23) write "Living in a deprived neighbourhood is also associated with an increased risk of poor mental and physical health for parents and behavioural problems for children".

**Resilience has become associated with approaches that tackle the problems outlined above. This brief review of the evidence explores what is meant by the term resilience, and gives an overview of what schools can do to foster it in their pupils.**

What is Academic Resilience?

Resilience is a word that is growing ever more popular and is being used by lay people, professionals and researchers alike across the broad spectrum of human behaviour. Successive UK governments have drawn heavily on the concept in policy arenas, emphasising the importance of resilience with the production of two key documents. These are Richard Layard's (2005) report into mental health in Britain, stating that at that time, the UK Government was spending more on incapacity benefits due to mental health difficulties experienced by people, than on unemployment benefits; coupled with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2007) report on child well-being in rich countries, which ranked children's well-being in the UK the worst of all 21 developed nations surveyed (see [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc7\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc7_eng.pdf)). Also the national mental health strategy emphasises the financial cost of poor mental health to the country and the need for earlier intervention in childhood

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-framework-to-improve-mental-health-and-wellbeing>). Alongside this, guidance provided by NICE on emotional and mental health for schools highlight the relevance of a resilient approach (<http://www.nice.org.uk/Search.do?x=0&y=0&searchText=schools+resilience&newsearch=true>)

Due to the changing nature of how resilience is viewed by researchers, the definition of the construct itself has necessarily shifted with new knowledge and understanding. There are many versions of what resilience is. Here are some examples:

- **Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000 p543)** – resilience is “...a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.”
- **Masten (2001 p234)** - “Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon arising from ordinary human adaptation processes”.
- **McGrath and Noble** - resilience is “...the capacity of a person to address challenges and cope with times of adversity and hardship, and then return to a state of wellbeing” (McGrath and Noble, 2010).
- **Ungar (2010 p425)** - “In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to *navigate* their way to the psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to *negotiate* for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways”.
- **Rutter (1993)** - Both external (social) and internal factors interplay within the individual and resilience is not solely the result of what the individual has done as an outcome. Developmental changes, maturity and reaching milestones, for example, can all have an impact on the degrees of resilience experienced by people. The interpretation people make of their circumstances is key to determining outcomes. This is further supported by the ecological model (see below).
- **Hart, Blincow and Thomas (2007 p10)** – “...resilience is evident where people with persistently few assets and resources, and major vulnerabilities...have better outcomes than we might expect given their circumstances, and in comparison to what we know happens with other children in their contexts”.

This definition involves not just thinking about what individuals can do for themselves, but also the impact of their environments on them. It takes into account factors that are internal and external to people and encourages practitioners and young people to make ‘resilient moves’ in their lives. The importance of schools in developing resilience cannot be overstated – Masten, Herbers, Cutuli and Lafavor (2008 p1) write “Effective schools and teachers provide children on a daily basis with mastery experiences, opportunities to experience success and enjoy achievement that also serve to foster intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and persistence in the face of failure”. The emphasis on strategic planning and detailed practice underlines the systemic approach that needs to be taken by schools to most effectively foster academic resilience. This involves:

- Strategy and leadership (governance, policy, senior leadership)
  - Systems and structure (Information management, behaviour systems, procurement etc)
  - Pupils and staff (skills, training, roles and responsibilities)
  - Parents and community (carers, services, local authority ec)
- School culture (ethos and attitude)

The Resilience Framework (see d below) supports schools to identify strategies and interventions that can be used with pupils and followed through systemically.

Figure 2: Academic Resilience Framework

Insert Resilience Framework graphic here

For us, academic resilience means students achieving good educational outcomes despite adversity. For schools, promoting it involves strategic planning and detailed practice involving the whole school community to help vulnerable young people do better than their circumstances might have predicted.

