Rethinking Curriculum

The belonging and wellbeing evaluation framework

Delivering an expansive and inspiring curriculum for all

This evaluation framework has been developed by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the Rethinking Curriculum project, funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is one of a series of evaluation frameworks that have been shared as part of our Rethinking Curriculum toolkits.

The framework captures some of the key ideas explored in the Rethinking Curriculum **belonging and wellbeing** toolkit and offers some key ideas for you to evaluate your school's curriculum practice on this theme. These ideas are drawn from research and evidence and from our work with schools, and include input from leading experts.

The ideas explored are not intended to provide a definitive approach to curriculum development on this theme. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress, which we will aim to develop further as the evidence base continues to evolve. You are encouraged to consider this framework alongside the belonging and wellbeing toolkit and to undertake your own reading and research to build your understanding of the key ideas discussed prior to implementing changes in your context.

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Part 1a: Building a culture of belonging and wellbeing

Evaluation
Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence	Your evaluation (1–6)
✔ The school has adopted shared terminology and a clearly defined scope for belonging and wellbeing, developed collaboratively and communicated to staff at all levels. The definitions recognise the complexity of the terms, as well as the needs of the individual school community. This could include decisions around: ○ The expectations across the curriculum. ○ The expectations and role of the class teacher and other adults in ensuring a culture of wellbeing and belonging is evident across the school. ○ The inclusivity of opportunities for all pupils.	
✔ All pupils are entitled to participate in all school activities, and barriers are actively identified and removed to promote a strong sense of identity, culture and belonging across the school. This is regularly reviewed to ensure that the needs of new cohorts are met.	
✔ School systems and policies fully support and integrate wellbeing and belonging for all members of the school community and are regularly reviewed to identify and remove potential barriers. This includes access to appropriate resources, facilities and specialist staff support, where required.	
✔ All members of the school community—including pupils, staff at all levels, families and wider stakeholders—are supported and consulted to understand their experiences of belonging and their place within the school community. This evidence is used to inform and improve CPD, school systems and the curriculum.	
✔ Relationships underpin whole-school principles and approaches, and teachers are given the agency to build positive professional relationships with their classes and colleagues. School leadership actively supports and celebrates this.	

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do we ensure that expectations for fostering belonging and wellbeing are consistently communicated and embedded across all levels of the curriculum and in classroom practice?
2. How do we actively seek and incorporate feedback from all members of the school community to continually improve our approach to inclusivity and belonging?
3. What strategies can we develop to effectively support teachers in building positive relationships with their pupils, and how can school leadership further promote and support this work?

Common barriers
What might impede improvement?

Staff feel that the terms 'belonging' and 'wellbeing' are too abstract and are not clearly defined within the school, obscuring their intended meaning and scope.

Staff have a limited understanding of how to foster a strong sense of pupil belonging and wellbeing, resulting in surface-level approaches and missed opportunities.

Staff perceive fostering pupil belonging and wellbeing as the responsibility of pastoral teams and/or specific subjects, such as RSHE.

The school's vision for belonging and wellbeing is not clearly defined or communicated, resulting in only some teachers prioritising it.

School systems, such as planning expectations and assessment practices, do not sufficiently value belonging and wellbeing and may inhibit practitioners' ability to plan and deliver for this effectively.

External pressures, such as standardised assessments or inspection frameworks, can hinder the adoption of approaches that foster a strong sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Part 1b: Building a curriculum with belonging and wellbeing at the forefront

Evaluation
Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence	Your evaluation (1–6)
✔ The pedagogical rationale and shared vision for embedding belonging and wellbeing within the curriculum have been developed collaboratively and communicated across the school. This should establish a clear understanding of what belonging and wellbeing mean in practice and how they are fostered through teaching, learning and everyday classroom experiences.	
✔ Staff at all levels are (or will be) provided with ongoing CPD and opportunities to develop their understanding of how to foster belonging and wellbeing through the curriculum. This is regularly revisited and shaped by the identified needs of the team.	
✔ Clear expectations for how belonging and wellbeing are embedded within the curriculum at each stage of the school have been developed and shared. These expectations should allow for teacher agency in making pedagogical choices that are appropriate to the cohort, subject and context.	
✔ Curriculum planning has been carefully designed to provide meaningful opportunities for all pupils to experience belonging, connection, participation and success. This includes regularly reviewing curriculum content, teaching approaches and learning experiences to ensure they are inclusive, appropriately challenging and responsive to pupils' needs.	
✔ The school has committed sufficient time, resources and support to embedding belonging and wellbeing across the curriculum on a sustained basis. Staff are regularly involved in reviewing and developing curriculum approaches to ensure that these principles are consistently reflected across the school.	

