

# School Mental Health Manifesto Summary

Mental health in schools is an urgent and complex problem which affects the most vulnerable children and young people the hardest.

Yet, schools and colleges can make a huge impact if they adopt a strategic whole school approach.

All school staff have a key role to play in this and, in order to do so, they need to be well too.

This work is most effective when schools and colleges listen to, and partner with, children, young people and their families.

There is much more to learn and those who commit to creating mentally healthy schools and colleges are pioneers, developing the evidence and best practice the sector needs.

*Taking a holistic, strategic, preventive, proactive whole school approach requires schools and colleges to do five things:*

**① Think holistically:** Define holistic, child-centred aims for children and young people that include their physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as their academic achievement and access to broad opportunities.

**② Plan strategically:** Develop a vision for a mentally healthy environment where all can thrive. Create a coordinated, strategic plan for how to reach this vision and ensure staff at different levels have the appropriate expertise.

**③ Take preventive measures:** Adapt school culture, policies, processes, curriculum and teaching so that they protect and promote mental health and wellbeing, develop resilience, and equip the school community with the tools to support one another.

**④ Be proactive:** Shift from a reactive to a proactive mode, introducing systems to identify issues early on and clear pathways to internal support and external referral as needed.

**⑤ Be reflective:** Encourage staff to reflect on their practice and on their effect on children, young people, other staff and the wider community. Create spaces for constructive discussion and feedback.

[www.mindsahead.org.uk](http://www.mindsahead.org.uk)

*Developing staff and pupils to revolutionise  
mental health in schools and colleges*

Minds  
Ahead