**Academic resilience** is not just about supporting vulnerable pupils who come from backgrounds of disadvantage. As the above definitions illustrate, anyone may be exposed to adversity at any point in their lives and may not cope with it successfully. Pupils who achieve highly academically may start to fall behind because of additional pressures or risks they are faced with at different points in their school lives. Academic resilience considers how to support ALL pupils in a school, giving them skills and strategies to cope with these adversities, if and when they are exposed to them. However, there are some pupils who will clearly need more support because they are more profoundly, and more systematically disadvantaged than others.

## Risk Factors

There are many disadvantages and stressors that can have a negative impact upon pupils. These are called risk factors. Risk factors can include, but are not limited to:

- Perinatal stress
- Poverty
- Mothers with little formal education
- Family instability
- Parental alcoholism
- Poor parental mental health (Werner, 1989)
- Poor educational attainment
- Poor relationships with others
- Low peer and adult support
- Not engaging with the wider community
- Being exposed to negative life experiences, such as domestic violence, drug abuse in the family

- Not mastering life skills
- Low self-esteem and self confidence
- Having the feeling of little control or influence over one's own life (locus of control)

### **Protective Factors**

According to (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt and Target, 1994), resilient children are generally:

- of higher socio-economic status
- female gender if prepubescent (male gender from puberty)
- without organic deficits
- 'easy' temperamentally
- younger age at the time of experiencing trauma
- without early experience of separations or losses.

Unfortunately, this list does not apply to all pupils at all times and many face the challenges of dealing with these pre-existing factors, along with the types of risk factors listed above.

Protective factors that assist pupils to be academically resilient include;

- competent parenting
- a good (warm) relationship with at least one primary caregiver
- availability (in adulthood) of social support from spouse, family or other
- better network of informal relationships
- better educational experience
- organized religious activity and faith
- high IQ
- good problem-solving ability
- superior coping styles
- task related self-efficacy, autonomy or internal locus of control
- higher sense of self-worth
- interpersonal awareness and empathy
- willingness and capacity to plan
- sense of humour (Fonagy et al, 1994)

Schools are ideally placed to enhance these protective factors for pupils and have the potential to have huge impact on their academic resilience, teaching skills and strategies that alleviate exposure to current and future risk factors.

### **Impact of Academic Resilience on Attainment**

Research shows that pupils' attainment can be raised when their resilience is enhanced. Examples of this are seen in the following quotes and:

**“...resilience is highly correlated with academic achievement and educational success (Werner and Smith, 1992 in Hart et al, 2007 p85). Engaging in school and reaping its rewards both reflects and enhances a child’s capacity to succeed over the whole lifespan. For these reasons, it might be argued that a good education is resilience” Hart et al 2007 p85**



**“Better grades predict resilience” (Gonzalez and Padilla in Hart et al, 2007 p90).**

The top three winners in the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition “Resilience and Results” competition all found that whole school approaches to developing resilience in pupils raised attainment

(see [http://www.cypmhc.org.uk/schools\\_competition\\_2013/](http://www.cypmhc.org.uk/schools_competition_2013/))

The findings of The School Based Health Interventions and Academic Achievement in Washington (2009) supported the fact that “...implementing proven school-based health interventions is an opportunity to improve students’ academic achievement, well-being and quality of life”

(see <http://sboh.wa.gov>)

“...well-planned and well-implemented opportunities for supporting the social-emotional development of students can positively affect academic outcomes” (Dix, Slee, Lawson and Keeves, 2012 p45).

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011 p417) found that social and emotional learning programmes “...enhanced competencies and attitudes about self, others, and school...behavioural adjustment...and improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades”.

In their review of the impact of health and health behaviours on educational outcomes in high income countries, Suhrcke and de Paz Nieves (2012 p29) found

“...overwhelming support for the relationship between childhood and adolescent health and educational outcomes...through both educational achievement and academic performance”.

