National Children's Bureau

School belonging

A literature review by Goldsmiths, University of London on behalf of the National Children's Bureau

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Introduction

This literature review for the National Children's Bureau reviews the construct of School Belonging, internationally and within the UK educational context. It covers eight main topics: (1) Definitions and Theoretical Frameworks, (2) How to measure belonging, (3) Factors Influencing Sense of Belonging, (4) Impact on Academic Outcomes and (5) Impact on Psychosocial Wellbeing, (6) issues around Underrepresented Groups, (7) Best Practices, and (8) Policy Implications.

School Belonging is a very substantial research area. A search on Web of Science or similar search engines yields hundreds of potentially relevant articles. However, a majority are from the USA, and a substantial number from Australia and recently China. We focus on those articles from the UK, plus those that link school belonging directly to school bullying. However, we draw on articles from other countries where necessary, for example when they provide core constructs, or meta-analyses of many studies. Indeed, the founding definitional article is from the USA.

In writing the review we carried out a search in Web of Science, using key words school belonging, for the last 20 years (since the foundational article in 1993). We extracted relevant articles. We also used more specific searches. A number of narrative review articles, and meta-analyses, were very useful, also the regular PISA evaluations.

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Content

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Foreword by Anna Feuchtwang, CEO of the National Children's Bureau

The findings presented in this review paint a sobering picture of the current landscape of school belonging in the UK. It highlights how factors such as bullying, SEN and disability, teacher-student relationships, parental support, access to extracurricular activities, pupil wellbeing, academic achievements, and aspirations for the future intertwine to shape the way children and young people feel they belong in our schools.

As we navigate this terrain, it becomes evident that addressing the issue of belonging is not merely an academic pursuit; it is a moral imperative that speaks to the heart of our commitment to the wellbeing, equity, and development of our future generations.

This literature review serves as a call to action—a call for further research, understanding, and concerted efforts to foster a robust sense of belonging for all children in our schools. It is incumbent upon us, as educators, policymakers, and advocates, to engage in a collaborative pursuit that ensures every child, regardless of background or circumstance, feels a profound sense of belonging within the educational spaces that shape their formative years.

In conclusion, this literature review is a vital contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the wellbeing and development of our children. It is my hope that it will inspire further research, policy initiatives, and practical interventions to create a nurturing and inclusive schools where every child not only learns but also belongs.

Anna Feuchtwang
CEO of the National Children's Bureau

1. Examine Definitions and Theoretical Frameworks:

Provide an overview of various definitions and theoretical frameworks related to pupils' sense of belonging in educational settings.

Definitions

A foundation article for the area of school belonging was by two U.S. researchers, Carol Goodenow and Kathleen Grady (1993). They argued that a pupil's subjective sense of school belonging was "a potentially important influence on academic motivation, engagement, and participation" (p.60). Their definition of school belonging is embedded in their text as:

"students' sense of belonging in the school or classroom, that is, the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults in the school social environment" (pp.60-61).

This definition is often misquoted, for example in the reviews by Slaten et al. (2016), and Allen et al. (2018). A non-existent page number (p.30) is cited, and the phrase "– especially teachers and other adults" is omitted. The definition thus (mis)quoted is:

"the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment".

This definition can be considered an improvement on the original, as other students are largely recognized as an important factor in school belonging, in addition to teachers and other adults (Allen et al., 2021).

There are related terms to school belonging, such as school connectedness, school attachment, school engagement, school identification, and school bonding (Slaten et al., 2016). Thus, measurement is a crucial issue (next section). School belonging emphasizes relationships with others in the school community.

Theoretical Frameworks

In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1954) argued that humans have five fundamental needs (physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization). These are in a hierarchy, such that the need for belongingness would emerge only after the physiological and safety needs have been satisfied. This refers to feelings of belonging to family, friends, community and social groups.

An influential development of this was the *belongingness hypothesis* of Baumeister and Leary (1995). They take the need to belong as 'a need to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships' (p. 499). They argue that this is innate and based in evolution; belonging to or interacting with others is vitally important for protection, shared resources, and reproduction. They describe two main features of belonging – the need for frequent personal contacts with others, and the perception of a stable relationship. These are seen as fundamental to an individual's wellbeing, and an absence of belonging can contribute to poorer health and wellbeing.

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Social identity and social categorization theory can help distinguish school belonging or connectedness from the adjoining construct of school climate. School climate generally refers to the overall quality and character of school life. School belonging refers to the individual pupil's sense of connection to the school and its values. When pupils identify with a school they internalize the norms, values, and beliefs that define that school. School norms that champion respect and care (school climate) together with an individual's psychological connection to the school (school belonging) should impact on aspects such as bullying behavior (Turner et al., 2014).

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2. How to measure belonging:

Are there existing measures that we can draw upon?

Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)

Goodenough and Grady (1993) not only provided the foundational definition, but also a measurement scale. This was the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale, consisting of 18 items. Students rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item, on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates Not at all true, and 5 indicates Completely true; see Table 1.

Although often scored as one factor, some studies suggest that the PSSM can be conceptualized as a multidimensional instrument. You et al. (2010) found a 3-factor structure of caring relationships, acceptance and rejection. In a detailed critique, Ye and Wallace (2014) pointed out that the rejection factor mainly had negatively worded items (marked [Rev] in the table). In their own examination of the factor structure of the PSSM, they identified three substantive factors—identification and participation in school, perception of fitting in among peers, and generalized connection to teachers. These authors noted an imbalance of negatively worded items across these 3 factors, and argued that further research on the impact of this would be desirable.

Table 1: Items of the PSSM

I felt like a real part of (name of school).
People notice when I'm good at something.
It is hard for people like me to be accepted here. [Rev]
Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.
Most teachers at this school are interested in me.
Sometimes I don't feel as if I belong here. [Rev]
There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.
People at this school are friendly to me
Teachers here are not interested in people like me. [Rev]
I am included in lots of activities at this school.
I am treated with as much respect as other students.
I feel very different from most other students here. [Rev]
I can really be myself at this school
The teachers here respect me.
People here know I can do good work.
I wish I were in a different school. [Rev]
I feel proud of belonging to (name of school).
Other students here like me the way I am.

The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale Primary (PSSM-P) is a modification of the original 18-item PSSM, which has been found to be a reliable and valid measure of school belonging for primary school children in the UK, China, and USA (Wagle et al., 2018; Castro-Kemp et al., 2020). It has a nine-item unidimensional factor structure. Scoring is on a six-point scale: 1=No, never; 2=No, almost never; 3=Yes, sometimes; 4 = Yes, often; 5 = Yes, very often; 6 = Yes, always; see Table 2.

Table 2. Items of the PSSM-P

Do you feel like you are a real part of your school?
Are most teachers at your school interested in you?
Do you belong at your school?
Is there a teacher or other adult at school that you can talk to if you have a problem?
Are people at school friendly with you?
Are you included in a lot of school activities?
Are you treated with as much respect as other students?
Can you be yourself at school?

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Another frequently used measure of school belonging comes from the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, evaluations (OECD, 2019, 2023). PISA measures students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy, but also wellbeing, every three years; students are aged between 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months at the time of assessment and have completed at least 6 years of formal schooling. From PISA 2003 it includes 6 items which have been used as a School Belonging scale, with 3 positive and 3 negative items, each scored as 1–4, from "strongly agree' to "strongly disagree". These are unchanged since PISA 2015; see Table 3. Notably, the PISA scale does not directly mention teachers, but does mention classmates as well as school generally.

Table 3. Items from PISA 2015, 2018, 2022

I make friends easily at school
I feel like I belong at school
Other students seem to like me
I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school
I feel awkward and out of place in my school
I feel lonely at school

School Connectedness scale

Another similar and quite frequently used scale is the School Connectedness Scale (SCS), see O'Brennan & Furlong (2010) and Loukas et al. (2012). This has 5 items, with a response scale of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither disagree nor agree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5); see Table 4.

Table 4. Items from the SCS.

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school …"
I feel close to people at this school
I am happy to be at this school
I feel like I am part of this school
The teachers at this school treat students fairly
I feel safe in my school.

Other measures

Other measures include the Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (HMAC) (Karcher & Lee, 2001) used as a measure of school belonging for adolescents specifically across social connectedness, academic connectedness, and family connectedness, using 74 items on a 5-point scale. The School Engagement Instrument (SEI) (Appleton et al., 2006) measures students' cognitive and affective engagement within the school environment in six areas: future goals and aspirations, control and relevance of schoolwork, extrinsic motivation, family support for learning, peer support for learning, and teacher-student relationships. It has 35 items on a 4-point scale.

Prevalence and trajectory

Prevalence at an international level, and including the UK, comes from the PISA surveys. These have reported on school belonging in students around the world, every 3 years since 2003. Their most recent collection of data occurred in 2022 (the test was originally planned to take place in 2021 but was delayed by one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic). As the scale was revised for PISA 2015, only data collected in 2015 and 2018 are comparable to the data collected in 2022. Table 5 compares scores on the 6 school belonging items for the OECD averages in 2018 and 2022, compared to the UK. The scores are percent for agree or strongly agree (for the first 3 positively worded items), or disagree or strongly disagree (for the last 3 negatively worded items); thus, higher scores are better.

Scores on school belonging worsened from 2015 to 2018. OECD (2019, p.132) comments that "PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 asked students the same question about their sense of belonging at school. On average across OECD countries, students' sense of belonging generally deteriorated between 2015 and 2018. … This trend seems to be part of a gradual decline in students' sense of belonging at school over the past 15 years". This was true of the UK, with a worsening on all 6 items. However there has been some improvement in the average 2022 scores in the UK, notably for the item 'I feel like I

belong at school'. However UK does worse now on 'I feel awkward and out of place in my school'. PISA showed UK secondary pupils had second lowest life satisfaction compared to other OECD countries.

Table 5. Scores on sense of belonging at school from PISA 2015, 2016 and 2022.

UK scores on sense of belonging at school compared to OECD average, from PISA 2018 data: Source OECD 2019, Table III.B1.9.1, p.131, and compared to 2015 scores, source OECD 2017, Table III.7.4, p.345. Data for 2022 from OECD (2023), Annex B1, pp.313-322.

	UK 2015	UK 2018	OECD average 2018	UK 2022	OECD average 2022
I make friends easily at school	79	73	75	75	76
I feel like I belong at school	68	62	71	81	74
Other students seem to like me	88	85	81	84	82
I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school	80	75	80	81	83
I feel awkward and out of place in my school	80	76	80	74	79
I feel lonely at school	86	84	84	84	84
Average over 6 items	*80.2*	*75.8*	*78.5*	*79.8*	*79.7*

In general, the PISA surveys also show that school belonging is lower in disadvantaged neighborhoods, rural rather than city schools, and state rather than private schools.

These differences were not significant in the UK sample for 2018 (OECD 2019, p.133); however, they were significant in the UK sample for 2022 (post-covid), with a decrease in school belonging scores for disadvantaged students (a small increase for advantaged students) (OECD 2023, p.321).

The PISA 2022 survey also gives a breakdown of school belonging scores by nation in the UK; the findings are shown in Table 6. On all the items, Northern Ireland and Scotland score slightly higher than Wales and England.

Table 6. School belonging scores by UK region, from PISA 2022.

	UK	England	N. Ireland	Scotland	Wales
I make friends easily at school	75.3	75.0	78.8	77.2	75.5
I feel like I belong at school	80.5	80.2	81.2	83.2	81.1

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Other students seem to like me	84.3	83.5	85.8	87.0	87.4
I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school	80.7	80.3	84.5	85.5	79.7
I feel awkward and out of place in my school	74.2	74.1	76.4	75.9	71.4
I feel lonely at school	84.0	83.7	87.0	85.6	83.3
Average over 6 items	*79.8*	*79.5*	*82.3*	*82.4*	*79.7*

Internationally, school belonging tends to decrease as students grow older (Bora et al., 2023); however much of the evidence here comes from the USA. For example, Loukas et al. (2013) assessed school connectedness in 6th to 8th graders (10-14 years) in two middle schools in Texas. They found an overall decline in school connectedness throughout middle school. Although scores were higher for girls, scores for both boys and girls declined at the same rate. Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligni (2013) got data from 9th to 12th graders in 3 public schools in Los Angeles, with pupils from very mixed ethnic backgrounds. In ninth grade, school belonging in girls was higher than for boys; over the course of high school, however, girls' school belonging declined, whereas boys remained stable. An age decline on the PSSM measure was reported by Didaskalou et al. (2017) with secondary school pupils in Greece.

3. Factors Influencing Sense of Belonging:

Identify and analyse the factors that influence students' sense of belonging, including but not limited to school culture, social interactions, teacher-student relationships, peer support, and institutional policies.

There are many factors that influence a sense of school belonging among pupils. Teachers, peer relationships and peer support along with developmental influence, personal and demographic characteristics, parental support, extra curricula activities in school, geographical location, school climate and safety and pupil aspirations all influence a sense of school belonging. Each factor will be identified and analysed below.

Teacher-student relationships

'A teacher is a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence, or virtue, via the practice of teaching' (Wiki). However, their influence extends further than simply standing at the front of the classroom. Many studies indicate different personal attributes a teacher may possess and how these impact on the students' daily experience of school, including their influence on a sense of belonging. According to the Centre of Disease Control, an essential resource for students' sense of belonging comes from their teachers (Cai, 2022).

Students who experience teachers who show empathy towards them, which includes being available to listen to them, have an increased sense of school belonging. Cai and colleagues (2022) designed a study to investigate the relationship with teacher empathy and students' sense of school belonging. They used data from PISA 2018 that involves 75 countries and 506,317 mid-adolescent students. There was a significant positive relationship between teacher empathy and a students' sense of belonging. Studies by Shaw (2019) and Allen et al. (2021) similarly found that teachers being available to listen to students was an important factor which promoted feelings of school belonging for students. These studies support the fundamental assumption that empathy and being listened to is an essential part in forming connections among human beings which in this case, directly influences and promotes school belongingness.

Teacher support refers to teachers who promote mutual care, respect, encouragement, friendliness, and fairness (Allen et al., 2018). Their meta-analysis explored individual and social level factors that influenced school belonging with 10 identified themes. The average associations between each of the themes and school belonging were analysed. Teacher support was shown to be the strongest predictor of school belonging along with personal characteristics (Allen et al, 2018). Similarly, a systematic review explored how staff in secondary schools create a sense of belonging and a reoccurring theme emerging from the findings was the support offered to students on an individual level by teachers (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019). Therefore, a good and supportive relationship between teachers and their students has consistently been shown to be linked with positive outcomes for children.

Mutual care and respect given by teachers towards their students has been widely observed in studies and shown to be related to school belonging. Students who perceive their teachers as creating a caring environment where mutual respect is

displayed feel a greater sense of school belonging (Allen, 2018; Allen 2021; Anderman 2003; Wagle et al., 2021).

Friendliness and fairness have been observed to influence and promote school belonging among students, particularly fairness which is suggested to have greater impact with increasing school age (Allen et al., 2018; Shaw, 2019). Fairness is linked with the research on school belonging and the school classroom environment. Allen et al. (2021) reported that students felt more like they belonged at school when teachers treated their students fairly and promoted a lack of conflict in the classroom.

Emotional support and encouragement are attributes of teachers that are highlighted in numerous studies that influence the sense of school belonging for students; the Centre for Disease Control emphasises four factors that may increase school connectedness, one of which is school staff providing support and emotional support to their students (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Emotional support and encouragement can be felt when students feel a sense of connection with their teacher; it creates a space for the sharing of external factors in a student's life (Porter et al., 2021). Furthermore, it promotes and nurtures a sense of belonging for both the student and the teacher; when there is a merging of identities, attachments are formed and if repeated, continuity develops and reciprocal effects occur (Nind et al., 2012; Porter et al., 2021). Allen et al. (2016) highlight the importance of teachers' emotional support and they suggest that it is the most important factor in terms of creating a sense of belonging and is above the influence of parental figures.

The academic support provided by teachers is suggested to influence a sense of school belonging among pupils (Slaten, 2016). Students have reported increased feelings of school belongingness when teachers were perceived to promote mastery goal orientation in the classroom, so creating an environment where personal improvement, effort and progress are emphasised (Anderman, 2003; Slaten, 2016). Furthermore, teachers who apply the goal orientation theory approach are more likely to report student engagement in school (Allen et al., 2021; Anderman, 2003).

