

# YOUNG MINDS

## Teacher survey reveals mental health crisis in our classrooms

**94% of teachers have seen a rise in pupils presenting with mental health issues over the last five years, according to a new survey by the charity YoungMinds.**

The survey of 6,719 teachers [1] across the UK shows that almost every teacher comes into contact with children and young people with mental health problems in their classrooms as a normal part of their job – but that most do not feel the education system values wellbeing and mental health highly enough.

When asked if, in the last year, they had taught a child who they believed was experiencing mental health or wellbeing issues:

- 95% of teachers said they had taught a child who they believe is experiencing anxiety
- 60% of teachers said they had taught a child who they believe is self-harming
- 46% of teachers said they had taught a child who they believe is experiencing cyberbullying
- 44% of teachers said they had taught a child who they believe is experiencing suicidal thoughts
- 44% of teachers said they had taught a child who they believe has an eating disorder

Among the 5,095 teachers who had taught for more than five years, 94% said that they had seen an increase in pupils presenting with mental health problems over that period.

Teachers who responded to the survey said that they spent an average of 4.5 hours every week responding to concerns around their students' wellbeing or mental health. This translates to around 175 hours per teacher per year.

But the overwhelming majority of teachers believe that the education system does not provide sufficient resources or recognition for schools to allow schools to prioritise wellbeing:

- 93% agreed that the current education system places a greater focus on academic performance than the wellbeing of children and young people.
- 86% agreed that the Ofsted framework should be revised, so that there is a greater focus on wellbeing and mental health, with other elements scaled back

- 92% agreed that schools need more funding for wellbeing and mental health initiatives.
- 83% disagreed that teachers have sufficient support for their own wellbeing and mental health.

Alongside the publication of the survey results, YoungMinds is coordinating an open letter to Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's Chief Inspector, calling for wellbeing and mental health to receive increased emphasis in the inspection framework, which is due to be reviewed next year.

The letter is part of the charity's Wise Up campaign and has been signed by more than 20,000 people. [2]

Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of YoungMinds, said:

"These results clearly show that mental health is becoming a more and more prominent issue in our classrooms. While schools shouldn't be expected to do the job of specialist mental health services, they have an important role to play in promoting wellbeing and intervening quickly when problems first emerge.

"Many schools and teachers do amazing work in this area, but, sadly, the current education system doesn't place enough value on this. And so when schools have to make difficult decisions about how to spend their limited budgets, it can be hard for them to make wellbeing a priority.

"The government's plans to introduce Mental Health Support Teams in schools and a focus on wellbeing in Relationship and Sex Education lessons are very welcome. But promoting wellbeing isn't just about one lesson or one member of staff.

"That's why we hope Ofsted will build on their recent announcement that they will no longer focus on grades in inspections by guaranteeing that the new framework will have a far greater emphasis on wellbeing."

Young people who are leading YoungMinds' Wise Up campaign are delivering the open letter to Ofsted on Thursday, alongside an illustration of the "perfect school", which was inspired by the suggestions of hundreds of young people, parents and teachers across the country.

*For more information or interviews, contact Nick Harrop on [nick.harrop@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:nick.harrop@youngminds.org.uk) or 07494 512 742.*

## NOTES

[1] All figures are taken from a YoungMinds survey hosted on surveygizmo.eu in August 2018, and promoted through advertising targeting teachers on social media. There were responses from 6,719 teachers across the UK. 91% of respondents teach in England, 3.9% in Scotland, 3.5% in Wales and 1.2% in Northern Ireland. 7.9% of respondents teach in early years settings, 44% in primary schools, 47% in secondary schools, and 17.8% in sixth form colleges.

[2] The open letter is promoted at <https://act.youngminds.org.uk/wise-tell-ofsted-prioritise-wellbeing-schools> and reads as follows:

*Dear Amanda Spielman,*

*There is a mental health crisis in our classrooms, with mounting evidence suggesting mental health problems in children and young people are on the rise.*

*As I'm sure you agree, schools have a crucial role to play in promoting positive mental health. Many schools are already doing excellent work in this area, which can have real benefits for students' wider education. But this is not well enough reflected in the current inspection framework or in inspection reports.*

*This means that, when school leadership teams have to make difficult decisions about how to spend their limited budgets, it can be hard for them to make wellbeing initiatives a priority.*

*We very much welcome your recent announcement that the new inspection framework will no longer focus on exam results and grades. But we urge you to build on this by ensuring that wellbeing is at its heart.*

## **ABOUT WISE UP**

YoungMinds launched its Wise Up campaign in early 2017, calling for a rebalancing of the education system to make wellbeing a priority.

For more information, see [www.youngminds.org.uk/wiseup](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/wiseup)

## **ABOUT YOUNGMINDS**

Now in our 25<sup>th</sup> year, we are the leading charity fighting for young people's mental health. We're leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported through life, whatever the challenges. We're here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties.

For further information please visit [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

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