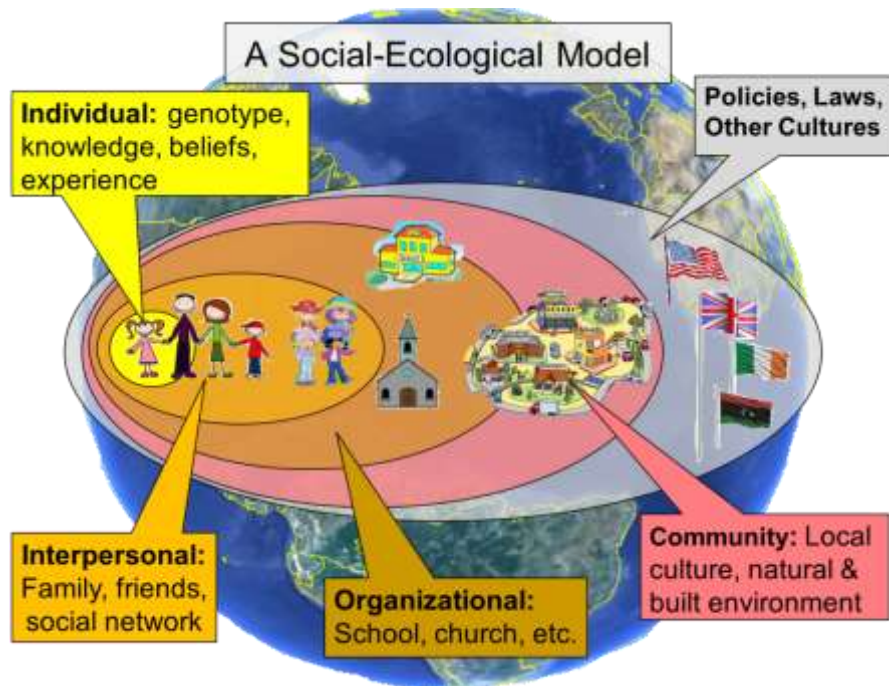
See <http://www.euro.who.int/en/home>

## **What can Schools do to Develop Academic Resilience?**

Academic resilience views pupils in a holistic way. The ecological model is a helpful way of considering how pupils can impact upon and are, in turn, impacted upon, by their wider communities (see RF I).

Insert ecological model here and make it resemble our own version:





Schools already use an ecological approach when working with pupils – they interact with (or are responsive to) Governmental policy (macrosystem), they consult with Local Authorities and other services (exosystem), they support parents and families (microsystem) and they work daily with pupils at an individual level. Developing pupils’ academic resilience on several levels is therefore not a new way of working for schools – it builds on what they already do. However, schools can use this approach to guide them as to how they can support pupils more fully – both across the school population and targeting those at increased risk of falling behind academically.

There are many strategies that schools can use which an Academic Resilience approach supports. Examples of these strategies include;

Glover (2009) recommends in the school context; **creation and maintenance of home-school links, positive school experiences, good and mutually trusting relationships with teachers, developing skills and opportunities for mastery and independence, having structured routines in place and providing breakfast and after school clubs.**

In their report “Closing the Gap”, Dyson, Gallanaugh, Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigelsworth (2010) found that **having high expectations, having a parent-school partnership with clear communication, behaviour contracts, commitment to reducing achievement gaps, monitoring academic performance data and planning interventions to address issues was successful.** They recommend **full service extended schools, multi-agency teams working together and alternative curriculum programmes, along with holistic approaches** (such as the

Resilience Framework approach see section/tab) and activities that build on pupils' **strengths and interests**.

The Social Exclusion Task Force (2007) quote authoritative parenting (high in control and warmth), **educational attainment, communicating aspiration**, strong family relationships and **building social and emotional skills** as all contributing toward building resilience in young people.

In recent international research conducted by Bonell, Parry, Wells, Jamal, Fletcher, Harden...and Moore, 2013), it was found that **schools that achieve better than expected attainment and attendance (value added) can reduce rates of substance abuse and violence**, whereas having policies that supported this reduction had little effect on pupil behaviour.