Jessiman et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of having good teacher-student relationships to strengthen a sense of school belonging as it allows other capacities, such as feeling autonomous and making healthy decisions to develop organically. Teachers having good relationships with their students has consistently shown to be linked with positive outcomes for students (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019). Negative interactions with teachers may indicate poor teacher-student relationships and may contribute to a lack of a sense of belonging at school (Sancho & Cline, 2021).

The association of teacher-student relationship with a sense of school belonging is supported, albeit at a weak level, by data from PISA. Chui (2016) used PISA 2002 findings and reported that students in more hierarchical cultures tended to have a lower sense of belonging at school, and that this was mediated by weaker teacher-student relationships. Hagenauer (2021) used the PISA 2015 dataset for Austrian students only and reported that the quality of teacher support was associated weakly with a student's sense of school belonging.

There are general concerns about the changes seen in UK school classrooms over the last 10 years. During this time, OFSTED have made changes to their assessments and require teachers to rate every aspect of what happens in their classroom. This is time

consuming and reduces the quality of time that could be spent in establishing relationships with students (Allen et al, 2021). In the 2019, a Teacher Workload Survey was performed, and the findings confirmed that teachers in the UK increasingly believe they are spending too much time on administrative tasks rather than promoting classroom cohesion (Partridge et al., 2020).

Peer relationships and peer support with developmental influence

Peer relationships have been identified as a direct contributor to a students' development of school belonging (Österman, 2000). It is suggested that positive social relations with peers create feelings of acceptance and closeness whereas students who are rejected by their peers may experience alienation, stress and social anxiety (Allen et al., 2018).

Similarly, peer support and peer acceptance refer to trust and openness with friends (Allen et al., 2018) and both have been associated with increasing a sense of school belonging (Wagle et al., 2021). An example presented in the literature is the peer support offered during extracurricular activities at school and this has been known to be a strong predictor of school belonging (Slaten, 2016). Ahmadi et al. (2020) investigated student level and school level variables related to a having a sense of school belonging. Their findings indicated that student level variables which included peer support are correlated with having an increased sense of school belongingness. Conversely, when students lack peer support and are not accepted, or who are ridiculed for being themselves, their sense of belonging is lower (Porter et al., 2021).

There is plenty of research available on how school belongingness is affected by having a friendship group. The literature suggests that having friends at school may facilitate a students' feeling of being connected to their school, thereby influencing a sense of school belonging (Allen et al., 2016). For example, a study by Sancho and Cline (2021) explored children's experience of transition between primary and secondary schools and their sense of school belonging. The findings highlighted a central theme following the transition to secondary school, which is that once friendships are established in school then so is a sense of belonging (Sancho & Cline, 2021). Shaw (2019) indicated that having a sense of belonging to school meant being part of a friendship group, so for the students in Years 7 to 9, the concept of a friendship group was the 'status quo' (Shaw, 2019). Hagenauer (2021) explored the association between students' perceptions of supportive relationships and their sense of belonging at school based on the PISA 2015 dataset for Austrian students. They confirmed that student relationships with their peers was the strongest factor of having high school belonging, even more than a supportive teacher relationship. Furthermore, Cemallcilar (2010) reported that satisfaction with social relationships emerged as a stronger predictor of having school belonging than satisfaction with the school environment. Craggs and Kelly (2018) explored students' views on "managed moves" and their sense of school belonging. A managed move facilitates an alternative to excluding vulnerable students in UK schools. Their findings revealed that a sense of school belonging resulted from positive relationships with peers, and furthermore, participants expressed the value of having sensitive and subtle peer support (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). However, some of the literature does not agree; Allen et al. (2018) in their meta-analysis indicated that peer friendships made less of a contribution to school belonging when compared with teacher or parent influences. A

suggestion is that it is the quality of the relationship that matters not just their presence (Allen et al., 2018).

Age is an important factor when reviewing peer influences on a sense of school belonging, especially during adolescence as it is a period of identity formation and shifting social relationships alongside increased self-consciousness and sensitivity to social comparison (Anderson, 2003; Allen et al., 2018).

Personal and demographic characteristics

Positive and negative aspects of a student's character have been consistently identified as an indicator of school belonging (Allen et al., 2018). Generally, for those who hold positive characteristics such as self-efficacy, conscientiousness and hope, these have all been shown to help foster a students' sense of school belonging. Conversely, negative characteristics such as depression, delinquency and substance use may lower a students' perceptions of school belonging (Allen & Kern, 2017; Kopershoek et al., 2019). Allen et al. (2018) reported in their systematic review that positive personal characteristics were the strongest predictor of school belonging alongside teacher support.

It is consistently reported that gender plays a role in influencing the levels of school belonging (Slaten, 2016). For example, Wagle et al. (2021) indicated that female students tended to report having higher psychological strengths alongside higher school belonging than male students. Similarly, this association was indicated by Allen et al. (2018), albeit a weak association. Another study by Lee (2021) explored the gender differences in character strength of kindness and its relationship to a sense of school belonging among Hong Kong secondary school-aged pupils. Students who perceived a greater sense of belonging tended to have higher levels of character strength of kindness, and female students performed higher than male students (Lee, 2021).

Race and ethnicity are factors that may affect a students' sense of school belonging (Slaten, 2016). Kuttner (2023) suggested that school belonging and a sense of belonging to other groups are connected, so students who have a stronger sense of racial or ethnic identity tended to show a stronger sense of belonging to the school. However, Allen at al. (2018) found no significant influence of race or ethnicity related to school belonging in their meta-analysis.

Parental support

A parent-child relationship is usually the first supportive relationship a child experiences, remaining throughout a lifetime and shifting as expected during adolescence (Allen et al., 2018). A number of studies indicate that parental support is strongly linked to one's sense of school belonging, including parental involvement in the school community which has been shown to foster school belongingness (Allen et al., 2016; Allen et al., 2018): when a parent or both parents provide support and show care, compassion and encouragement towards their child's schooling, it can facilitate a greater sense of connectedness to the school for the child. Chui et al. (2016) examined data from the PISA 2002 dataset to see if a sense of belonging at school might differ across countries with different cultural values. Family, school friends and teacher attributes had more influence on a sense of school belonging than country attributes such as those places

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with hierarchical cultures. Shaw (2019) analysed interview data from pupils attending two secondary schools in London on their perceptions of school belonging. They reported parental influence as having the capacity to make a child feel more connected to their school.

Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) can positively influence students' sense of school belonging. For example, Allen et al. (2018) and Allen et al. (2016) both identified that the number of extracurricular activities (ECAs)a student participates in relates to the levels of school belongingness. O'Donnell et al. (2023) examined ECAs on school belonging and its association on depressed mood with a sample of 3,850 students aged 12 years in Australia. Participating in ECAs predicted higher school belonging alongside reinforcing positive mental health outcomes. The effects of participation predicted higher school belonging even two years later (O'Donnell et al., 2023).

Some research findings reveal more contextual details about the effect of ECA involvement on school belonging. For example, Slaten (2016) found that engaging in extracurricular activities is indeed a positive predictor of school belonging for both female and male students; however, they found that only moderate participation was required, and being involved in too many ECAs did not increase a sense of belonging any further (Slaten, 2016). Shaw (2019) revealed further insight into the potential effects of ECAs on school belonging. Their findings identified the views of Year 7 and year 8 students who participated in ECAs and suggested that school belonging increased due to their participation, but it also made them feel like they had done something to help the school.

Geographical location

Different geographical locations have been suggested to have an influence on a sense of school belonging, for example Allen et al. in their meta-analysis (2018) reported the influence of school belonging is higher in rural and suburban areas than in urban areas. Rural and suburban areas may have smaller class sizes, less disciplinary problems, greater participation in ECAs and more teacher-student interaction synonymous with less densely populated places and these may be factors that increase school belonginess (Anderman, 2003). However, PISA findings suggest lower school belonging in rural schools (OECD 2019, p.133).

School climate and safety

A school's climate can significantly affect students and their sense of belonging at school. In the literature, school climate may also be referred to as school culture and it describes the infrastructure, social composition, physical surroundings and the shared assumptions, beliefs and values within a school (Jessiman, 2022). It is suggested that increased school belonging for adolescents can be influenced by the physical and psychosocial climate within a school and can set the stage for having positive perceptions of school (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Slaten, 2016). Furthermore, when the classroom environment is supportive it is more than just a space for interaction alone, it has the potential to influence individual identities and nurture and enrich relationships which all enhance school belonging (Anderman, 2003; Nind et al., 2012). Bora et al.

(2023) note that a students' sense of belonging has a strong relationship with the individual characteristics of the student as discussed, but as well the school climate has its influence too.

An environment that demonstrates fairness has been shown to influence a students' sense of school belonging. The structures and policies that govern a school climate can reflect an atmosphere of fairness (Allen et al., 2018). Physical and emotional safety within a school is consistently associated with school belonging (Slaten, 2016). Porter et al. (2021) found that unsupervised times of the day such as break time or lunch time made students feel less safe and affected their perception of connectedness. These times of the day were referred to as 'small pinch points' and impacted negatively on student interaction (Porter et al., 2021). Additionally, the authors reflected that to belong socially is to belong spatially and related to the allocation of space within a classroom including the seating plan (Porter et al., 2021; Riley, 2022). Therefore, the school setting relates to how safe and secure a student may feel in school and appears to be a significant dimension of school belonging (Allen et al., 2018; Craggs & Kelly, 2018).

School size is referenced as an aspect that can help foster a sense of belonging. Generally, mainstream secondary schools cater for more students than primary schools. A greater number of pupils can increase a sense of school belonging; firstly, there are more opportunities to meet people (Shaw, 2019), and secondly, tutor groups and informal socializing opportunities seem to facilitate more interaction and sense of belonging (Sancho & Cline, 2021).

School belonging and bullying

"If the school norms clearly oppose and address bullying then identification with the school should impact on individual bullying behavior" (Turner et al., 2014, p.323). There are a number of studies relating measures of school belonging (usually, school connectedness – a version of the SCS scale) and of bullying and victimization, mainly from the USA and more recently China. They consistently show bullying measures are higher when the sense of school belonging is lower.

Wilson (2004) gathered data from 9 middle and 10 high schools in the USA. A school connectedness scale related negatively to measures of physical and relational perpetration of aggression, and to being a victim of aggression.

You et al. (2008) obtained data from grades 5 to 12 in 4 schools in California. Children who were victims of bullying scored lower on all items of a school connectedness scale, especially when the victim experience involved a power imbalance.

O'Brennan and Furlong (2010) used the SCS with grades 8, 19 and 12 pupils from 6 middle and 4 high schools in California. The SCS scores related negatively to measures of physical and relational victimization, and most strongly to verbal victimization.

Loukas et al. (2012) used the SCS with 10-14 year olds from 3 middle schools in Texas.

The SCS scores related negatively to measures of overt and relational victimization.

Turner et al. (2014) used as 4-item school identification measure (e.g. 'I feel a strong sense of connection with this school') with grade 7 to 10 pupils from 4 high schools in Australia. Over 3 years, a positive change in school identification predicted a decrease in both bullying perpetration and peer victimisation over time, as also did a separate measure of school climate.

Gao and Chan (2015) gave the PSSM to 7th, 8th and 9th graders from a rural middle school in southwest China. They also assessed bullying perpetration, and future orientation (such as planning future education). The PSSM was negatively related to all forms of bullying perpetration; but it also mediated the relationship between bullying, and (lower) future orientation.

Duggins et al. (2016) used a 4-item version of the SCS with 7th to 10th grade pupils from a school in Georgia, USA. SCS scores were related negatively to both aggression and victimization scores.

Didaskalou et al. (2017) used the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) measure of school belonging with pupils from 15 public secondary schools in Greece. A measure of bullying victimization was most strongly predicted by the rejection factor of the PSSM.

Li et al. (2020) used the PSSM with 15 year olds in schools in a rural district of southwestern China. They found support for a mediation model, whereby bullying victimisation predicted lower academic achievement, but serially mediated by school belonging and school engagement – a finding most significant for boys.

Huang (2020) used PISA 2015 survey data from China. Both bullying victimisation and bullying climate had significant and negative relationships with students' science, maths and reading performance. Students' sense of belonging at school partially mediated the effects of both bullying victimisation and bullying climate on academic performance in science, maths and reading.

Xu and Fang (2021) used the PISA 2018 data and school belonging scale, from a large sample of students from 4 areas of mainland China. There was a negative relation of school belonging to bullying victimization. Furthermore, the level of school belonging mediated the relationship between bullying victimization experiences and lower subjective wellbeing.

Burgess et al. (2023) worked with secondary schools in a north-eastern rural area of the USA. They specifically examined bias-based bullying victimization (BBBV) using a 5 – item scale ("how often have other students harassed or bullied you for any of the following reasons?": race/ethnicity/national origin, gender, sexual orientation (or

perceived sexual orientation), physical/mental disability, and weight/physical appearance). BBBV was negatively related to school belonging, assessed with the PSSM. Furthermore, a significant mediation effect was found in that pupil perceptions of school fairness mediated the link between BBBV and school belonging.

Jiang et al. (2023) worked with grade 4 and 5 pupils from three elementary schools in Anhui, China. They used the 6-item PISA measure of school belonging. Besides bullying victimisation, they also measured perceived teacher unfairness. School belonging was negatively correlated with victimization; but in addition, the negative relationship from perceived teacher unfairness to victimization was mediated by school belonging.

Lo Cricchio et al. (2023) worked with secondary school pupils (mean age 13 years) from eight schools in Tuscany, Italy. Besides bullying victimization they used an eight-item school connectedness scale, and also measured school burnout (e.g. 'I feel overwhelmed by my schoolwork'). School connectedness was negatively correlated with victimization; but in addition, the longitudinal design supported a reciprocal relationship between school connectedness and school burnout.

Pupil aspirations

School belonging may significantly contribute to making future career decisions (Slaten, 2016). Some of the current literature indicates that when a student has a strong sense of belonging in school they are more confident in making a career decision. Therefore, the benefits of having school belongingness are palpable whilst at school and stretch into adulthood too (Riley, 2022; Slaten, 2016).

Summary

The current literature exposes a multitude of factors that influence a student's sense of school belonging. Peer relationships, teacher relationships, personal characteristics and school climate and safety are covered extensively in the current literature.

4. Impact on Academic Outcomes:

Investigate the relationship between pupils' sense of belonging and academic achievement, wellbeing and attendance rates.

Academic achievement and school belonging

The most quantifiable method to determine whether schools have equipped students with knowledge and skills is achieved through grades, assessments and performance on tests; 'quantified measures of academic achievement are considered the gold standard indication of school success' (Allen & Kern, 2017). A meta-analysis suggests that having a strong sense of school belonging significantly improves student outcomes (Craggs & Kelly, 2018), and more specifically, it may improve student academic achievement, motivation and engagement (Hagenauer, 2020). These motivational variables (Anderman, 2003) and other variables such as valuing of tasks, educational expectations and gender, and their relationship with school belonging are discussed below. It must be noted that generally there is a paucity of UK research studies on school belonging, and research with secondary school-aged pupils has been more common than of primary school-aged children.

Academic engagement and school belonging

Academic engagement has been linked with a student's sense of class belonging and is suggested as being one of the strongest predictors of academic performance (Anderman, 2003; Slaten, 2016). Components of academic engagement are cognitive, affective, metacognitive, social, task-related and communicative (Amerstorfer et al., 2019). It requires a student to be mentally and emotionally absorbed by a task set in class and often involves social interaction with peers and the teacher. Students who feel like they belong at school are more engaged and motivated overall (Kuttner, 2023). Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2004) explored the psychological and parental factors in relation to academic performance among African American adolescent students. School engagement along with educational expectations have the strongest relationship to academic performance.

In a longitudinal study Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligini (2013examined the fluctuations of school belonging over the years that a student attended secondary school in the USA. The years that showed students having higher school belonging were also the years they felt school was more enjoyable and more useful to them above their level of achievement. The results highlight the importance of school belonging for maintaining students' engagement during the teenage years (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligini, 2013). Worryingly, academic engagement is a global concern and the PISA 2018 study highlighted that around one in five adolescents reported low levels of academic engagement (Allen, 2016). Therefore, it is important that the results from the study by Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligini (2013) are addressed in attempt to bolster school belonginess especially during adolescence.

