Positivity

Positivity refers to a person's tendency to see things (including him or herself) positively, or to adopt a positive stance when considering life, including past events and potential future events.

A basic human need is to feel a sense of belonging. Researchers have suggested that people need frequent contact and interaction with others that is mainly free of conflict. It is also suggested that people benefit from relationships that are stable, where others are concerned about their feelings and where there is a foreseeable future of it continuing. Recently there has been more interest in the importance of relationships as part of school life and how they can contribute to children and young people having an increased sense of belonging. Having a sense of belonging within a school involves feeling accepted, encouraged and included by others. It is important that children and young people feel they are part of the life of the school and are involved in school activities. Research has suggested that those who have a sense of belonging to their school setting are more likely to develop positive psychological, academic and social outcomes as well as having better health and wellbeing compared to those who feel disconnected.

In the survey we assess children's positivity through questions in five areas:

- How they feel about themselves (**Self-esteem**)
- Their view of their future academic life (**Optimism**)
- How satisfied they are with their current school environment (**Satisfaction**)
- How much they see school as a safe place to learn, take risks and get support (**Class climate**)
- How they feel about their school (**School belonging**)

Positivity has been included in the survey because of its documented links to children's learning at school and prosocial behaviour. The more positive children are, the better the overall school climate is found to be and the better a school climate is, the more positive pupils become. In this way children's positivity helps to create a learning environment that will benefit all pupils at school.

In terms of the different elements of positivity, self-esteem is known to be associated with adaptability and school belonging. We also know that optimism is associated with higher achievement and positive pupil outcomes and can mediate the relationship between anxiety and how children approach learning tasks. School satisfaction is linked to pupil achievement in a circular way: the more children are satisfied with school, the more they achieve, and the better their achievement is the more satisfied they are with their school environment. It is particularly linked to pupil adaptability and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy focuses on the belief a person holds about their capabilities and the outcomes from their efforts powerfully influences the way they behave. According to some psychologists these self-efficacy beliefs impact on the choices people make, how much they persevere and persist with tasks, and how they feel about challenges they face in their daily lives.

Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning supports schools to develop different aspects of self-efficacy. Firstly, it focuses on **Emotional self-efficacy**. This area looks at supporting children to identify, express and understand their emotions and in connecting how their emotions impact on their thoughts and behaviour. This is an important skill; those who lack emotional self-efficacy may find achieving life goals difficult.

The tool also supports staff to understand and develop **Interpersonal self-efficacy** in children. Interpersonal self-efficacy focuses on the ability to acquire and maintain pleasant relationships with those around you. This is obviously an important area as school life contains many and varied relationships which have to be navigated.

Finally, the strategies help staff and pupils to understand and develop **Academic self-efficacy** behaviours. The way that pupils view themselves in terms of their academic ability is important and can require support; there can be the tendency to focus more on negative aspects rather than positive ones. In addition, supporting children to develop skills which help them regulate their emotions and behaviours is important for them to succeed in school and beyond.

Motivation

Very simply, motivation is an area of psychology that seeks to understand why we do the things that we do (or don't do). Some researchers refer to it as a form of internal energy or 'drive' that compels us to move towards desirable outcomes, and away from unpleasant or undesirable outcomes. Motivation is often understood as having two main forms: extrinsic motivation – doing something that will result in some form of desirable reward or benefit, and intrinsic motivation – doing something because it is inherently satisfying. However, arguably the best way to understand motivation is to think of it not as a characteristic of a person but as a process that is engaged when we tackle a particular activity. As with all processes, its outcome can be influenced by a range of different factors. It is unlikely that any child is universally low in motivation. Looking at what tasks and activities children are highly motivated to engage with, and under what circumstances, is a useful starting point for any insights into why the same child may show low levels of motivation in relation to classroom activities. It is important to resist labelling a specific child as 'poorly motivated' as a result.

Motivation is clearly important to children's engagement in activities both inside and outside of school. In the survey, motivation is assessed from these perspectives:

- **Intrinsic motivation** – the extent to which children are motivated to learn by internally driven factors, such as personal curiosity or the desire to improve their understanding
- **Extrinsic motivation** – the extent to which children's learning is influenced by external rewards, praise, expectations and adverse consequences
- **Support** – the extent to which children feel that they have the interpersonal support that they need to engage in academic activities

Research into motivation has demonstrated links between motivation levels and a pupil's academic performance, adjustment and wellbeing. As a result, it is a key feature of children's experience of school and motivation levels are an important indicator of wider areas of concern.

Resilience and persistence

Resiliency focuses on the ability to 'bounce back' or stop yourself being knocked down when faced with difficulties or adversity. Researchers are interested in what factors might contribute to some people being more resilient than others. It would appear that resiliency can be nurtured. Furthermore, there are protective factors which can be in someone's life and support people even if they live in adverse circumstances or conditions. It would appear that the more protective factors someone has in their lives, the greater the chance of them displaying resiliency.

Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning supports teaching staff to help children to develop resiliency through providing activities that increase protective factors in their lives. These activities are designed to help teaching staff understand how resiliency can be nurtured through school-based activities. This is particularly important as research has suggested that schools which nurture resiliency can have far-reaching benefits for many children.

Schools are able to foster resiliency by providing safe and nurturing environments. This does not involve ignoring where difficulties may lie and still exist but it can 'tilt the balance' in a child's life to nurture protective factors.