**Research recommends many ways that schools can be involved in supporting the academic resilience of pupils. There are a number of systemic initiatives already in place that have done a great deal of valuable work in this regard. Arguably the most important example from the UK is the evidence-based programme run by the charity Achievement for All. This has worked in partnership with government and other for many years to transform the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families by raising educational aspirations, access and achievement. Their programme has been delivered in over 400 schools across the UK and it has four elements. These are:**

Element 1: [Leadership](#) of Achievement for All - to ensure schools maintain a focus on the aspirations, access and achievement of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.

Element 2: [Teaching & Learning](#) - leading to improved progress for all pupils

Element 3: [Parental Engagement](#) - to improve parents' and carers' engagement with school and their child's learning

Element 4: [Wider Outcomes](#) - to support participation, enjoyment and achievement of children in all elements of school life.

Schools would be well advised to join in with such programmes where there is clear evidence that they are successful. The following are some strategies that research evidence demonstrates enhances pupils' academic resilience, many of which are endorsed by the practices of whole systems programmes such as Achievement for All.



## 1. High Quality Teaching and Learning (Learning, RF)

The Academic Resilience Approach takes its starting point from the recognition that schools should be doing all they can to ensure high quality teaching.

The Department for Education (2011 p58) stresses **the importance of the quality of teaching and learning**, writing “International evidence shows that the most important factor in effective school systems is the quality of teachers and teaching”. It goes on to state that **monitoring academic data is also crucial to pupil success**.

*Students who are academically engaged will ultimately show significantly higher grades, academic test scores, and performance on standards assessments” (Doll, Jones, Osborn, Dooley and Turner, 2011 p652).*

Cowen, Wyman and Work (1996) state that factor that predicted low risk for drug and alcohol use in later primary school age pupils and early adolescents was **reading achievement and global self-worth**.

However, for schools, drawing attention to the value of high quality teaching and learning in relation to resilience promotion and what has come to be known as ‘closing the gap’ between poor academic achievers and those who do well, is clearly a variation on the teaching grandmothers to suck eggs theme. However, we draw attention to this issue here, in case others need convincing.

In many countries, including the UK there have been clear and well-resourced policy initiatives that have produced impressive results in this regard. As mentioned above, the UK programme Achievement for All includes a fundamental focus on high quality teaching and learning with proven improvements in the academic achievements of those 20% of children who leave school with the poorest GCSE results (Blandford and Knowles 2013 **Achievement for All: Raising Aspirations, Access and Achievement**). Clearly with these outcomes, if schools are ready to get involved in a formal programme, they should seriously consider joining in with Achievement for All.

## 2. Significant Adults (Belonging, RF)

The importance of having a relationship with at least ONE significant adult in pupils’ lives has been demonstrated repeatedly in resilience research. Johnson and Howard (2007 p2) write “Children...are more likely to demonstrate resilient characteristics if they **attend schools that have good academic records and attentive, caring teachers**”.

Fergusson and Horwood (2003 p133) state “A number of studies have suggested that children from high risk backgrounds who either develop strong interests outside

the family or **form attachments with a confiding adult outside their immediately family may be more resilient to the effects of family adversity**".

### 3. Developing Talents and Interests (Coping and Core Self, RF)

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Review conducted by Ofsted in 2010 states that those **schools that ensured pupils had access to outside activities were more likely to be judged as good or outstanding**, according to Ofsted criteria (Ofsted, 2010).

Layard and Dunn (2009 p69) assert that "What did more [as opposed to school policies] to reduce unhealthy living was a **school ethos based on general principles of positive living – consideration for others, self-understanding and the cultivation of constructive interests**".

In order to experience success at school, Rutter (1993) writes "**Extracurricular activities of many kinds must be generally and generously available in schools**" (Wolff, 1995 p570). Experiences that foster self-esteem, self-efficacy and an internal locus of control are key (Quinton and Rutter, in Wolff, 1995).

**Problem solving** is another important aspect of development that an RF approach supports in pupils (Hart et al, 2007), and which needs to be prioritised by schools. The curriculum of course provides many naturally occurring opportunities to practice these.