Academic motivation and school belonging

There is plenty of research to suggest the positive link between having an increased sense of school belonging and motivation and engagement being activated (Battistich et al., 1995; Finn, 1989; Hagenauer, 2020; Kuttner, 2023; Sari, 2012). Hornstra et al. (2014) investigated the effects of social economic status and ethnic classroom composition on increased student motivation and having a sense of classroom belonging. They found that ethnic minority students benefitted from being taught in classes with other ethnic minority students in terms of motivation and a sense of belonging, an important finding among increasingly diverse landscapes. Anderman (2003) looked at the changes in middle school students' sense of belonging in relation to motivation variables and average academic grades. Their findings suggested that prior school achievement and academic motivation variables were positively associated with students' sense of school belonging. Considering the paucity of research on a sense of school belonging in primary schools, this particular finding may reiterate the importance of understanding how school achievement appears for pre-adolescent age groups.

Academic achievement (grades), future success and school belonging

Every year, 630,000 pupils turn 11 years old in the UK and are assigned a school place (Burgess, 2020). It is estimated that between 10-20% of the difference in pupils' academic outcomes originates from the school they attend. This seems a moderate figure, however, a larger proportion of the difference in pupils' academic outcomes is influenced by other variables such as school experience (Anderman, 2003). One academic variable likely to influence a students' sense of belonging is academic achievement, as having a commitment to education is a factor that has been suggested to increase school connectedness (Craggs & Kelly, 2018).

Current research indicates the significant connection between school belongingness and academic achievement (Akar Vural et al., 2020), but some studies add further insight, highlighting that students with higher school belongingness tend to be more future orientated which increases academic achievement (Anderman, 2003; Adelabu, 2007; Shaw, 2019).

Having supportive peer friendships is known to increase a sense of school belonging (Delgado, 2015) and some studies explore this relationship in terms of academic achievement. Pittman and Richmond (2007) looked at the influence of the peer group on academic achievement, and their findings indicated that better perceived friendships lead to a stronger sense of school belonging, which in turn leads to more positive beliefs about one's learning which then relates to higher academic achievement.

Other research looked specifically at a particular aspect of learning and the impact of having positive emotions. For example, Deci et al. (1991) revealed students with a higher sense of school belonging seem to be ready to foster academics emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally. Furthermore, they found a positive relationship between school belonging and reading achievement so increased school belonging influenced reading ability. Meanwhile, Lam et al. (2015) found students with a greater sense of

school belonging experienced more positive emotions which in turn contributed to their academic success.

Low academic achievement is associated with having a low sense of school belonging. Allen et al. (2021) suggested that students who lack a sense of belonging are far more likely to engage in problematic behaviour and therefore experience low achievement. Furthermore, they may experience academic stress which is not buffered by having a sense of school belonging, which causes further deterioration both academically and emotionally.

A study by Hogberg (2023) was performed as a direct response to the PISA 2018 data results in Sweden. During the PISA 2018 data collection, Sweden was in the process of introducing different testing schemes and implementing earlier grading systems into their schools. The results from this particular PISA data collection captured the reforms and the study's findings coincided with a decline in a sense of school belonging among pupils in Sweden. Therefore, Hogberg (2023) confirmed the detrimental impact of extensive testing in schools and its effects on school belonging, and it may present a reason for declining school belonging rates around the world (Kuttner, 2023).

Subjective valuing of task, academic achievement and school belonging

Having a strong sense of school belonging seems to nurture students' formation of an emotional connection with school and this encourages them to value school and academic achievement (Adelabu, 2007). Additionally, a student's sense of belonging can be predicted by their subjective valuing of academic tasks assigned to them in school (Anderman, 2003). Craggs and Kelly (2018) reported a direct association between classroom belonging and intrinsic academic interest and value, and furthermore, those who experience high levels of school belonging showed increased academic attainment. Therefore, a sense of belonging appears to be a central component required for academic achievement; Finn (1989) summarises 'belonging attributes to the value adolescents attribute to academic work...it proposes meeting the need for belonging is a necessary precondition to higher needs, such as the desire for knowledge'.

Educational expectations, academic achievement and school belonging

If students believe that others are rooting for them such as teachers, peers and parents, they believe in having the (internal) resources for academic achievement (Finn, 1989). The expectation to be academically successful from oneself and significant others, seems to result in them accomplishing and completing academic tasks. Therefore, having a sense of belonging in school may facilitate expectancy of academic success (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Slaten (2016) reiterates this point by suggesting that one of the strongest predictors of academic performance is educational expectation.

Gender, academic achievement and school belonging

Gender is associated with school belonging and academic achievement and has been captured by several studies. For example, Adelabu (2007) reported that male pupils scored lower grades than females and were more likely to report feelings of rejection in school, indicating a lower sense of school belonging. Similarly, Akar Vural et al. (2020) indicated that male student academic achievement was lower than female students along with their subjective wellbeing. Sanchez (2005) suggested that female students perform better academically than males but found no gender differences with school belonging. Overall, the research appears to suggest female students have stronger levels of belonging and academic achievement.

Attendance rates and school belonging

A student's regular attendance at school sets the stage for academic success (Henderson et al., 2014). There are around 196 scheduled days in an academic year in the UK (UCL, 2023). The estimated absence rate in 2022-2023 for the UK is 7.5% overall, higher in secondary schools (14.7%), then special schools (14.2%) followed by primary schools (7.5%) (School attendance in England 2023). Six years ago, the overall absence rate was 4.5%. Missing school has a negative effect on academic achievement and there is evidence to suggest that the impact varies according to being absent at different times of the academic lifespan (Henderson et al., 2014). However, the overall impact is that learning suffers, with each day absent results in 0.3-0.4% decline in achievement (UCL, 2023). Difficulties with attendance are reported across the UK with the south-west region reporting the highest absences (9%) whilst the lowest absence rates are outer London (7.5%) (Long & Danechi, 2023). Alarmingly, the pandemic absence rate was 25.9% in 2020-2021 (Long & Danechi, 2023) and pupils with higher absences over KS4 had lower GCSE attainment (School attendance in England 2023).

The figures reported give an indication of absenteeism/attendance and its association to academic attainment. The literature suggests that school attendance is connected to multiple physical, social and environmental factors at community, school and individual levels (Henderson et al., 2014). Pupil absences happen either due to illness, truancy or natural obstacles or due to unexpected school closure (UCL, 2023). The variable that is absent here is school belongingness and its association with school attendance. Kuttner (2023) indicated that students who feel like they belong at school have higher attendance, similarly Allen (2016) reported that belongingness correlates with less absenteeism and less truancy whilst Cai (2022) mentioned a sense of school belonging leads to a decline in 'undesirable' outcomes such as absences.

Finn (1989) explored at-risk students and a sense of belonging with school attendance and posited an ''identification-participation model'' to account for school withdrawal among at-risk students. At-risk students have two attributes that place them more susceptible to educational difficulties. Firstly, status risk factors which have racial or ethnic origin and socioeconomic conditions, and secondly, behavioural risk factors which are related to participation in school such as arriving on time or completing assigned work. Finn (1989) suggested 'that unless students identify with the school to at least a minimal extent, feel that they belong as part of the school, and believe themselves to be welcomed, respected and valued by others, they may begin gradual

disengagement process of which officially dropping out is the only final step' (Finn, 1989). Risk

Other studies had similar findings, for example, Borman et al. (2019) reported that adolescent student who are transitioning between schools may experience a decrease in school belonging and this increases the risk of dropping out of school or becoming an 'early school leaver'. Hagneauer (2020) also showed a positive correlation between having a low sense of school belonging and school absenteeism, and additionally reported that students who were victimised by peers felt less connected to school and this resulted in more frequent absences.

Disengagement is the failure to develop a sense of school membership (Korpershoek et al, 2020). Research suggests that fostering belonging should be a key focus in schools when addressing absenteeism especially for at-risk or 'known absent' pupils, 'fostering belonging for otherwise invisible children prone to absences' (Riley, 2020).

Summary

A student's sense of school belonging is undoubtedly influenced by academic achievement, high grades appear to help reinforce school membership. Similarly, attendance is associated with how a student feels about school and how well they are doing at school academically.

5. Psychosocial Wellbeing:

Assess how a strong sense of belonging contributes to students' psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, and mental health within the school context.

A sense of belonging is the need to form and maintain at least a minimum number of interpersonal relationships based on trust, acceptance, love and support (Kuhn et al 2021). A sense of school belonging is critical to overall human functioning and is a protective factor against psychological distress across all age groups and all levels of socioeconomic status (King et al, 2022; Wagle, 2021). Wellbeing, mental health and self-esteem and their association with school belongingness will be assessed below, firstly well-being will be addressed.

Well-being

Wellbeing is about 'how we are doing 'and consists of several components: firstly, affective wellbeing focuses on positive and negative emotions and how happy people feel generally; secondly, cognitive wellbeing is the quality of people's lives overall or certain aspects of their lives; thirdly, eudaimonic or psychological wellbeing which looks at people's sense of meaning, purpose and autonomy (Good Childhood Report, 2022).

Overall, having a strong sense of school belonging is positively associated with wellbeing outcomes such as increased life satisfaction, confidence, positive affect (cheerfulness, pride, enthusiasm, energy and joy) and future aspirations (McCahey, 2021; Xu, 2021). Furthermore, it has been suggested that students with a greater sense of school belonging have superior psychological wellbeing (King et al., 2022).

There is a paucity of literature looking at primary school-aged pupils and their sense of school belonging both in the UK and globally, whereas adolescent or secondary school data seems more prolific. A study by Tian et al (2016) revealed that pupils aged between 9 to 14 years old who experienced higher levels of school belonging reported subsequent higher levels of school satisfaction and more frequent positive affect in school. Similar findings were reported by Moffa et al. (2016) who explored mental health, wellbeing and students' school belonging concurrently. Students who reported high life satisfaction and who experienced normative distress, so 'thriving', reported the highest sense of school belonging. Arslan (2018) explored the association between school belonging and wellbeing, distress and emotional health status among adolescents, and found a large positive association between school belonging and emotional wellbeing variables. Specifically, they found emotional wellbeing has a larger effect in comparison with emotional distress for school belonging, reaffirming emotional wellbeing as an important indicator of school belongingness among adolescents.

Transitioning between primary school and secondary school is an experience most children will undertake during their educational lifespan. To help understand any impact of school transition, Sancho and Cline (2012) explored the experiences of students during the first few weeks of school transition. Their findings indicated that students who had a sense of school belonging seemed to have more resilience which enabled proactive behaviour, a more positive attitude to learning and increased emotional wellbeing (Sancho & Cline, 2012).

Adolescence marks a time of physical and psychological development and the changes in relationships towards family, peers and school are profound. Mantak and Lijian (2023) performed a meta-analysis to explore school connectedness in relation to psychological wellbeing among adolescent students. Their findings supported the view that having strong school connectedness is associated with having higher levels of psychological wellbeing. However, it was noted that adolescents may become less reliant on school connectedness as a source of wellbeing as they get older which is an important finding in terms of developing appropriate interventions for this age group (Mantak & Lijian, 2023).

As mentioned, there is a paucity of UK research on school belongingness. However, Porter et al. (2021) recruited adolescents in three UK secondary schools to explore the barriers and supports to participation in school life and its relationship with their belongingness to school. One of the open-ended questions to be answered by participants was 'what things (if any) help you feel part of the school?'. The findings showed that 3.5% of participants answered 'nothing' would make them feel part of their school. It suggests a feeling of limited optimism or agency to bring about or even desire change due to negative school experiences. In turn, participants in this study reported lower scores for feeling part of the school.

Other research paints a stark picture of wellbeing overall among school children in the UK and may address some of the reasons for the decreases seen in school belongingness. For example, The Good Childhood Report (2022) collected responses from over 2000 children aged between 10 and 17 years old on their happiness levels with different aspects of their lives. The findings indicated that 11% of participants scored below the midpoint of overall life satisfaction scale, indicating low wellbeing, whilst 14.2% said they were unhappy with school, and particularly those students in KS3 and KS4. Findings from PISA have also been a source of concern, see Table 5. Finally, the HBSC 2018 dataset indicated that England, Scotland and Wales were among 6 countries out of 25 with the highest levels of schoolwork pressure among 15-year-olds, again another potential indicator of lower wellbeing figures.

Another issue happening in the UK is an unregulated but well-established practice of using isolation as a disciplinary punishment in mainstream secondary schools, known as isolation room booths. Condliffe (2023) explored how young people aged between 11-18 years old experience isolation room booths. The findings suggested that young people experienced feelings of sadness and anger as well as detachment because of this confinement. The Department of Education recently published statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education and states that schools have an important role to play in supporting mental health and wellbeing. Using this practice as a form of punishment may threaten the fundamental needs of belongingness and its impact on well-being and mental health (Condliffe, 2023).

Mental health

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables an individual to cope with daily life stresses (WHO, 2022). It includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being, and affects the way we think, feel and act. The World Health Organization recognises the school as a key setting for promotion of physical and mental health of young people (Childs-Fegredo, 2021). The Department of Education recognises that a

sense of belonging is a protective factor in building resilience for children (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). The fourth wave of the figures taken from the Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023 were released in November 2023. It reported that 20.3% of children and young people aged between 8 to 25 years had a probable mental disorder, the figure was 19.0% in 2022 (NHS Digital, 2023). Having a sense of school belonging may impact students' mental health and adjustment more than is realised as research indicates that mental health improves when students sense that they belong at school (Allen, 2022). Having a sense of school belonging and its relationship to mental health will follow.

School belonging has been recognised as a protective factor for youth suicidal behaviour. Having a sense of school belonging is linked to lower levels of suicidal ideation (King et al, 2022); longitudinal impact finds that school connectedness levels are associated with decreased suicidality across all age groups (Wagle et al., 2021). Woolfe (2008) captures the gravity of suicide among adolescents: "Adolescents are most affected by mattering. They need to belong in some way to an individual, family or group...If an individual comes to the realisation that they do not matter to others, that they are not part of a group, and that they are not needed, they may consider the significance of their continued existence" (Woolfe, 2008, p.11-14).

Olcon and colleagues (2017) explored the association between having a sense of school belonging and suicide ideation and attempts among a sample of Texan students aged 14 to 18 years. They reported that school bullying or being threatened or injured at school significantly increased suicidal ideation, whilst feeling unsafe at school increased suicide attempts behaviour. Having a sense of community belonging reduced both types of suicidal behaviours among youth. In England, according to the Office for National Statistics, suicide rates among young people aged between 15 to 19 years old, increased by 35% from 2020 to 2021, 147 to 198 young people, respectively (Disability Rights UK, 2022). The results confirmed that having a sense of school belonging is an important protective factor against suicide behaviours among adolescents.

Sleep is an important process that has mental, physical and psychological consequences for all age groups (Huynh & Gillen-O'Neel, 2016). Current data suggests 37.8% of children aged between 8 to 16 years had a problem with sleeping three or more times over a period of the previous 7 nights, the figure increased to 76.5% among those children with a probable mental disorder (NHS Digital, 2023). Therefore, many students attending school are not sleeping well and this impacts on their mental health. Research suggests that having a sense of school belonging may buffer the negative effects of worse sleep quality (Huynh & Gillen-O'Neel, 2016). It must be noted that this study was looking at the associations between ethnic discrimination and adolescent sleep.

Similar to research gleaned on wellbeing and having a sense of school belonging, the research conducted on mental health and having a sense of school belonging focuses on secondary school-aged children. Among this age group, a strong inverse association between school belonging and depressive symptoms is consistently reported (Parr et al., 2020). For example, Shochet et al. (2011) explored school belonging as an important predictor of negative affective problems during adolescence. They suggest that the psychological school belonging scale is comprised of three factors, these are caring relations, acceptance and rejection. Their findings indicated that it was the acceptance factor of school belongingness predicted current and future negative affective

problems. Parr and colleagues (2020) explored the importance of 'general' belonging to a community to understand the interrelationship with school belonging in predicting depression among adolescents. Despite 'general' belonging showing a larger correlation with reducing depressive symptoms than school belonging, the authors reiterated that general belonging is still strongly influenced by school belonging. They concluded that adolescents who reported higher levels of general belonging reported lower levels of depressive symptoms (Parr et al., 2020).

