

# 40 Top Tips for Educational Settings





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*As a Local Authority, we are continually striving to better support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment staff from different schools and settings across Edinburgh consulted with almost 450 children and young people for their views and suggestions. The following is a list of the most common responses that our children and young people told us were already working well in schools or that they thought would be helpful.*

***'If you keep things inside it can weigh you down, so it is good to speak to the teacher.'***

## **Ethos and Life of the School**

- ❖ Being greeted when we arrive in the morning or into class with a smile and a good morning makes you feel good.
- ❖ Spend more time getting to know us, build relationships as early as possible before support is really needed.
- ❖ Use assemblies to regularly raise awareness and promote mental health issues, signposting and support available, both in schools and the wider community.
- ❖ It is helpful when staff know and adapt to your personal circumstances.
- ❖ Clear timetables help us to know what the day will be like.
- ❖ Look for the deeper reasons behind the behaviour. Often when we are not listening or understanding the learning, there is something else going on.
- ❖ Learn from the teachers that have effective ways to help people behave without telling them off/punishments.
- ❖ Celebrate wider achievements and share stories of alternative routes to work and further education. Remember less than 50% of young people go to university.
- ❖ Ask senior pupils or community leaders to share success stories and real-life experiences about how they found school, how they felt, what they did, who they spoke to and how they feel now.
- ❖ Look after your wellbeing. We are more stressed when you are stressed.

***'Constant academic pressure and stress from staff and parents to do well in class, pass exams and go to university - it should not be the only thing that matters.'***

## **In the Classroom**

- ❖ Allow us to get to class and settled before asking us to take off our jackets.
- ❖ Having a stationery box in the classroom is really useful and saves embarrassment if you have forgotten a pen.
- ❖ When you get something wrong in class, it is great when the teacher helps you and doesn't get cross so you can learn from your mistakes.
- ❖ Consult with us more about what we want to learn and give us opportunities to problem solve together as a class.
- ❖ It is preferable when the teacher puts us into groups as it is less stressful and we get to work with new people.



- ❖ Please let us have access to water and toilets during class.
- ❖ More time for everyone to have a one to one with the teacher to speak about work and learning.
- ❖ If a child gets something wrong please be discreet about pointing it out or tell them off in private, don't do it in front of everyone.
- ❖ Please understand there are often good reasons why we are late, it is not because we are lazy.
- ❖ Consider having a relaxing 10 minutes built into the school day for quiet reading, drawing or mindfulness.

***'Understand that young people have lives outside of school and homework isn't always manageable in the allotted time. It also means we can't spend time at home just relaxing with family but family time improves wellbeing.'***

### **Before School, Break Times & After School Clubs**

- ❖ Breakfast clubs are a good start to the day and we appreciate spending time with staff in an informal way.
- ❖ Consider setting up a mental health and wellbeing group or ambassadors who meet regularly to share better ways to promote good mental health in school and put ideas into practice.
- ❖ We would like to have a calm and quiet space to go and relax inside at break and lunchtime.
- ❖ More adults in the playground at break and lunch to supervise and speak to.
- ❖ There should be a really good variety of clubs to go to and open to all (not just those who are doing it as a subject).
- ❖ Give everyone the same chances, for example girls football and boys netball clubs.
- ❖ Use senior pupils to run some clubs, they would be better to go to and would relate to us more.
- ❖ Offer homework clubs that have staff to help you and give you the materials you need.
- ❖ Emotional support groups such as Seasons for Growth and nurture, as well as maths and literacy groups are really helpful.
- ❖ The buddy/kindness benches need more focus and attention.

***'We would like more resources in the playground, sometimes we get bored and we think that is what causes disagreements and arguments outside which upsets people'***



## Support

- ❖ We feel supported when staff notice us and ask if we are OK, especially if we look visibly different, upset or messier than usual. It is even better when all staff do this not just in the classroom but office staff, janitors, librarians, etc.
- ❖ Have someone in the school who has the job of listening and helping with worries or problems on a 1-1 basis (preferably someone who you don't have to call Miss or Sir).
- ❖ Have a clear and confidential way (eg worry boxes, text system, emails) to ask for help and let us choose who we would feel most comfortable talking to.
- ❖ All schools should have a nurture room or safe, calm place where you can go to if you are needing support where it does not feel like a punishment.
- ❖ More information and posters around school to signpost to health and wellbeing support, making sure we know resources are there and how to contact them.
- ❖ Be sensitive about the language you use around wellbeing. Depression, OCD and bipolar are diagnosable conditions and should not be used flippantly.
- ❖ Being offered hot drinks or food at 1-1s really helps us to calm down and relax.
- ❖ Sometimes young people feel reluctant to come to pupil support as they feel they will always contact home. Make it clearer that over the age of 12 we have a right to privacy and what can and cannot be confidential.
- ❖ More classes on building resilience, self-care, life choices, mental wellbeing and the importance of sleep.
- ❖ Regular visits from partner agencies and stalls showing the support they offer are good.

*'Sometimes teachers don't have time and they just say 'sorry can you come back later' but if we need to tell them something it might have taken a lot of courage to build up to talking to them and then we get shut down. Please arrange an alternative time and place that suits you instead, otherwise we might find it too difficult to come back.'*

## Acknowledgements

### **Thanks to the staff, children and young people from the following schools and settings;**

Roseburn PS, Leith Academy, Niddrie Mill PS, Currie Community HS, Young Edinburgh Action, Redhall Special School, Corstorphine PS, Forrester HS, Leith PS, Drummond HS, Gracemount HS, Royal High School, Broomhouse PS, Hillwood PS, Trinity HS, Boroughmuir HS, Craigmount HS, St Augustine's RC HS, St David's RC PS, Canongate Youth, Sciennes PS, Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce, Balerno HS, Broughton HS, Newcraighall PS, Hermitage park PS, South Morningside PS, Pirniehall PS, Castlebrae HS, The Junction

This leaflet was produced by the Health and Wellbeing Team. For further information please email [growingconfidence@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:growingconfidence@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Young Minds – [www.youngminds.org.uk/youngminds-professionals/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/youngminds-professionals/)

Hands on Scotland – [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)

Mentally Healthy Schools – [www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk](http://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk)

Mental Health Foundation – [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

Pupil Support Inclusion Hub – <https://cityofedinburgheducation.sharepoint.com/sites/PsychologicalServices/inclusionhub/SitePages/Home.aspx>