### 4. Interpersonal Relationships (Belonging, RF)

Masten and Powell (2006 p7) write "In childhood, **antisocial behaviour appears to undermine academic achievement**, which, in turn, appears to contribute to later problems in multiple competence domains and internal well-being – an apparent *cascade effect*. However, children who leave their conduct problems behind in elementary school do not appear to have residual problems later in development..."

Axford, Blyth and Schepens (2010 p7) highlight the crucial role of having a **relationship with peers** as being "...of key importance to the development of resilience in a school context".

Pugh and Statham (in McAuley, Pecora and Rose, 2006 p283) state "Having a **special and trusted friend who can help them through difficult times** is one of the main protective factors for children as it is for adults".

A key aspect of developing relationships with others is also instilling a sense of having responsibilities and obligations toward others (Hart et al, 2007).

### 5. Supporting Parents/Carers (Basics, Belonging, RF)

Research also supports the crucial nature of schools supporting parents and carers and working in partnership with them. Johnson and Howard (2007 p3) write "...a risk

factor...**did not necessarily predict long-term negative outcomes if family and community support was strong**".

In their study of pupils in mainstream schools who have 'succeeded against the odds' Rees and Bailey (2003 p43) note "**Parenting that is nurturing, emotionally responsive, empathic of needs, consistent and respectful of responsibility is thought to lead to resilience**".

Hart (2012) asserts that if family support is not available to pupils, the next best environment to provide resilience enhancing factors is school. She states "Although the family has been implicated in providing a powerful protective factor this is not so for some children. **The school environment**, therefore, may be the next significant factor in supporting vulnerable children by creating a potentially resilience-enhancing environment...**so potent that for at least six hours a day it can override almost everything else in the lives of those children**" (Hart, 2012 p3). **If schools are able to provide effective parenting advice, support and programmes for families, pupils' academic resilience is furthered enhanced.**

## **6. Enjoying School (Learning, Coping, RF)**

Cyrulink (2009 pp124-125) highlights the importance of remembering the **impact that positive relationships at school** can have on children, writing "Children who were numb with unhappiness when they were being abused see no point in going to school because it means nothing to them and may even seem ridiculous. Compared with what lies in store for them when they go home at the end of the day, Pythagoras's theorem is just a joke...But **once an adult succeeds in knitting even the slightest bond with them, these children overinvest in school**...school becomes a place of happiness. **It is at school that the child meets friends and adults who talk to her nicely.** It is here that she plays at **being socialized and enjoys learning.** In such a context, **school becomes a place of warmth, gaiety and hope**".

In their review of wellbeing in childhood, Gutman, Brown, Akerman and Obolensjaya (2010 pvii) conclude e "**...children who enjoy primary school experience more positive change in their social and behavioural wellbeing** than those who did not enjoy school".

## **7. Planning for the Future (Learning, RF)**

Rutter (1993) writes that **positive experiences at school lead to better planning on the child's part** and that this planning can have **further positive effects later in life**, for example, a successful marriage. He states that planning key life decisions is important for people to have a sense of personal control over what happens in their lives (Rutter, 1999). **From the point of entry into this school, pupils and parents could be consulted with about short, medium and long term goals for the future** that could be used as part of a personalised learning plan for their period of enrolment at the school, to be reviewed regularly.

Johnson and Howard (2007 p11) support this, stating “The experience of displaying her talent in public had several very positive effects: knowing that she was good at something that set her apart from others; praise for her skills; and using it for the good of others all enhanced her sense of self worth. **Practice to maintain and improve her skills taught her persistence which she applied to other areas of her life.** Her musical activities put her in contact with a wide and diverse group of caring adults beyond the family, who knowing her circumstances, supported and cared for her and provided her with assistance, respite and advice when necessary. Music structured her plans for the future”.