To capture a more systematic overview of school belonging and mental health, Kopershoek et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analytic review on the relationship between school belonging and socio-emotional behaviour as well as academic functioning. Their findings from 82 studies revealed a moderate positive correlation with socio-emotional outcomes and school belonging. The authors acknowledge that the associations are small, but the results clearly highlight the importance school belonging appears to play in school settings (Kopershoek et al., 2020).

Psychological distress, emotional instability and school bullying are reported to affect a sense of school belonging. For example, Wagle (2021) reported primary school students who experienced the highest levels of psychological distress had the lowest school belonging; Allen (2018) indicated that having emotional instability had a sizable impact on the levels of school belongingness felt by students (Allen 2018), whilst Arslan (2022) reported students who experience school bullying have greater challenges in their social relationships and in turn, reduced their sense of school belonging.

There is an increasing percentage of children and young people who experience feeling lonely. The current figures estimate around 5.5% of 11 to 16 years in the UK say they often or always feel lonely (NHS Digital, 2023). Palikara (2021) explored the relationship between wellbeing, school belonging and loneliness among primary school children in London. Their findings indicated school belonging partially mediated the relationship between wellbeing and loneliness. They concluded 'when developing interventions...these will only have an impact on children's feelings of loneliness if they change their perceived sense of school belonging' (Palikara, 2021).

Self esteem

Self-esteem refers to feelings of one's own value and worth (Rosenberg, 1995). Individuals with high self-esteem generally view themselves in positive terms believing they have worth and are valued and respected by others (Watson, 2017). They feel empowered to take charge of their lives and grow in healthy and productive ways. Having low self-esteem means an individual views themselves in negative terms, are dissatisfied with their life and are self-deprecating in their thoughts, actions and communications.

Self-esteem plays its part in creating a stronger sense of school belonging. For example, a meta-analysis examining the extent to which ten different themes relate to school belongingness (academic motivation, emotional stability, personal characteristics, parent support, peer support, teacher support, gender, race and ethnicity, extracurricular activities and environment/school safety), the theme most strongly influencing school belonging was having positive personal characteristics (Allen et al., 2018). Positive personal characteristics include conscientiousness, optimism and self-

esteem, which emphasises the importance of self-esteem and having a strong sense of school belonging. Similar findings are reported by Ma (2010), who explored mental and physical conditions, and individual and family characteristics and their relationships with a students' sense of belonging. The findings revealed high self-esteem was the single most important predictor of their sense of school belonging. Watson (2017) also assessed 'mattering', considered as the quantity and quality of attention someone receives from other people, so the presence of an individual makes an impact and is noticed. This study indicated that self-esteem along with mattering are required to experience school belonging and overall wellness.

Summary

Having a strong sense of school belonging contributes positively to children and young peoples' wellbeing, mental health and self-esteem. However, data from the UK is limited, and less research is available for primary school-aged children. A sense of belonging in school is a basic requirement to fully experience and optimise school life.

6. Underrepresented Groups:

Explore the unique challenges and opportunities in nurturing a sense of belonging among underrepresented and marginalised CYP populations in UK schools, including minority ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ pupils, and pupils with SEND.

Underrepresented and marginalised populations include ethnic minorities, refugees, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), special educational needs and disability (SEND) and poverty. We explore the unique challenges and opportunities to nurture a sense of school belonging for children and young people who fall into these groups.

Ethnic minorities

Historically, minority ethnic groups may struggle with a sense to belong because their social identities make them vulnerable to negative stereotyping and racial stigmatisation (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). Furthermore, when minority identity is threatened, experiences of exclusion, discrimination, or negative stereotyping signal to these students that their identities are devalued, and they will feel less belonging (Celeste et al., 2019). A lower sense of belonging erodes student engagement exposing these individuals to academic failure, school dropout alongside other psychological outcomes (Holt et al., 2008). As children and young people spend more time in school, feelings of being connected and respected take on heightened significance (Graham et al., 2022). Schools have an opportunity to nurture these cultural differences by shaping the curriculum so that minority ethnic groups 'experience belonging in continuity with their ancestral heritage' (Gray et al., 2018, p.100). When schools tailor their approach accordingly, two positive outcomes are achieved: firstly, by creating a positive intergroup climate that communicates social identity valuation, this positive diversity approach predicts enhanced minority belonging and better achievement (Heikemp et al., 2020); secondly, stemming from Piaget's concept of disequilibrium, majority ethnic groups benefit from being around people who are different as children develop cognitively in part through working through contradictions, therefore diversity forces children to do that (Conway-Turner et al., 2023).

England is a multi-ethnic country where diversity plays a key role; birth rates of ethnic minorities and immigration from European communities and commonwealth countries are surging (Demie & See, 2022). It is evident that minority ethnic children appear systematically disadvantaged in the English education system (Boyle, 2022). Furthermore, research on minority ethnic groups and their sense of school belonging is sparce. Existing evidence suggests for these individuals a sense of school belongingness is low. For example, Biggart et al. (2013) recruited 711 school children in Northern Ireland to explore their experience of belonging and exclusion. Participants comprised of the three main ethnic groups in Northern Ireland; Irish Traveller, Chinese/Asian and European migrant children. The study examined variations between each group and how they compare to the White settled population. Findings indicated all three groups experienced lower levels of belonging and higher levels of exclusion than their white settled Northern Irish peers, Irish Traveller children reported the lowest experiences. Challenges for ethnic minority groups may even occur outside the school gates. A study by Wallace (2018) reported experiences of black Caribbean school pupils travelling to and from school in London. These individuals were six and half times more likely to

experience 'stop and search' and for those who were searched, these street encounters affected their sense of security and belonging.

More research on minority ethnic groups and a sense of school belonging has been published in other countries where challenges continue to be reported. Celeste et al. (2019) examined diversity approaches within school policies to see which approach predicted smaller ethnic gaps in belonging and achievement. Their findings indicated that in less diverse schools, minority students felt significantly less belonging than majority students, whereas schools with high multiculturalism reported no gaps in belonging. Meanwhile, Burgess et al. (2022) examined bias-based bullying (BBB) and its relationship with race, gender, sexuality and school belonging. Bias-based bullying is a phenomenon where youths are targeted based on race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The sample consisted of 2600 adolescent pupils in North America and results indicated BBB victimisation had a direct and significant association with a lower perception of school belonging. Furthermore, it highlighted how the effects of discrimination are influenced by the presence of either a stressful or supportive environment. Other research studies have captured opportunities for nurturing a sense of belonging among minority ethnic groups in schools: Graham et al. (2022) reported how feelings of school belonging increased when an individual's own racial group is relatively large; Morris et al. (2020) examined racial discrimination and school belonging among 344 black youths and reported similar findings to Graham et al. (2022). Furthermore, high levels of school belonging demonstrated a buffering effect for racial discrimination stress; Heikemp et al. (2020) used a sample of 1050 students from 52 Belgium secondary schools. Their findings indicated that when minority peers in mixed classrooms collectively perceived a more positive diversity climate, individual minority youth felt more belonging and their belonging was less negatively associated with personal experiences of discrimination; Holt et al. (2008) performed a Randomised Control Trial to see whether a 5-month adult mentoring intervention delivered by staff personnel would enhance urban minority school related cognitions and behaviours. The findings reported significant and positive effects of mentoring in areas of perceived teacher support, school belonging, and decision making. Additionally, adolescent school bonding increased with participation, indicating that weekly school-based mentoring endorsed higher levels of school belonging when compared to the control group.

Refugees

Schools all over the world face challenges accommodating children from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds (Celeste et al., 2019). Upon arrival, refugees must cross three psychological barriers: firstly, to understand the habits, rules and customs of their new territories; secondly, they may be carrying traumatic memories of their home country's disintegration following war; and finally, navigating their way through an immigration maze (Kohli & Mather, 2003).

Free movement and extension of EU membership to eastern and central countries led to a substantial increase in migration to the UK; foreign-born population of the UK has nearly doubled from 2004-2017 (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). Each year, around 5,000 refugees arrive in the UK who are under 18 years old, and between 2-3,000 unaccompanied minors apply for asylum (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). Schools are the 'first port of call' for migrant families upon arrival to the UK and consequently, there are

claims from primary and secondary schools being 'stretched to breaking point' by immigrant children of eastern European origin (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017).

Students from migrant backgrounds experience a range of challenges that can adversely affect their sense of belonging and wellbeing (Schweitzer et al., 2021). Migrant children have challenging needs stemming from disruption to schooling or being too young for school and/or negative life experiences such as living in conflict zones (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). Additionally, migrant children may have little proficiency with the English language and are unfamiliar with teaching, learning and cultural aspects of school life in the UK. Schools are not always prepared to deal with new arrivals due to the diverse range of complex needs (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017; Riley, 2020). A critical issue for children of refugee families is worrying about whether 'others' feel they have the right to be in the country (Riley, 2020), furthermore having a sense of school belongingness. A paucity of UK research data exists with one study by Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) available. They explored ways in which 15 schools integrated migrant pupils into the school community. Findings revealed that migrant pupils make a positive contribution to school communities with buddy and ambassador schemes benefiting the non-migrant pupils too (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). However, many challenges were revealed such as financial restraints of schools that placed limits on the support available, such as hiring specialist staff (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017; Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019).

Research from other countries provides a further understanding of refugee minority children and how they experience a sense of school belonging. Altinyelkin (2009) highlighted educational challenges experienced by migrant girls attending primary schools in Turkey. These included adaptation, language, low-socio-economic background, school belonging and integration. Using a sample of 61 participants comprising of migrant and non-migrant pupils and parents, their findings revealed unique challenges that migrant girls experience which impact their sense of school belonging. For example, migrant girls may have more attendance problems due to being asked to stay at home and take over household responsibilities when sickness or additional family members are born, and parents preferring not to send their daughters into school once they reached puberty as are expected to marry early.

Two studies captured opportunities to nurture a sense of school belonging among refugee children. Schweitzer et al. (2021) conducted a study in a specialised school for newly arrived students from non-English speaking migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker backgrounds in Australia. A series of creative and narrative workshops among 31 members of the school community took place where implicit knowledge of inclusive schooling practices was captured. Findings revealed three key themes that helped social inclusivity among refugee pupils in school: promoting student acculturation by helping students adapt to their new environment; fostering socially supportive relationships; fostering a students' school belonging. Furthermore, visual representations, responses to stimuli such as taste and smell and providing a welcoming space nurtured a sense of belonging among this group. Pupils were able to construct their experiences of belonging through memories and nostalgia in combination with their experiences and interactions with the present. Meanwhile, Cardeli et al. (2020) explored Bhutanese refugees who have resettled in America; over 94,000 Bhutanese refugees have arrived since 2008. Struggles with resettlement include acculturation difficulties, financial insecurity and separation may increase vulnerability to mental

health problems. Their study explored the effectiveness of 12-week skills-based intervention on 34 Bhutanese refugee students aged between 11-15 years. It was a component of Trauma Systems therapy for Refugees. Findings indicated that this intervention is an effective way of addressing their specific psychosocial needs and highlighted the protective role that school belonging plays in reducing refugee pupils' vulnerability.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender pupils

The World Health Organisation emphasises the importance of health-promoting school environments to promote social connection and well-being (Ullman, 2022). The Salamanca Statement indicated that schools must be inclusive to all groups of students, such as those with religious, ethnic or social characteristics (Hope and Hall, 2018). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are a marginalised group. Schools often and unwittingly contribute to LGBT students' sense of isolation, despite considerable improvements in understanding this community over the last 10 years (Harris et al, 2022). Educational research into transgender students' secondary school experiences is an emerging field, one of which has experienced exponential growth in the past five years due to the increasing visibility of trans youth in school settings (McBride, 2021). Historically, this community experience peer victimisation, prejudice and marginalisation in school settings underpinned by gendered privileges and disadvantages formed under cisnormativity (Hatchel et al., 2018; McBride, 2021).

One UK research study recruited six secondary schools from diverse areas to explore the extent to which they provided a supportive LGBT environment (Harris et al., 2022). Findings reported that schools contributed to these pupils' sense of isolation rather than nurturing a sense of belongingness. For example, students reported their experiences of gendered spaces as a place to be victimised by peers as often out of sight from teacher observation; further isolation ensued as students were reluctant to report issues in school to parent/carers as feared their LGBT status would be communicated home; the school curriculum reported concerns about LGBT topics largely absent from lessons further contributing to a sense of isolation with huge variation of awareness in attempts to include these topics by teachers. Harris et al. (2022) concluded that any meaningful change requires focus on the school culture and a critiquing of heteronormative and cisgendered norms.

Global data reported a similar picture, McBride (2021) reviewed 83 empirical studies which provided insight into secondary school experiences for transgender youth. A few studies reported examples of schools providing affirmative experiences, such as accepting a young person's self-determined gender identity and providing an inclusive curriculum, both of which enhance school belonging. Findings affirmed the view that cisnormativity is institutionalised within secondary school environments and these expose transgender youth to educational inequalities and personal harm. Ullman (2022) focused on experiences of secondary school pupils to understand how the reported school climate, with respect to gender and sexual diversity, is related to a student's sense of school-based wellbeing, academic self-concept, educational behaviours and aspirations. Findings indicated transgender participants reported lower well-being scores, with the largest mean score differences variable for the sense of connectedness. It highlighted the impact of "cisnormative" microaggressions on transgender students' sense of school belonging. Attempts to provide schools with 'safe spaces' for those

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who identify as LGBT have been explored with mixed results. For example, a study by Hope and Hall (2018) explored 'affirming schools' to see whether they have a place within inclusive education systems. The findings reported a negative result questioning whether these schools could potentially be perceived as segregating students from their peers and therefore undermining the vision of inclusive education.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

Increasingly children with additional support needs are educated alongside peers in inclusive schools (Prince & Hadwin, 2013). A rough guiding principle deems mainstream schools should accommodate children and young people regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional conditions (Dimitrellou, 2017). Furthermore, every pupil must have opportunities to participate continually and meaningfully in school activities at all levels; being physically integrated into a school is not sufficient to ensure full participation (Vetoniemi & Karna, 2019). In the UK, various reforms have taken place to maintain pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in mainstream schools, such as The Green Paper, The SEN Code of Practice and The Children and Families Act (Dimitrellou & Male 2020; Midgen et al., 2019). Government statistics for England consistently show children with SEND are more likely to experience both fixed and permanent exclusions and more likely to be sent home for 'cool off or calm down 'periods or when there no staff present to support them (Porter & Ingram, 2021). Despite the Department of Education encouraging all schools to adopt inclusive practices, the data is indicative of the prevailing level of unmet needs for this group in mainstream education (Dimitrellou, 2017). Limited attention has been given to exploring a sense of school belonging for pupils with SEND. A sense of belonging has been reported to make positive contributions to the educational experiences for those young people with SEND (Porter & Ingram, 2021). Other countries have indicated similar experiences for example Carter et al. (2016) reported 28 % of students with multiple disabilities spend at least 40% of their day in general education classes in secondary school in America, whilst Finland has gradually increased putting pupils with SEND into mainstream schools (Pesonen et al., 2016).

UK research has highlighted the barriers and the facilitators of nurturing a sense of school belonging among this group. Barriers were captured in two studies: Dimitrellou and Male (2020) explored schooling experiences of pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health challenges (SEMH) and those with Mild Learning Disability (MLD). Findings indicated ineffective structures in relation to the start and end of the school day, duration of lessons, lack of commitment to do work and uninspiring lessons; Porter and Ingram (2021) recruited four secondary schools and 108 pupils with SEND reported being particularly vulnerable to feeling disconnected from their school. Opportunities to facilitate a sense of belonging among pupils with SEND were captured in two studies, Midgen et al. (2019) and Porter and Ingram (2021). The former reported four key themes: relationships, the school environment, teaching and extra-curricular activities (ECAs) with the most important theme being relationships, the latter reported ECAs.