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do we have a clear vision for what pupil belonging and wellbeing should look like at each stage of our school, and has this been effectively communicated to all stakeholders? Do we have a clear progression plan from EYFS to Year 6?
2. How do we build staff understanding, expertise and confidence in fostering pupil belonging and wellbeing through the curriculum, and how does/will our CPD respond to identified needs?
3. How effectively does our curriculum provide meaningful and inclusive opportunities for all pupils to experience belonging, connection, participation and success, including through extra-curricular opportunities?
4. How do we evaluate the impact of our curriculum approaches on pupils' experiences of belonging and wellbeing, and how do/will we use this evidence to review and improve our practice?

Common barriers
What might impede improvement?

An overcrowded curriculum and competing accountability pressures limit the time and capacity available to prioritise and embed this work across the curriculum.

Limited access to specialist expertise and ongoing CPD reduces staff confidence and consistency in embedding this work through curriculum planning and teaching.

The impact of this work can be difficult to evidence and evaluate, making it challenging to demonstrate its value and secure sustained investment.

Curriculum planning does not consistently build on pupils' previous experiences or provide a clear progression of opportunities to develop belonging, connection, participation and success.

Opportunities may be repeated or unevenly distributed, particularly where responsibility for the approach rests with an individual teacher or small number of staff.

Part 2: Key considerations for successful implementation

Evaluation
Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence	Your evaluation (1–6)
✔ Leaders clearly articulate the vision and values for belonging and wellbeing and communicate their importance across the school and wider community.	
✔ Leaders ensure that sufficient time, resources and supporting structures are in place to enable staff to deliver and develop a curriculum that effectively supports belonging and wellbeing.	
✔ Leaders build and sustain relationships with partners to provide expertise, resources and authentic learning opportunities, ensuring that the school community feels a strong sense of belonging and that wellbeing is supported and protected.	
✔ Implementation is developed as an iterative process, with collaborative cycles of planning, trialling, evaluating and refining. This is carefully aligned with other initiatives and staff capacity.	
✔ Teachers are supported to develop their expertise, including strong subject knowledge, a deep understanding of effective pedagogical approaches, and the ability to combine these with knowledge of the school curriculum, pupils' needs and the wider context to plan and implement the curriculum effectively. High-quality CPD is planned as a sequence rather than as a one-off event.	
✔ There is an appointed lead or champion (or team) for belonging and wellbeing who drives staff development, evaluates impact and develops partnerships.	

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is your school ready to implement a curriculum development activity in this area? Have you already evaluated existing practice using the full Rethinking Curriculum evaluation framework to ensure a strong foundation for this work?
2. Do you have a clear implementation plan? How will you involve staff in this process?
3. Is there existing capacity and/or how will you create capacity for this work? Is there anything that you will need to de-implement to enable this to happen?

Common barriers
What might impede improvement?

Leaders and/or staff find it difficult to articulate vision/goals/values.

Implementation may be rushed or insufficiently planned.

There is a lack of resources/time to support development of curriculum.

Curriculum changes are implemented wholesale, without sufficient consideration of context, school needs and/or capacity.

School leaders do not systematically seek staff input into curriculum development and, as a result, there may be a disconnect between the intended and enacted curriculum.

Curriculum changes are seen as a 'quick fix', with new ideas introduced with limited development or impact evaluation.

Teachers implement new approaches too quickly, without a clear rationale or understanding of how they align with the school context, ultimately resulting in a lack of impact on pupil learning.