## **Evidence-based school programmes that aim to foster resilience**

### **United Kingdom Resilience Programme**

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resilience-programme-evaluation-final-report>**

The UKRP was introduced into nine secondary schools (along with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and special schools), by three local authorities in Scotland in 2007. It was aimed at Year 7 pupils attending mainstream schools, with the goal of improving their emotional difficulties, rather than behavioural problems. In their evaluation of UKRP in 2010, Challen, Noden, West and Machin found that, the programme had positive short term improvements for pupils who were entitled to free school meals (FSM), had not attained the national targets in English or Maths at the end of Key Stage 2, or who had symptoms of anxiety or depression experienced a larger measured impact of UKRP on their depression and anxiety scores.

The overall impact of the UKRP was limited and not sustained over time. The evaluators write “There was no measured impact of workshops on behaviour scores or life satisfaction scores” (Challen et al, 2010 p4). The impact of the UKRP lasted for one year, with no observed impact two years on. This raises the issues of programmes that may be seen as “add ons” to a school’s provision, and also of sustainability of effect – not only is this an ethical issue whereby children need to be supported continually until skills are embedded (Lee, 1993), but also an economic one, where programmes need to be cost effective. Overall, in a meta analysis of the Penn Resilience Programme, (Brunwasser, Gillham and Kim, 2009, in Challen et al, 2010 p9) found “...very mixed results across studies”. It had little impact on pupil’s absence rates.

Interestingly, when considering the applicability of such a programme to children with complex needs, Hart and Heaver (2013) found this group of children were often left out of these programmes.

Some things to consider if implementing this programme in your school:

- A limitation of the UKRP is its applicability to children with complex needs (those who may need such support the most) because;
  - it relies on them *attending* school,

- extensive staff training is required which will certainly embed resilience approaches if successful but schools may not be able to accommodate easily,
- it may be seen to create “experts” in the field,
- it is costly,
- it hasn’t been written to take account of the range of complex needs and disadvantage that many pupils in the UK face and therefore needs adapting,
- it requires 18 discrete sessions of teaching. This could be very beneficial, particularly if emphasis is simultaneously put on creating an “ethos” of developing resilience throughout both the school and wider community.
- the authorities involved in the evaluations so far were self-selected and subsequently, results may have been gained that do not reflect a fair representation of UK school pupils.
- How well would the programme transfer to pupils in highly diverse UK Boroughs, especially in contexts of deprivation.
- What role did parental involvement and support play in achieving better results for some children?
- Are the materials accessible if English is not a family’s first language?

## Bounce Back

<http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/projects.php?p=cGikPTU3JmIkPTM2OA>

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Helen McGrath and Toni Noble (2011) designed the Bounce Back (BB) programme for developing wellbeing and resilience in children in Australia. The key aims of BB are to create positive, pro-social and resilient classrooms and schools, and to provide resources to enable staff to help their pupils develop resilient attitudes and behaviour (McGrath and Noble, 2011). BB materials were formatted to suit a UK population, and were introduced to 16 primary schools in Scotland in 2008. Mixed results were found across the schools, with 30% of classes showing a decrease in overall resilience scores. Reasons for this decrease are not accounted for by the authors. However, an overall increase of 2.25% in feelings of connectedness was reported by pupils, along with a 12.06% increase in pupils reporting more kindness to each other (Axford, Blythe and Schepens, 2010).

Some things to consider if implementing the BB programme in your school

- The materials produced to accompany the programme are user-friendly and easy to get hold of. You can buy the materials and just use them if you want without having to stick rigidly to a programme.
- The area where BB was introduced in the UK (Perth and Kinross) varies from some other UK contexts – the small population is spread geographically and has remote rural towns as part of its make up. The contexts of a rural village with lower class sizes and familiarity with peers contrasts starkly to growing up in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual city where population transience is the norm.
- How accessible is this programme to ALL pupils e.g. those living in disadvantage, coping with psychological and communication difficulties and having limited social support.