Data from other countries reported a more in-depth understanding of nurturing a sense of school belonging among SEND pupils. Some of the challenges were highlighted by Graham et al. (2014) who explored the extent to which transportation difficulties were associated with socioemotional wellbeing for those with disability: a prerequisite to student learning is getting to school and into the classroom. Children with disability

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often get to and from school in specialised school buses and the findings indicated transportation problems predicted more school stressors, less school belonging and more depressive symptoms. A study by Vetoniemi and Karna (2019) focused on narratives of four SEN pupils concerning their social participation in mainstream school. The findings reported pupils' experiences of the school environment aredetermined and shaped by how they feel about themselves, as pupils, and as members of a group. Additionally, the pupils' experiences and emotions relating to the school environment were often negative with the school environment not accommodating their SEND needs. Carter et al (2016) and Pesonen et al. (2016) highlighted the nurturing of school belonging among SEND pupils. The former study conducted a randomised controlled trial to examine the efficacy of peer support to improve academic and social outcomes for 51 students with severe disabilities in mainstream school in America. Special educators were recruited to support 106 peers to provide individualised academic and social assistance to these students for one term. Findings indicated those receiving support experienced increased interactions with peers, increased academic engagement, more progress on individualised social goals, increased social participation and a greater number of new friends. The latter examined conceptions associated with school belonging among Finnish pupils with SEND and similar to the findings by Midgen et al. (2019), they reported pupil relationships with adults, equality among adults, respectful and supportive school climate were important concepts.

Poverty

Poverty or disadvantage brings both uncertainty and insecurity, it can penetrate deep into social and interpersonal relationships, sapping self-esteem and undermining children's confidence (Ridge, 2011). Interestingly, the educational attainment gap in English and maths between disadvantaged 16-year-olds and their peers at the end of secondary school is 18 months (Wilson & McGuire, 2021). A trend of poverty and disadvantage may continue into adulthood with those individuals having reduced employment opportunities and lower income (Banjeree, 2016).

Research data from the UK is sparce. One study by Castro-Kemp et al. (2020) examined how belongingness and other socio-demographic variables can predict membership to a specific profile of socio-emotional health in primary school children in England. A sample of 522 children were recruited from three primary schools in London who were in Key stage 2. Two primary schools were in the top 25% of most affluent local authorities while the third school was placed in the top 25% most disadvantaged. Results indicated that a child who lives in a disadvantaged local authority and experiences lower levels of school membership is more likely to score lower on socio-emotional health. The effects of poverty and belongingness radiate among the parent/carers too. Wilson and McGuire (2021) examined the perceived barriers faced by families supporting their children's education, particularly those from areas of significant poverty. Findings reported two themes; feeling viewed as 'being lesser' in some way and stigma due to undesired differentness. 'Being lesser' was judged by their ascribed social identities such as a single parent, the latter theme where parents felt teachers were not listening to them in meetings.

Summary

It is clear from evidence published in the UK and from around the world that unrepresented and marginalised children and young people experience a sense of school belonging compromised differently according to the group they belong to. Each group has its own unique challenges and opportunities to nurture school belongingness.

7. Best Practices:

Identify and synthesise any available best practices, interventions, and strategies employed in UK schools to enhance pupils' sense of belonging. (there may well not be much literature available here)

Much of the evidence and advice on best practices comes from the USA. In 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) held a convention to develop tactics for bolstering students' perceptions of school belonging. They developed the Wingspread Declaration on School Connections (2004) which identified the following 6 strategies for increasing students' belonging to and connection with their school:

- Implementing high standards and expectations and providing academic support to all students.

- Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced.

- Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families.

- Hiring and supporting capable teachers skilled in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner's needs.

- Fostering high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion.

- Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school.

This was followed up by the CDC in a later publication on school connectedness (CDC, 2009) which reviewed relevant evidence and came up with 6 slightly revised strategies:

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement; academic achievement; and staff empowerment.

- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.

- Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.

- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.

- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

In the UK, the National Education Union sponsored two reports. Belonging, Behaviour and Inclusion in Schools: What Does Research Tell Us? (Allen et al., 2020) reviews relevant research and similarly argues for the importance of 'the quality of teacher relationships with students, sense of belonging and enhancement of social and emotional learning' (p.7). Place and Belonging in School: Why it Matters Today: Case Studies (Riley et al., 2020) gives evidence of good practice in these respects, from 4 primary schools and 1 school in England.

How good is the evidence for these strategies being effective? Allen et al. (2022) searched and found 22 relevant studies between 1999 and 2021: 14 had randomised control trials, and 8 were quasi-experimental. The majority of the studies (14) were from the United States, 3 were in Australia, and 1 each in Canada, Israel, Nigeria, Spain, and Uganda. Overall, findings were positive: successful interventions targeted students' strengths and promoted positive interactions between students and between school staff and students. Studies were very varied in terms of definition, measurement and outcome measures, and many studies measured a variety of related outcome variables (such as school climate) that included school belonging as a component but did not report the effect separately. The authors concluded that 'It was not possible to specifically pinpoint which types of interventions seemed to work better than others' (p.252).

The Global Belonging Collaborative is an organisation with a mission to 'enhance belonging worldwide by providing scientists, teachers, practitioners, and the general public with information, tools, resources, and opportunities to collaborate, network, and share research and resources related to belonging'. Based in the USA, it has representatives from the UK, Australia, and other countries. The website at https://www.globalbelonging.org/ has resources, and information about the start of a new journal, the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection.

8. Policy Implications:

Analyse the policy implications of the findings, offering recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to promote a greater sense of belonging among pupils.

School Belonging can be defined and measured and is a vital component of student mental health and well-being. As such, we recommend that it be measured routinely, that schools are cognizant of its importance and take steps to improve scores on this measure; and that they are supported in doing this, notably through teacher training opportunities. Besides general measures, under-represented or marginalized groups will need special attention. Recommendations are presented and summarized again at the end of this section.

School belonging can be defined and measured: the standard definition appears satisfactory, so **we recommend** it is used:

A student's sense of belonging in the school or classroom is the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment:

- This includes relationships with teachers and other adults, and with other pupils - both important aspects.

School belonging is separate from but complementary to, school climate. If school climate is positive, then identifying with these school values will be beneficial. For example, 'If the school norms clearly oppose and address bullying then identification with the school should impact on individual bullying behavior'.

How to measure – PSSM and PISA measures

Goodenough and Grady (1993) not only provided the foundational definition, but also a measurement scale; the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale. The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale Primary (PSSM-P) is a modification of the original 18-item PSSM, found to be a reliable and valid measure of school belonging for primary school children in the UK, China, and USA. It has a nine-item unidimensional factor structure.

Another frequently used measure of school belonging comes from the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, evaluations (OECD, 2019, 2023). In these surveys, every 3 years, it includes (since 2003) 6 items which have been used as a School Belonging scale, with 3 positive and 3 negative items, each scored as 1–4, from "strongly agree' to "strongly disagree". These are unchanged since PISA 2015. Notably, the PISA scale does not directly mention teachers, but does mention classmates as well as school generally.

We recommend that either the PSSM and PSSM-P, or the PISA scales, are used for measurement. The PISA scales have the advantage of being shorter, and used internationally, but the disadvantage of not including pupil-teacher relationships explicitly. It would be easy to add 1 or 2 PSSM teacher items to PISA, although some comparability with other PISA scores would be compromised. **A small research project**

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might examine adding a couple of items to the 6-item PISA scale, perhaps in collaboration with the PISA authorities.

We recommend that it be used routinely; PISA surveys provide a global perspective, but more widespread use in UK schools should be considered.

School belonging is a vital component of student mental health and well-being, that needs to be fostered. The importance of social relationships for wellbeing is underpinned by theories in social and evolutionary psychology, notably the belongingness hypothesis of Baumeister and Leary. They see the need for frequent personal contacts with others, and the perception of a stable relationship, as fundamental to an individual's wellbeing, and an absence of belonging can contribute to poorer health and wellbeing. Indeed, the empirical evidence globally strongly supports this assertion. When school belonging is higher, school attendance is higher, students have better academic motivation and achievement, a better sense of well-being, and there are lower rates of bullying in the school.

Schools and school management and teachers have key roles in fostering school belonging, and **we recommend** that they be encouraged and supported to address this.

We know factors that can promote school belonging and also, some practices that may be detrimental to SB.

There are many factors that positively influence a sense of school belonging among pupils.

a) Teachers: Teacher support refers to teachers who promote mutual care, respect, encouragement, friendliness, and fairness. Friendliness and fairness have been observed to influence and promote school belonging among students, particularly fairness which is suggested to have greater impact with increasing school age.

b) Peer relationships and peer support: peer support practices are correlated with having an increased sense of school belongingness. The peer group has an important influence on academic achievement, and better perceived friendships lead to a stronger sense of school belonging, which in turn leads to more positive beliefs about one's learning which then relates to higher academic achievement.

c) Parental support: parental support is strongly linked to one's sense of school belonging, including parental involvement in the school community which has been shown to foster school belongingness.

d) Extra curricula activities in school (ECAs): these can positively influence a students' sense of school belonging. However, only moderate participation is required; being involved in too many ECAs may not increase a sense of belonging any further.

e) Supervision: unsupervised times of the day such as break time or lunch time made students feel less safe and affected their perception of connectedness.

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Recommendation: schools work to foster teacher support for pupils; peer support practices; parental involvement and support; ECAs in moderation; and break time and lunch time supervision.

Some practices may be detrimental to school belonging

(1)   Over the last 10 years OFSTED have made changes to their assessments and require teachers to rate every aspect of what happens in their classroom. This is time consuming and reduces the quality of time that could be spent establishing relationships with students. In 2019, a Teacher Workload Survey confirmed that teachers in the UK increasingly believe they are spending too much time on administrative tasks rather than promoting classroom cohesion.

(2)   Another issue in the UK is the practice of using isolation as a disciplinary punishment in mainstream secondary schools, known as isolation room booths. Young people experience feelings of sadness and anger as well as detachment because of this confinement. Using this practice as a form of punishment may threaten the fundamental needs of belongingness and its impact on well-being and mental health.

(3)   The detrimental impact of extensive testing in schools and its effects on school belonging, may present a reason for declining school belonging rates around the world.

Recommendation: schools may wish to give more time to teachers to work on establishing relationships with pupils; and try to avoid punishments such as isolation; and over-extensive testing.

Besides general measures, under-represented or marginalized groups will need special attention.

Research with SEN/D pupils suggests that what makes a positive school experience for them is interesting lessons, effective control of challenging behaviour, equal allocation of teachers' support and positive relations with teachers and peers (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020).

Research with LGBT+ pupils finds that victimisation can occur in spaces which school policy compel them to use, such as specific peer support venues. Despite good intentions, isolation can be exacerbated by the way schools operate regarding policy, integration and knowledge. Schools need to focus on this and have clear guidance on use of gendered spaces (Harris et al., 2022). LGBT+ issues should be covered in curriculum, and teachers lack confidence and initiative to plan LGBT+-related content.

Regarding ethnic minorities, policymakers need to address educational contexts where there is limited cross-race peer interactions in schools.

For all of these possibly marginalised groups, group work activities can be helpful for fostering peer relationships. Throughout, the voices of pupils themselves can be a powerful tool to inform inclusive practice; they know best what is affecting them, whether positively or adversely.

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Recommendation: schools may wish to give special attention to groups of pupils less likely to have a strong sense of school belonging. Best procedures may vary with context, but group work may enhance pupil relationships; overall, accessing views of these pupils (pupil voice) should be used to refine best practice in the school context.

Data from the UK is limited.

Much of the research on effects of school belonging comes from the USA or other countries. Also, less research is available for primary school-aged children. There is a paucity of literature looking at primary school-aged pupils and their sense of school belonging both in the UK and globally, whereas adolescent or secondary school data seems more available.

Recommendation: more UK-based research is needed on the impact of school belonging, and school practices that affect it in either positive or negative ways. This need is particularly pressing in primary schools.

The Wingspread Declaration on School Connections (2004) identified the following 6 strategies for increasing students' belonging to and connection with their school:

- Implementing high standards and expectations and providing academic support to all students.

- Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced.

- Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families.

- Hiring and supporting capable teachers skilled in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner's needs.

- Fostering high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion.

- Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school.

CDC in a later publication on school connectedness (CDC, 2009) which reviewed relevant evidence and came up with 6 slightly revised strategies:

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement; academic achievement; and staff empowerment.

- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.

- Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.

- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

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- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.

- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

Successful interventions targeted students' strengths and promoted positive interactions between students and between school staff and students; it was not possible to specifically pinpoint which types of interventions seemed to work better than others.

Recommendation: although based on US practice, these strategies provide an excellent summary, broadly applicable in the UK. A clear need throughout is for more training opportunities for teachers on the importance of school belonging and on how it can be facilitated.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) **The standard definition of school belonging appears satisfactory**, so we recommend it is used:
  "A student's sense of belonging in the school or classroom is the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment."

(2) **Either the PSSM and PSM-P, or the PISA scales, be used for measurement. The PISA scales have the advantage of being shorter, and used internationally, but the disadvantage of not including pupil-teacher relationships explicitly. A small research project might examine adding a couple of items to the 6-item PISA scale, perhaps in collaboration with the PISA authorities.**

  a. **We recommend that a possibly revised scale be used routinely; PISA surveys provide a global perspective, but more widespread use in UK schools should be considered.**

(3) **Schools and school management and teachers have key roles in fostering school belonging, and we recommend that they be encouraged and supported to address this.**

(4) **Schools work to foster teacher support for pupils; peer support practices; parental involvement and support; ECAs in moderation; and break time and lunch time supervision.**

(5) **Schools may wish to give more time to teachers to work on establishing relationships with pupils; and try to avoid punishments such as isolation; and**

over-extensive testing.

(6) Schools may wish to give special attention to groups of pupils less likely to have a strong sense of school belonging. Best procedures will vary with context, but group work may enhance pupil relationships; overall, accessing views of these pupils (pupil voice) should be used to refine best practice in the particular school context.

(7) More UK-based research is needed on the impact of school belonging, and school practices that affect it in either positive or negative ways. This need is particularly pressing in primary schools.

(8) Although based on US practice, the Wingspread Declaration and later CDC strategies provide an excellent summary, broadly applicable in the UK. A clear need throughout is for more training opportunities for teachers on the importance of school belonging and on how it can be facilitated.

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References

Adelabu, D.H. (2007). Time perspective and school membership as correlates to academic achievement among African American adolescents. *Adolescence*, 42(167), 525-38. PMID: 18047236.

This study examined the relationship of academic achievement to time perspective and school membership among 232 low-income urban African American adolescents. The findings suggest a positive, significant relationships among academic achievement, future time perspective, school belonging and school acceptance. Time perspective and school membership to predict academic achievement differed between genders; present time perspective was predictive of academic achievement for males, school acceptance and future time perspective significant predictor of academic achievement among females.

Ahmadi, S., Hassini, M., & Ahmadi, F. (2020). Student and school level factors related to school belongingness among high school students. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 25*, 741-752. http://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2020.1730200

This study investigated student level and school level variables related to a sense of belonging to school, with high school students in Iran (n=25,000) during the academic year 2018/19. Student level variables such socio-economic status, peer support and parental involvement were related to a sense of belonging at school.

Akar Vural, R., Donmez, B., Guven, H., & Gundogdu, K. (2020). A cross-sectional study of eight graders' sense of school belonging, subjective wellbeing, and academic achievement. *Bulletin of Educational Research, 42*, p. 93-116.

The study determined levels of sense of belonging to school and subjective wellbeing in school of 8th graders attending 15 public and private secondary schools (n=770) in Turkey. A students' sense of belonging and subjective wellbeing were at high levels, there was a relationship between subjective wellbeing and their sense of belonging to school, and it favoured girls more than boys.

Allen, K-A., Brodrick, D.V., & Waters, L. (2016). Fostering school belonging in secondary schools using a socio-ecological framework. *Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 33*, 97-121. http://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.5

This article presents a new conceptual framework based of school belonging based on Brofenbrenner's 1979 sociological model of human development. Designed to better understand the factors across five levels that affect a students' sense of school belonging.

Allen, K-A., Cordoba, B.G., Ryan, T., Arslan, G., Slaten, C.D., Ferguson, J.K., Bozoglan, B., Abdollahi, A., & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2023). Examining predictors of school belonging using a socio-ecological perspective. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 32(9)*, 2804-2819. http://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02305-1

This study assessed the significant predictive variables within each socio-ecological level regarding school belonging. Study data from the PISA 2015 dataset was used,

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309,507 15-year-old students attending schools in 52 countries. Student factors, microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem factors were all significantly related to school belonging.

Allen, K-A., & Kern, M.L. (2017). School belonging. In *School Belonging in Adolescents: Theory, Research and Practice*. Springer Briefs in Psychology. Springer, Singapore. doi:10.1007/978-981-10-5996-4.

This chapter unpacks the terminology of a sense of school belonging and considers the range of measures developed to measure it. The authors consider the benefits of adolescents having a sense of school belonging.

Allen, K.-A., Kern, M. L., Rozek, C. S., McInerney, D. M., & Slavich, G. M. (2021). Belonging: a review of conceptual issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 73(1), 87–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2021.1883409

A narrative review that summarizes existing perspectives on belonging, describes a new integrative framework for understanding and studying belonging, and identifies several key avenues for future research and practice. Relevant databases were searched. Results reported by identifying the core components of belonging, a new integrative framework for understanding, assessing, and cultivating belonging is introduced.

Allen, K., Kern, M.L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J. & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30(1), 1–34. doi:10.1007/s10648-016-9389-8.

This article reviews studies on predictors of school belonging, published from 1993 to 2013. A meta-analysis made of 51 studies (n=67,278) identified 10 themes that influence school belonging at the student level during adolescence: academic motivation, emotional stability, personal characteristics, parent support, peer support, teacher support, gender, race and ethnicity, extracurricular activities and environmental/school safety. The average association between each of these themes and school belonging was examined, and teacher support and positive personal characteristics were the strongest predictors of school belonging.

Allen, K-A., Slaten, C.D., Arslan, G., Roffey, S., Craig, H, & Vella-Brodrick, D.A. (2021). School Belonging: The importance of student and teacher relationships. Chapter 21 in M. L. Kern & M. L. Wehmeyer (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64537-3_21

This book chapter asserts the importance of relationships for school belonging, especially teacher-pupil relationships. It includes comments on the Ofsted inspection system in the UK (p.535), stating that it rates schools from inadequate to outstanding and that "this approach to education has led to several unwanted consequences … a teacher's time is consumed with paperwork and getting through the demands of the curriculum that there is little time to establish and maintain relationships. The priority for teachers, especially in the secondary sector, is on delivering their subject, rather than responding to the needs of the young people who they are teaching and taking account of their individual contexts".

Allen, K-A., Jamshidi, M., Berger, E., Reupert, A., Wurf, G. & May, F. (2022). Impact of School-Based Interventions for Building School Belonging in Adolescence: a Systematic Review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34, 229–257. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09621-w

A systematic review of intervention studies between 1999 and 2021 found 22 controlled trials (but none from UK). Results were mostly positive, with effective school-based interventions targeting students' strengths and promoted positive interactions between students and between school staff and students. However methods were very varied, and it was not possible to pinpoint which types of interventions worked better than others.

Allen, T., Riley, K. & Coates, M. (2020). Belonging, Behaviour and Inclusion in Schools: What Does Research Tell Us? National Education Union.

A review of relevant literature, that concludes with emphasising the importance of the quality of teacher relationships with students, sense of belonging and enhancement of social and emotional learning.

Altinyelken, H.K. (2009). Educational challenges of internal migrant girls: a case study among primary school children in Turkey. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 4, 1-18. Doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2009.4.2.211

This study investigated education-related challenges by migrant girls at primary school in Turkey. 61 participants including 19 migrant and 8 non-migrant pupils and a mix of parents and teachers. Interviews and workshops. The study identified a number of educational challenges experienced by migrant girls. These included adaptation, language, low socio-economic background, peer relations, discrimination and bullying. Migrant girls are among the most disadvantaged children.

Anderman, L.H. (2003). Academic and social perceptions as predictors of change in middle school students' sense of school belonging. *Journal of Experimental Education, 72*, 5-22.

This study examined the change in middle school students' sense of belonging in relation to academic grades, motivational variables, and teachers' promotion of mutual respect in classes. Survey data from 618 students was collected from 6th and 7th graders in a south-eastern state of America. School belonging predicted positively students' grade point average, academic task values, and perceived classroom task goal orientation. The findings also suggest that sense of belonging is enhanced when teachers promote adaptive academic and interpersonal context into classes.

Appleton, J.J., Christenson, S.L., Kim, D. & Reschly, A.L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(5), 427–445. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.04.002.

This article discusses academic, behavioral cognitive and psychological aspects of student engagement; of these, psychological engagement is closest to the school belonging construct. The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) assesses cognitive

(30 items) and psychological (26 items) engagement. It was tested on ninth grade students from schools in Midwest USA. A six-factor model gave the best fit. Factors were Teacher–Student Relationships, Control and Relevance of School Work, Peer Support for Learning, Future Aspirations and Goals, Family Support for Learning, and Extrinsic Motivation. The factors correlated positively with each other, and with academic outcomes such as GPA.

Arslan, G. (2018). Exploring the association between school belonging and emotional health among adolescents. *International Journal of Educational Psychology, 7*, 21-41. doi:10.17583/ijep.2018.3117

The study investigated the association between school belonging and wellbeing, distress and emotional health status yielded from a bidimensional model among 413 adolescents aged 11-18 years. There was a large positive association between school belonging and emotional wellbeing variables, but a negative association between school belonging and emotional distress variables.

Arslan, G. (2022). School bullying and youth internalising and externalising behaviours: do school belonging and school achievement matter? *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 20*, 2460-2477. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-021-00526-x

This study examined whether school bullying predicts increased internalising and externalising behaviour through decreased school belonging and achievement. A sample of 389 students with a mean age of 12.17 years participated in Turkey. Both victimisation and perpetration significantly predicted internalising and externalising behaviours. Adolescents with these behaviours experienced more negative emotional states which in turn caused greater academic, psychosocial and behavioural challenges in school.

Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D-I., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and students' attitudes, motives and performance: a multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*, 627-658.

This study examined relationships between students' sense of school community, poverty level, and student attitudes, motives, beliefs, and behaviour. A diverse sample of 24 elementary schools participated. The main findings suggested that individual students' sense of school community is positively related to a range of attitudinal, motivational and behavioral variables but less strongly to achievement than other outcomes.

Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 11, 497–529. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

A classic article which hypothesizes a need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships: frequent, nonaversive interactions within an ongoing relational bond. This 'belongingness hypothesis' is consistent with people forming social attachments readily under most conditions and resisting the dissolution of existing bonds. Belongingness appears to have multiple and strong effects on emotional patterns and on cognitive processes, whereas lack of attachments is

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linked to a variety of ill effects on health, adjustment, and well-being. The authors conclude that the need to belong is a powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation.

Biggart, A., O'Hare, L., & Connolly, P. (2013). A need to belong? The prevalence of experiences of belonging and exclusion in school among minority ethnic children living in the 'white hinterlands'. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32, 179-195. Doi:10.1080/03323315.2013.765264

A study based on 711 children in Northern Ireland, exploring a range of experiences of belonging and exclusion among three main ethnic groups - Irish traveller, Chinese/Asian and European migrant children. Results of the overall composite measure of belonging/exclusion as well as other measures suggest that while all minority ethnic children have a lower sense of SB and feel more excluded than their white, settled Northern Irish peers, the experiences of Irish Traveller children were the most negative with a much greater sense of exclusion than other minority children.

Bora, H.T., Seheryeli, M.Y., & Altun, S.A. (2023). Relationship between students' sense of school belonging with principles perceptions of school discipline, and teachers' perceptions of school safety in TIMSS 2019. *Current Psychology, DOI:10.1007/s12144-023-05123-w*

A predictive correlational study to examine the relationship between students' sense of school belonging, principles' perceptions of school discipline and teachers' perceptions of school safety. Data from TIMSS 2019 used, 3991 5th grade and 4077 8th grade students. Students have less sense of belonging to school as their grade level increases.

Borman, G.D., Rozek, C.S., Pyne, J., & Hanselman, P. (2019). Reappraising academic and social adversity improves middle school students' academic achievement, behaviour and wellbeing. *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences, 115*, 16286-16291. http://doi/10.1073/pnas.1820317116

This study explored the effects of using a brief intervention designed to help students reappraise concerns about fitting in at the start of middle school. Data was collected from all middle schools in a Midwestern public school district in America. Findings suggested the long-term benefits of psychologically reappraising stressful experiences during critical transitions and the mechanisms that support them.

Boyle, R.C. (2022). We are not 'mixed', we are 'all': understanding the educational experiences of mixed ethnicity children to enhance learner agency. *Education*, 3, 471-482. Doi:10.1080/03004279.2022.2052237

The paper addresses the experiences of mixed ethnicity children in primary school in the UK. It presents a discussion of how children's agency is both impacted and enhanced by their racialised position. Overall, their lived experiences are intricate and complex. Schooling forms a pivotal part of the journey to developing a sense of self.

Burgess, D.L., Kim, I., Seon, Y. & Chatters, S.J. (2023). Exploring dimensions of bias-based bullying victimization, school fairness, and school belonging through mediation analysis. *Psychology in the Schools*, 60, 4531–4544.

This is an empirical study of 2600 middle and high school students from a school district in north-eastern USA. It reported on associations between bias-based bullying (BBB) victimization, school belonging, and school fairness; and whether school fairness mediated the link between BBB victimization and school belonging. A structural equation model found that BBB victimization was negatively related to school fairness and school fairness was positively linked to school belonging. BBB victimization was also inversely associated with school belonging. A significant mediation effect was found in that school fairness mediated the link between BBB victimization and school belonging.

Cai, Y., Yang, Y., Ge, Q., & Weng, H. (2022). The interplay between teacher empathy, students' sense of school belonging and learning achievement. *European journal of Psychology of Education, 38*, 1167-1183. http://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-022-00637-6.

This study investigated the relationship between teacher empathy, students' sense of school belonging and learning achievement using the PISA 2018 dataset so 75 countries participating with 506,317 15-year-old students. Teacher empathy was positively related to reading achievement directly, and indirectly through a students' sense of belonging.

Cardeli, E., Phan, J., Mulder, L., Benson, M., Adhikara, R., & Ellis, H. (2020). Bhutanese refugee youth: the importance of assessing and addressing psychosocial needs in a school setting. *Journal of School Health*, 90, 731-742. Doi:10.1111/josh.12935

The paper had two aims: to describe the psychosocial needs of resettled Bhutanese refugee students and to evaluate the impact of skills-based groups on these students' sense of school belonging and mental health. 34 Bhutanese middle school student refugees participated in a 12-week program. The findings indicated high levels of mental health symptoms at baseline. Students' symptoms had significantly decreased post intervention and there was a substantial increase in school belonging.

Carter, E.W., Asmus, J., Moss, C.K., Biggs, E.E., Bolt, D.M., Born, T.L., Brock, M.E., Cattey, G.N., Chen, R., Cooney, M., Fesperman, E., Hochman, J.M., Huber, H.B., Lequia, J.L., Lyons, G., Moyseenko, K.A., Riesch, L.M., Shalev, R.A., Vincent, L.B., & Weir, K. (2016). Randomised evaluation of peer support arrangements to support inclusion of high school students with severe disabilities. *Exceptional children*, 82, 209-233. Doi: 10.1177/0014402915598780

The paper examined the efficacy of peer support arrangements to improve academic and social outcomes for 51 students with severe disabilities in mainstream education using peer support interventions. 106 peer partners involved. Peer support expanded opportunities by increasing interactions students with disability had with peers.

Castro-Kemp, S., Palikara, O., Gaona, C., Eirinaki, V. & Furlong, M.J. (2020). The role of psychological sense of school membership and postcode as predictors of profiles of

socio-emotional health in primary school children in England. *School Mental Health*, 12, 284–295. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-019-09349-7

This article used the 9-item Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale Primary (PSSM-P) scale, with 522 primary school children from three primary schools in Greater London. It explored the predictive role of school sense of belonging together with gender, main language spoken at home, and socio-economic status of postcode, on the socio-emotional health profiles. The PSSM-P was the best predictor of socio-emotional health profiles and, together with socio-economic status, explained 37% of the variance in this. The findings suggest that school belonging starts affecting well-being and socio-emotional health as early as in primary school, hence the importance of universal screening and early preventive actions to promote well-being in this age range. The use of the abbreviated (PSSM-P) was also supported.

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5767/

An update of the Wingspread Declaration (2004), which enumerates 6 strategies that provide a framework for increasing students' connectedness to school, with further useful expansions of how these can be put into practice. Based on US experience, but likely to be broadly helpful in the UK context.

Celeste, L., Baysu, G., Phalet, K., Meeussen, L., & Kende, J. (2019). Can school diversity policies reduce belonging and achievement gaps between minority and majority youth? Multiculturalism, colour-blindness, and assimilationism assessed. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 45(11), 1603-1618. DOI: 10.1177/0146167219838577

The study examined which diversity approaches are communicated by actual school policies and which predict smaller ethnic gaps in outcomes overtime. 66 Belgium middle schools were recruited. There were significant effects of school diversity approaches on the belonging gap. In low multicultural schools, minority students felt significantly less belonging than majority students. In schools with high multiculturalism there was no gap in belonging.

Cemalcilar, Z. (2010). Schools as socialisation contexts: Understanding the impact of school climate factors on students' sense of school belonging. *Applied Psychology*, 59, 243-272. Doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2009.00389.x

This study examined social aspects of schools that may be instrumental in increasing students' sense of school belonging. 799 Turkish middle school students participated. Satisfaction with social relationships emerged as a stronger predictor of school belonging than satisfaction with the school environment.

Childs-Fegredo, J., Burn, A.-M., Duschinsky, R., Humphrey, A., Ford, T., Jones, P.B., & Howarth, E. (2021). Acceptability and feasibility of early identification of mental health difficulties in primary school: a qualitative exploration of UK school staff and parents perceptions. *School Mental Health, 13*, 143-159. http://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-020-09398-3

The study aimed to increase understanding of the acceptability and feasibility of different early identification methods in primary schools in the UK. Twenty-seven staff and 20 parents participated. The findings indicated that a systematic and tailored approach to early identification would be most acceptable and feasible, taking school context into consideration. Teacher training should be a core component in all schools.

Chui, M.M., Chow, B.W-Y., McBride, C., & Mol, S.T. (2016). Students' sense of belonging at school in 41 countries: cross-cultural variability. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 47*, 175-196. http://doi:10.1177/0022022115617031.

The study examined whether students' sense of belonging at school differed across attributes of countries, families, schools, teachers, or students. 193,073 15-year-old students in 41 countries were surveyed as part of the PISA 2002 data collection. Results suggested students who lived in fairer countries had higher sense of school belonging than more hierarchical countries, also teacher-student relationship had strongest link to a sense of school belonging.

Condliffe, E. (2023). 'Out of sight, out of mind': an interpretative phenomenological analysis of young people's experience of isolation rooms/booths in UK mainstream schools. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 28(2-3), 129-144.

doi: 10.1080/13632752.2023.2233193

The study explored how young people (between 11-18 years) made meaning of their lived experiences of isolation rooms/booths in UK secondary schools. The findings suggested significant negative impact on a young persons' wellbeing by using this practice as a form of punishment.

Conway-Turner, J., Williams, J., & Winsler, A. (2023). Does diversity matter? School racial composition and academic achievement of students in a diverse sample. *Urban Education*, 58, 1085-1117. Doi:10.1177/0042085920902257

The study examined school racial diversity and educational outcomes for ethnically diverse students. 33,857 students from 278 schools participated in the study in the USA. Increased school diversity was negatively related to academic achievement.

Craggs, H., & Kelly, C. (2018). Adolescents' experiences of school belonging: a qualitative meta-synthesis. *Journal of Youth Studies, 21*, 1411-1425. http://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1477125

This is a meta-synthesis to explore adolescents' accounts of the experience of school belonging in UK secondary schools. Feeling safe and secure in an educational setting was found to be a significant dimension of school belonging. Also being in an environment in which positive relationships can be nurtured and sustained, where individual identities are known, understood and accepted and opportunity for group membership were all dimensions of school belonging.