- The schools in the evaluation study were self-selected, so as with the UKRP sample, may not be representative of the wider UK.
- One of the methods used in this evaluation was self reporting on questionnaires – a method that many pupils may find difficult to access.
- BB is based on a particular definition of resilience. It deals with ‘every day set backs’, for example, feeling disappointed. This contrasts with some of the other definitions of resilience introduced above – coping with significant adversity, as opposed to daily set backs. The BB definition of resilience is “...the capacity of a person to address challenges and cope with times of adversity and hardship, and then return to a state of wellbeing” (McGrath and Noble, 2010 in Axford et al, 2010 p5). This assumes that one was in a state of wellbeing to begin with.
- BB also focuses on individuals, without recognising bi-directional child-environment interactions. It centres on the capacities an individual has, not viewing the person in an ecological model of resilience.

## FRIENDS

FRIENDS is a whole school cognitive-behavioural intervention that promotes emotional resilience in school children. An evaluation of it was completed by Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Carter, Osborn and Bush in 2005. This evaluation concluded that levels of anxiety reduced in pupils and self-esteem increased, it also had an impact on 60% of the pupils deemed in the “high risk” category.

Issues to consider if implementing FRIENDS in your school:

- staff who deliver the programme need to be trained in cognitive behaviour therapy – something that school staff aren’t necessarily familiar with.
- While research has demonstrated that children aged 7 and over are able to access the concepts of CBT, it also has to be delivered at a developmentally appropriate level – this may mean that some pupils are not able to access the programme successfully.
- Although this programme had positive effects on reducing anxiety and raising the self-esteem of 60% of “high risk” pupils, what about the other 40% that did not achieve these results? How would a school then provide for their needs?
- It was unclear from the evaluation whether the effects were sustained over time.

Adapted FRIENDS programme

None of the above programmes recognise the context of diversity and challenge living in disadvantage may have on children and young people living in the UK experience. They are mainly focused on the individual child, as opposed to also considering the possible impact the macro systems they live within may have upon them. These contexts have a huge impact on schools, their resources and their publicly measured results and must be acknowledged. An ecological model recognises these forces and the potential impact they can have on pupils in schools.

## Health Promoting Schools

[http://www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/gshi/hps/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/index.html)

The World Health Organisation (WHO), provides a framework for schools to assist them to develop policies that enhance overall health in pupils. According to the above WHO web site, a health promoting school:

- Fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal.
- Engages health and education officials, teachers, teachers' unions, students, parents, health providers and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place.
- Strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education, and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programmes for staff, nutrition and food safety programmes, opportunities for physical education and recreation, and programmes for counselling, social support and mental health promotion.
- Implements policies and practices that respect an individual's well being and dignity, provide multiple opportunities for success, and acknowledge good efforts and intentions as well as personal achievements.
- Strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members as well as pupils; and works with community leaders to help them understand how the community contributes to, or undermines, health and education.

However, the health promoting schools model does not provide a framework, based on resilience research, that guides schools on strategies that may work for individual pupils and their families. Its view is a broad one of school ethos and policies, leaving schools to determine practical, day to day strategies that may work for their pupils.

## Summary of resilience programme research

The existing programmes that aim explicitly to develop resilience in children and young people do not adequately address their differing contexts or their levels of experienced difficulties. The programmes focus on the individual child and what they can do to help themselves, without considering the wider social, community and political forces upon them that they may be powerless to have any impact on. They do not regard resilience ecologically. A seven year old child is unable to access financial resources so that her mother can buy more nutritious food; a ten year old boy cannot tell a school inspector that while he may be 'failing' according to their remit academically, he feels happier and better about himself than he did six months ago.

However, used wisely they can offer impetus to schools and create a set of practices around which other resilience-enhancing approaches can be developed. The biggest threat to their implementation and sustainability is that many of them are costly and require schools to follow a specific programme rigidly in order to get the best results. As an alternative, schools might want to consider implementing Achievement for All,

the programme we referred to at the beginning of this paper, rather than any of the explicit resilience building programme. In many cases it would be cheaper and it addresses many of the fundamentals of resilience building. Further exploration of that programme is beyond the scope of this briefing paper. However, the reference list provides further details, and the activities and approaches suggested on this website complement that programme, as well as many of the others.

## References

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