Deci, E.L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L.G., & Ryan, R.M. (1991). Motivation and education: the self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 26*, 325-346. http://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653137

This article explores self-determination theory in terms of the social-contextual factors that nurture intrinsic motivation and promote internalization, which lead to desired educational outcomes such as having an interest in learning, a value of education and confidence in ones' own attributes and capacities.

Delgado, M.Y., Ettekal, A.V., Simpkins, S.D., & Schaefer, D.R. (2016). How do my friends matter? Examining Latino adolescents' friendships, school belonging and academic achievement. *Journal of Youth Adolescent, 45,* 1110-1125. http://doi 10.1007/s10964-015-0341-x

This study examined whether the process of Latino students' school belonging mediated the relationships between the context of friendships and their academic outcomes. Data was used from the National longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (n=6782, 7th to 12th graders). Being nominated as a friend by peers and perceiving to have friends exerted both direct effects on school belonging and indirect effects on academic achievement for different Latino subgroups.

Demie, F., & See, B.H. (2023). Ethnic disproportionality in the school teaching workforce in England. *Equity in Education and Society*, 2, 3-27. Doi:10.1177/27526461221134291

The paper addresses the gaps in literature around the trends in England teachers workforce by ethnic background and its disproportionality when compared to children they teach. The findings reported and confirm the education system in England is characterised by ethnic proportionality in the school teaching workforce and teaching staff ethnic background does not mirror those of the students they teach.

Didaskalou, E., Roussi–Vergou, C. & Andreou, E. (2017). School belongingness and coping with victimisation in bullied and non-bullied students: A discriminant analysis approach. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Special Issue: 110-124.

This empirical study used the PSSM measure of school belonging with 860 pupils aged 12 to 16 from 15 public secondary schools in Greece, together with exposure to victimization, and coping strategies. Gender proved a stronger differentiating factor than age in reporting being victimized (boys higher), in coping with victimisation and in perceived school belongingness (boys lower). The measure of bullying victimization was most strongly predicted by the rejection factor of the PSSM. Being a boy and feeling rejected in school puts individuals at high risk for being victimised.

Dimitrellou, E. (2017). Does an inclusive ethos enhance the sense of school belonging and encourage the social relations of young adolescents identified as having social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD). PhD Thesis, Institute of Education, London.

The aim of the study was to examine whether perceptions of pupils identified as having SEMH and MLD are moderated by school ethos, plus whether a school with an inclusive ethos enhances a sense of belonging and encourages social relations of these groups of SEN. Three secondary schools were recruited in England. The findings indicated the inclusive ethos of a school was found to be positively associated with the perceived sense of school belonging as well as the relations of pupils identified as having SEN.

Dimitrellou, E., & Male, D. (2020). Understanding what makes a positive school experience for pupils with SEND: can their voices inform practice? *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 20, 87-96. Doi: 10.1111/1471-3802.12457

The study explored the schooling experiences of secondary school-aged pupils with MLD and SEMH. 37 pupils from 3 schools were recruited. Pupils' perceptions on reasons influenced their sense of school belonging and two sub themes emerged: reasons for liking and reasons for disliking. Frequently cited for not liking was ineffective structures applied in relation to start and end of day, duration of lessons, lack of commitment to do work, some found lessons boring. A reason for liking school was interesting lessons, especially interactive teaching strategies used. The needs of SEMH are less satisfied with mainstream settings than compared to needs of pupils with MLD. The main issue is that voices of pupils with SEND go unheard.

Duggins, S.D., Kuperminc, G.P. Henrich, C.C. Smalls-Glover, C. & Perilla, J. L. (2016). Aggression among adolescent victims of school bullying: Protective roles of family and school connectedness. *Psychology of Violence*, 6(2), 205–212.

This empirical study used a 4-item version of the School Connectedness Scale (SCS) to examine cross-sectional and 2-year longitudinal associations between school victimization and aggression among with 373 7th to 10th grade pupils from a school in Georgia, USA. SCS scores were related negatively to both aggression and victimization scores. Drawing on resilience theory, family and school connectedness were examined as compensatory or protective factors. High family connectedness and school belonging were linked to lower level of aggression regardless of victimization. Victimization predicted higher initial levels of and steeper decline in aggression. Family connectedness was protective; baseline aggression was lower and declined more steeply for youth who reported more family connectedness. School connectedness played a complex role, potentially contributing to students' vulnerability over time. The authors argue that promoting students' sense of school belonging may compensate for negative effects of victimization on aggression in the short term; however, broader efforts directed at establishing a safe and supportive school climate and setting social norms that discourage school violence may be necessary to reduce the incidence of victimization and subsequent aggressive behavior.

Finn, J.D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59(2), 117-142.* http://doi.org/10.3102/00346543059002117

The paper describes two models for understanding dropping out of school, the frustration-self-esteem model and the participation-identification model. According to the models, school completion is maximized if the student maintains multiple, expanding forms of participation in school-relevant activities.

Gao, S.L. & Chan, K.L. (2015). Future orientation and school bullying among adolescents in rural China: The mediating role of school bonding. *Sage Open*, Jan-March, DOI: 10.1177/2158244014568463.

This empirical study examined the relations among future orientation, school bonding, and school bullying perpetration behaviors, among 677 seventh- to ninth-grade adolescents in Southwest China. The authors used the PSSM, the Future-Orientation

Questionnaire (such as planning future education or occupation), and the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. The PSSM was negatively related to all forms of bullying perpetration; but it also mediated the relationship between bullying, and (lower) future orientation. This research suggests that school bonding may be one mechanism by which children's orientation toward future education or future occupation may have an effect on their bullying perpetration behaviors.

Gillen-O'Neel, C. & Fuligni, A. (2013). A longitudinal study of school belonging and academic motivation across high school. *Child Development*, 84(2), 678–692. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01862.x.

This empirical study examined how school belonging changes over 4 years of high school, and how it is associated with academic achievement and motivation. 572 9th to 12th graders from 3 public schools in Los Angeles, USA, with pupils from very mixed ethnic backgrounds, participated. In ninth grade, school belonging in girls was higher than for boys; over the course of high school, however, girls' school belonging declined, whereas boys' remained stable. Within-person longitudinal analyses indicated that years in which students had higher school belonging were also years in which they felt that school was more enjoyable and more useful, above and beyond their actual level of achievement. The results highlighted the importance of belonging for maintaining students' academic engagement during the teenage years.

Goodenow, C. & Grady, K. E. (1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62 (1), 60–71. doi:10.1080/00220973.1993.9943831.

A foundational article that not only provides a well-used (if sometimes misquoted) definition, but also introduces a well-used scale (the PSSM), and relates school belonging to beliefs about friends academic values, and academic motivation. Ethnic and gender differences are reported from schools in the USA. School belonging was higher and more strongly associated with expectancy for success among Hispanic students, and girls.

Graham, B.C., Keys, C.B., & McMahon, S.D. (2014). Transportation and socioemotional wellbeing of urban students with and without disability. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 42, 31-44. Doi:10.1080/10852352.2014.855056

The study explored the extent to which transportation difficulties were associated with social, psychological and academic experiences of At-risk students. 165 African/American and Latino high school youths with and without disability were recruited in USA schools. Students with transportation problems in getting to and from school indicated lower school belonging than those without those problems.

Graham, S., Kogachi, K., & Morales-Chicas, J. (2022). Do I fit in: Race/ethnicity and feelings of belonging in school. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34, 2015-2042. Doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09709x

Reviews studies that describe how feelings of belonging are shaped by important racial/ ethnical context variables. As representation of Latino peers decreased across middle school transition so SB decreased. Overall declining representation

was related to less sense of belonging and school achievement; however the negative effect of fewer Latino peers on school belonging was weakened when the receiving school was more diverse.

Gray, D. L., Hope, E. C., & Matthews, J. S. (2018). Black and belonging at school: A case for interpersonal, instructional, and institutional opportunity structures. *Educational Psychologist*, 53(2), 97-113. DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2017.141466

The paper aimed to describe cultural and political aspects of schooling that can support a sense of school belongingness. Discusses the support for belonging of Black adolescents in terms of interpersonal, instructional, and institutional opportunity structures.

Greenwood, L., & Kelly, C. (2018). A systematic literature review to explore how staff in schools describe how a sense of belonging is created for their pupils. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 24, 3-19. http://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2018.1511113.

A systematic review exploring descriptions of how staff in secondary schools create a sense of belonging for their pupils. The review identified methods that were perceived to be useful when supporting pupils to develop a sense of belonging within school environment.

Hagenauer, G., Wallner-Paschol, C., & Kuhn, C. (2021). Austrian students' experiences of supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and parents and the mediating effect of school belonging in the context of their academic and non-academic outcomes. *Zeitschrift Fur Bildungforschung, 11,* 93-11. http://doi.org/10.1007/s35834-021-00300-y

This study explores the interrelations between students' perceptions regarding supportive relationships, their sense of belonging at school, and academic and non-academic outcomes. Based on the PISA 2015 dataset for Austrian students, the findings indicated that the quality of perceived supportive relationships with teachers, parents and peers is important to students' experiences, behaviour and achievement. Relationships are important the correlates of student wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Harris, R., Wilson-Daily, A. E., & Fuller, G. (2022). 'I just want to feel like I am part of everyone else': how schools unintentionally contribute to the isolation of students who identify as LGBT+. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 52 (2) 155-173.

The study explored experiences of students who identity as LGBT in 6 secondary schools in England set in diverse neighbourhoods. These students struggle to conform to gendered spaces – it appears to increase these students' sense of difference and isolation. This difference is exacerbated by policy, low teacher awareness, varied teacher attitude towards nonbinary and trans pupils, heteronormativity in RSE, plus the school curriculum is absent of LGBT topics, thus reinforcing a sense of othering.

Hatchel, T., Valido, A., De Pedro, K.T., Huang, Y., & Espelage, D.L. (2019). Minority stress among transgender adolescents: the role of peer victimisation, school belonging and

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ethnicity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28, 2467-2476. Doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1168-3.

The study examined relations among transgender youth and school belonging, mental health and peer victimisation. A sample of 4778 transgender adolescents were recruited. A high proportion were exposed to victimisation and this predicted mental health issues. Peer victimisation was associated with diminished school belonging. However, having a greater sense of school belonging was associated with fewer mental health issues.

Heikamp, T., Phalet, K., Van Laar, C., & Verschueren, K. (2020). To belong or not to belong: Protecting minority engagement in the face of discrimination. *International Journal of Psychology*, 55(5), 779-788. doi: 10.1002/ijop.12706

The study aimed to improve our understanding of diverse classrooms as real-life inter-group contexts that can enable or undermine belonging in minority youth. 69 secondary schools in Belgium with a sample 5336 pupils participated. There were significant positive relations between SB, task engagement and positive diversity climate. Adolescents who experienced more discrimination in school reported lower SB and task engagement.

Henderson, T., Hill, C., & Norton, K. (2014). The connection between missing school and health: a review of chronic absenteeism and student health in Oregon. *Upstream Public Health, October.*

This report is a comprehensive review of the literature on common health problems and health factors that have an association with student attendance and overall achievement.

Hogberg, B. (2023). Academic performance, performance culture, and mental health: an exploration of non-linear relationships using Swedish PISA data. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, http://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2023.2192752

A study to investigate the relationship between performance and mental health using the Swedish PISA dataset. The findings indicated the relationship between performance and mental health is not linear. Intermediate performing boys have the best mental health, low performing and high performing girls and boys have low mental health, and low performing students may be vulnerable to strong school performance culture.

Holt, L.J., Bry, B.H., & Johnson, V.L. (2008). Enhancing school engagement in at-risk, urban minority adolescents through a school-based adult mentoring intervention. *Child and Family Behaviour Therapy*, 30, 297-318. Doi: 10.1090/07317100802482969

This study reports an RCT to test if theory-based mentoring intervention could enhance urban minority school-related cognitions and behaviours among 44 students in 9th grade in America, chosen from those receiving a universal prevention program "peer group connection". Students were characterized as ''at-risk'' if they exhibited at least two of the following risk factors: low grades and/or academic motivation, discipline problems, and frequent tardiness or absence from school. These 44 students were stratified by gender and race/ethnicity and then randomly assigned

to a 5-month Achievement Mentoring intervention. Significant and positive effects of mentoring were observed in the areas of perceived teacher support, school belonging, decision making, and whether a student entered the discipline system.

Hope, M.A., & Hall, J., J. (2018). 'Other spaces' for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) students: positioning LGBTQ-affirming schools as sites of resistance within inclusive education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(8), 1195-1209. doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2018.1500273

The paper explored affirming schools in Atlanta, USA, aimed at CYP who identify as LGBT; and considers whether these schools operate within an inclusive system.

Hornstra, L., van der Veen, I., Peetsma, T., & Volman, M. (2014). Does classroom composition make a difference: effects on developments in motivation, sense of classroom belonging, and achievement in upper primary school. International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice, 26, 125-152, doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.887024Huang, L. (2020): Exploring the relationship between school bullying and academic performance: the mediating role of students' sense of belonging at school. *Educational Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03055698.2020.1749032

This study used PISA 2015 survey data from China. Both bullying victimisation and bullying climate had significant and negative relationships with students' science, maths and reading performance. Students' sense of belonging at school partially mediated the effects of both bullying victimisation and bullying climate on academic performance in science, maths and reading. Implications are discussed.

Huynh, V.W., & Gillen-O'Neel, C. (2016). Discrimination and sleep: the protective role of school belonging. *Youth & Society, 48*, 649-672. doi:10.1177/0044118X13506720.

The study examined whether school belonging can protect adolescents from discrimination's negative association with sleep. 360 US adolescents aged around 17-18 completed self-reports. School belonging buffered the negative effect of overt discrimination on sleep and school belonging may be a positive resource for adolescents.

Jessiman, P., Kidger, J., Spencer, L., Geiger-Simpson, E., Kaluzevicuite, G., Burn, A.M., Leonard, N., & Limmer, M. (2022). School culture and student mental health: a qualitative study in UK secondary schools. *BMC Public Health, 22*, 1-18. http://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13034-x

This study explored three secondary schools in the UK prior to the implementation of a participative action research study bringing students and staff together to identify changes to school culture that may impact on mental health. The findings indicated staff who seek to shape and improve school culture as a means of promoting student mental health may have better results if improvements made across all four dimensions.

Jiang, L., Zhao, B., Guo, J., Sun, W. & Hu, W. (2023). Perceived teacher unfairness and school bullying victimization of senior-grade pupils: The mediating effect and gender

difference of the sense of school belonging. *Social Psychology of Education* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-023-09861-4

This empirical study investigated the longitudinal associations between perceived teacher unfairness and school bullying victimization, and the mediating role of the sense of school belonging. Data were collected from 822 grade 4 and 5 pupils from three elementary schools in Anhui, China, over three semesters. The authors used the 6-item PISA measure of school belonging. They also measured bullying victimization, and perceived teacher unfairness. School belonging was negatively correlated with victimization; but in addition the negative relationship from perceived teacher unfairness to victimization was mediated by school belonging. Compared to girls, the predictive effect of the sense of school belonging on school bullying victimization was stronger for boys. The results demonstrated the importance of ensuring teacher fairness and cultivating pupils' sense of belonging to the school as a method of preventing school bullying.

Karcher, M. & Lee, Y. (2001). Connectedness among Taiwanese middle school students: A validation study of the Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 3(1), 92–114. doi:10.1007/BF03024924.

This study examined the psychometric properties of a measure designed to assess aspects of connectedness (to family, friends, self and school) among 320 junior high school students in Taiwan. The measure used 74 items on a 5-point scale, and had satisfactory reliability and concurrent validity. Girls were generally more connected than boys. Both connectedness to school and to friends explained more variance in connectedness to self than did family connectedness. The measure appeared promising in terms of future research on adolescent social development in the Asia Pacific region.

King, R.B., Chiu, M.M., & Du, H. (2022). Greater income inequality, lower school belonging: multilevel and cross temporal analyses of 65 countries. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 114,* 1101-1120.

This study examined whether income inequality is associated with students' school belonging, along with whether having high socioeconomic status could buffer the harmful consequences of income inequality. They used the PISA dataset drawing on 8,222,230 participants. Country-level income inequality was associated with lower school belonging. For students in more affluent schools and advantaged families, the association between inequality and belonging was weaker.

Kohli, R., & Mather, R. (2003). Promoting psychosocial well-being in unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in the United Kingdom. *Child and Family Social Work*, 8, 201-212.

The paper reviewed literature concerning vulnerability and resilience that emerges from refugee related studies in the UK. It confirms the views that these children have vulnerabilities associated with separation and trauma but have capacities to settle. It proposes that promoting psychosocial wellbeing aids recovery with resettlement. It involves finding ways to regenerate a lost sense of belonging.

Kopershoek, H., Canrinus, E.T., Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., & de Boer, H. (2020). The relationships between school belonging and students' motivational, social-emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes in secondary education: a meta-analytic review. *Research Papers in Education, 35*, 641-680. http://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1615116

A meta-analysis was performed of 82 correlational studies, published between 2000 and 2018, to examine the relationships between students sense of school belonging and students motivational, social-emotional, behavioural, and academic functioning in secondary school, and to what extent they differ between students in different groups such as SES, and academic level. There was a small positive correlation with academic achievement, and small to moderate correlations with motivational outcomes. Overall, the results revealed that school belonging plays an important role in students' life.

Kuhn, L., Bradshaw, S., Donkin, A., Fletcher, L., Liht, J., & Wheater, R. (2021). *PISA 2018 Additional analyses: what does PISA tell us about the wellbeing of 15-year-olds?* Slough: NFER.

Based on the PISA 2015 and 2018 datasets, this study focuses on pupil wellbeing from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and three OECD countries, France, Finland and Korea. The study explored changes in wellbeing assessed by life satisfaction as well as wellbeing. The findings indicated that wellbeing in young people is linked to personal, then parental, then lastly teacher relationships.

Kuttner, P.J. (2023). The right to belong in school: a critical, transdisciplinary conceptualisation of school belonging. http://doi:10.1177/23328584231183407

This study explores six aspects of belonging that are currently not given much emphasis in the current literature. The author suggests that school belonging should be interpreted as agentic, intersectional, systematic, political, place-based and a right.

Lam, U.F., Chen, W-W., Zhang, J., & Liang, T. (2015). It feels good to learn where I belong: school belonging, academic emotions, and academic achievement in adolescents. *School Psychology International, 36*, 393-409. http://doi: 10.1177/0143034315589649.

This study examined the relationships between school belonging, academic emotions and academic achievement among 406 junior high school students in Macau. The survey gleaned information on the extent to which these students felt accepted and respected in their schools, the emotions experienced during learning and their grade point averages. Academic emotions mediated the relation between school belonging and academic achievement. Students with a greater sense of school belonging experienced more positive emotions and less deactivating emotions which in turn contributed to their academic success.

Lee, C-K.J., & Huang, J. (2021). The relations between students' sense of school belonging, perceptions of school kindness and character strength of kindness. *Journal of School Psychology, 84*, 95-108. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2020.12.001

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This study with 1973 Hong Kong secondary school students explored the associations between sense of school belonging, perception of school kindness and character strength of kindness and looked at possible differences across gender groups. Students' sense of belonging was positively linked to their perceptions of school kindness at the school and student levels. Female students reported higher levels of character strength of kindness than male students.

Li, L., Chen, X., & Li, H. (2020). Bullying victimization, school belonging, academic engagement and achievement in adolescents in rural China: A serial mediation model. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 113, 104946.

This study aimed to understand how bullying victimization impacts on adolescents' academic achievement through the serial mediation of school belonging and academic engagement. It used the PSSM with 813 15 year olds in schools in a rural district of southwestern China, together with a measure of victimization, academic engagement, and PISA test results. Boys reported higher bullying victimization and lower school belonging and academic engagement than girls. Bullying victimisation predicted lower academic achievement; school belonging and academic engagement were identified as mediators between bullying victimization and academic achievement in the models for the whole sample and boys group, but not for girls separately. The findings highlight the importance of fostering a positive school climate to fight against negative consequences associated with bullying victimization.

Lo Cricchio, M.G., Zambuto, V., Palladino, B.E. Nocentini, A., Salmela-Aro. K. & Menesini, E. (2023). The association between school burnout, school connectedness, and bullying victimization: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 47(6), 508–520. DOI: 10.1177/01650254231198028

This empirical study worked with 363 secondary school pupils (mean age 13 years; 184 in middle school, 179 in high school) from eight schools in Tuscany, Italy, who took part in three waves of data collection. Besides bullying victimization they used an 8-item school connectedness scale, and also measured school burnout (e.g. 'I feel overwhelmed by my schoolwork'). School connectedness was negatively correlated with victimization; but in addition at both school levels, there was a reciprocal and longitudinal role of school connectedness in reducing burnout, and of school burnout in reducing the sense of connectedness to school, both directly and indirectly. Bullying victimization was not longitudinally associated with school burnout, but it negatively predicted the level of students' connectedness to school.

Long, R., & Danechi, S. (2023). School attendance in England. *House of Commons Library Research Briefing*, 29th September 2023.

This briefing discusses absences of children from school. The Department of Education (UK) published this report on non-statutory guidance on setting about to improve school attendance. It sets out the relevant roles and responsibilities of schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities.

Loukas, A., Ripperger-Suhler, K. G., & Herrera, D. E. (2012). Examining competing models of the associations among peer victimization, adjustment problems, and school

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connectedness. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50, 825-840. http://dx.doi.org/10.106/j.jsp.2012.07.003

This empirical study tested two competing models to assess whether psychosocial adjustment problems mediate the associations between peer victimization and school connectedness one year later, or if peer victimization mediates the associations between psychosocial adjustment problems and school connectedness. The authors used the School Connectedness Scale (SCS) with 500 10-14 year olds from 3 middle schools in Texas, in two study waves. The SCS scores related negatively to measures of overt and relational victimization. Path analyses indicated that the better-fitting model was one in which peer victimization mediated the adjustment problem effects. Specifically, relational, but not overt, victimization mediated the association between depressive symptoms and change in school connectedness one year later. The model was largely consistent across gender.

Ma, X. (2003). "Sense of belonging to school: Can schools make a difference?" *Journal of Educational Research*, 96, 340-349. http://doi:10.1080/00220670309596617.

This study applied student and school characteristics to explain differences among 6,868 students in 92 schools in Canada regarding a sense of belonging to school. The findings indicated discrepancies in students' sense of belonging mainly within schools rather than between schools. At a student level, sense of belonging was affected more by student's mental and physical conditions and less by their individual characteristics and family characteristics. Self esteem was the most important predictor of sense of belonging, followed by health status.

Madziva, R., & Thondhlana, J. (2017). Provision of quality education in the context of Syrian reugee children in the UK: opportunities and challenges. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47, 942-961. Doi:10.1080/03057925.2017.1375848

The study focuses on a group of Syrian refugees entering the UK. The findings highlight the importance of three intersecting environments. The use of English is critical for refugee children's integration and inclusion. The paper adds to the inputs and processes key to the development of quality education for refugee children.

Mantak, Y., & Lijian, W. (2023). Relationship between school connectedness and psychological well-being in adolescents: a meta-analysis. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues,* doi:10.1007/s12144-023-05164-1

A meta-analysis examined 18 studies that explored school connectedness in relation to psychological well-being in adolescents. Adolescents with stronger school connectedness had higher levels of psychological well-being. Gender was not found to be a moderator of the association. Findings suggest that secondary schools should make every effort to foster and encourage adolescents' school connectedness.

Manzoni, C., & Rolfe, H. (2019). How schools are integrating new migrant pupils and their families. Report for National Institute of Economic and Social Research niesr.ac.uk

The research aimed to identify ways in which schools were actively integrating pupils to create an inclusive environment and to optimise performance. 15 schools were recruited and interviews and focus groups performed involving 92 children. The findings revealed the positive contribution that migrant pupils and their families make to the life of their school. Non-migrant benefits of being educated alongside migrants includes buddies and ambassadors. Migrant children may have special needs and may be difficult to identify due to language barrier. Parents fear exclusion if they share details of child's needs.

Maslow, A.H. (1954). *Motivation and personality.* New York: Harper.

This book by Abraham Maslow deals with the nature of human fulfillment and the significance of personal relationships, implementing a conceptualization of self-actualization. His pyramidal model supposes the most basic needs are physiological (food, warmth) and then safety and security. Above these are needs for love and belonging, and self-esteem, culminating in self-actualization. In this hierarchy of needs, Maslow argued that the need for belongingness would emerge only after the physiological and safety needs have been satisfied; this need refers to feelings of belonging to family, friends, community and social groups.

McBride, R-S. (2021). A literature review of the secondary school experiences of trans youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 18, 103-134. Doi: 10.1080/19361653.2020.1727815

The paper reviews 83 empirical studies that provide insight into the secondary school experiences of trans youth. Some of these youth have affirming school experiences whilst others are exposed to institutionalised cisnormativity.

McCahey, A., Allen, K-A., & Arsla, G. (2021). Information communication technology use and school belonging in Australian high school students. *Psychology in the Schools, 58*, 2392-2403. http://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22600

This study examined the relationship between school belonging and ICT usage among 14,530 Australian students in Grade 7 or higher. More frequent usage of ICT at home for schoolwork predicted a higher sense of school belonging, conversely ICT usage for leisure predicted lower levels of students' sense of school belonging.

Midgen, T., Theodoratou, T., Newbury, K., & Leonard, M. (2019). 'School for Everyone': An exploration of children and young people's perceptions of belonging. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 36, 9-22. 10.53841/bpsecp.2019.36.2.9.

The paper explored understanding what helps them feel like they belong in their school among 84 school-aged pupils with a range of SEN/D. Four key themes were identified in supporting a child's sense of belonging: Relationships, School Environment (safety), Teaching and Learning, and Extra Curricular Activities.

Moffa, K., Dowdy, E., & Furlong, M.J. (2016). Exploring the contributions of school belonging to complete mental health screening. *Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 33*, p. 16-32. http://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.8

This study explored data from mental health screening of 1,159 pupils in a central California high school. There were significant differences in school belonging

between students who reported low global life satisfaction and those who reported average or high life satisfaction, regardless of reported levels of psychological distress. The data showed that global life satisfaction and psychological distress were predictive of wellness and internal distress.

Morris, K.S., Seaton, E.K., Iida, M., Johnson, L. (2020). Racial discrimination stress, school belonging, and school racial composition on academic attitudes and beliefs among black youth. *Social Sciences*, 9, 1-20. Doi:10.3390/socsci9110191

The study examined how racial discrimination stress and school belonging influence academic attitudes and beliefs, among 344 black youths from a south-eastern state in USA. Within majority white schools, black youth with high levels of discrimination stress and low levels of school belonging reported lowest academic efficacy. Racial discrimination stress is complex. Black students are more likely to drop out of school, disengage and identify less as students. The findings demonstrated that SB was positively associated with academic competency and academic efficacy.

Murphy, M.C., & Zirkel, S. (2015). Race and belonging in school: How anticipated and experienced belonging affect choice, persistence and performance. *Teachers College Record*, 117, 1-40.

This paper argues that belonging is important to everyone, however the nature and meaning of belonging in school is different for students targeted by negative racial stereotypes. Comparisons between samples of African American and white students demonstrated that peer friendships in racially diverse schools affect student's engagement and enjoyment of school. Highlights that questions of belonging are persistent ones that influence students at many different times throughout their academic career.

NHS Digital (2023). Mental health of children and young people in England, 2023- wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey.

This survey provides data on the mental health of young people between 8 to 25 years in the UK.

Nind, M., Boorman, G., & Clarke, G. (2012). Creating spaces to belong: listening to the voice of girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties through digital visual and narrative methods. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16,* 643-656. Hyyp://doi: 10.1080/13603116.2010.495790

The study gathered views from girls excluded from mainstream education in the UK, attending small special, girl-only secondary provision in the south of England. The authors reflect on visual and digital methods and how girls perceive educational inclusion and exclusion. Themes such as space, identity, relationships and community emerged from the data and conclude with the core message of the importance of belonging.

O'Brennan, L. M., & Furlong, M. J. (2010). Relations between students' perceptions of school connectedness and peer victimization. *Journal of School Violence*, 9(4), 375–391. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2010.509009

This empirical study used the School Connectedness Scale (SCS) with 1,253 grades 8, 19 and 12 pupils from 6 middle and 4 high schools in California. School connectedness was significantly related to students' experiences of all forms of victimization and perceived reasons for victimization, whereas grade level is only related to the form of victimization experienced. The SCS scores related negatively to measures of physical and relational victimization, and most strongly to verbal victimization.

O'Donnell, A.W., Redmond, G., Gardner, A.A., Wang, J.J.J., & Mooney, A. (2023). Extracurricular activity participation, school belonging, and depressed mood: a test of the compensation hypothesis during adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, http://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2023.2260745

This study examined the effect of extracurricular activities (ECAs) on school belonging and depressed mood on a sample of 3,850 adolescents aged 12-13 years in Australia. Over a four-year period, being involved in ECAs predicted higher school belonging two years later, and higher school belonging reinforced positive mental health outcomes. Participants residing in low socioeconomic status communities received the greatest benefit from participation despite low levels of participation.

OECD (2017). PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en

The periodic Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, evaluations measure students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy, but also wellbeing, pupil reports of being a victim of bullying, and a measure of school belonging. The 2015 survey (reported in 2017) covers up to 70 countries (OECD and partner countries, exact number depending on Tables consulted), with an average sample of 7,500 pupils per country, aged c.15 years.

OECD (2019). PISA 2018 Results (Volume III) What School Life Means for Students' Lives. Chapter 9. Sense of belonging at school.

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d69dc209-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d69dc209-en

The periodic Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, evaluations measure students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy, but also wellbeing, pupil reports of being a victim of bullying, and a measure of school belonging. The 2018 survey (reported in 2019) covers 79 countries - all 37 OECD Member countries and 42 non OECD Member countries - with an average sample of 7,500 pupils per country, aged between 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months at the time of assessment.

OECD (2023), PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en.

The periodic Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, evaluations measure students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy, but also wellbeing, pupil reports of being a victim of bullying, and a measure of school belonging. In the 2022 survey (reported in 2023), nearly 700,000 students from 37 OECD Members and

44 non-OECD Member partner economies, took the test. Pupils were aged between 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months at the time of assessment.

Olcon, K., Kim, Y., & Gulbas, L.E. (2017). Sense of belonging and youth suicidal behaviours: what do communities and school have to do with it? *Social Work in Public Health, 32,* 432-442. http://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2017.1344602

The study used data from the 2013 Texas Youth Risk Behaviour survey and examined the associations between school and community belonging and suicidal ideation and attempts among high school students. Community belonging was associated with reduced suicidal behaviour; and school bullying, feeling unsafe at school, and being threatened or injured at school with increased suicidal behaviours. The findings suggest that fostering a safe and inclusive environment at school and strengthening their experiences at school and community belonging may reduce suicidal behaviours.

Österman, K.F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research, 70(3),* 323–367.

http://doi-org.eproxy.lancs.ac.uk/10.3102/00346543070003323

This review reflects a social cognition perspective on motivation. This framework maintains that individuals have psychological needs, that satisfaction of these needs affects perception and behaviour, and that characteristics of the social context influence how well these needs are met. The findings indicate that students' experience of acceptance influences multiple dimensions of their behaviour but that schools adopt practices that neglect and may undermine students' experience of membership in a supportive community.

Palikara, O., Castro-Kemp, S., Gaona, C., & Eirinaki, V. (2021). The mediating role of school belonging in the relationship between socioemotional well-being and loneliness in primary school age children. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 73,* 24-34. http://doi:10.1080/00049530.2021.1882270

This study examined the relationship between socioemotional wellbeing, school belonging and loneliness. 517 primary school-aged children participated from 3 schools in London, UK. The findings indicated socio-emotional wellbeing does not predict loneliness, however school belonging partially mediated the relationship between socioemotional wellbeing and loneliness. Their findings provided knowledge on the key role of school belonging and in shaping the relationship between socioemotional wellbeing and loneliness among this age group.

Parr, E.J., Shochet, I.M., Cockshaw, W.D., & Kelly, R.L. (2020). General belonging is a key predictor of adolescent depressive symptoms and partially mediates school belonging. *School Mental Health, 12,* 626-637. http://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-020-08371-0

This study aimed to explore the importance of general belonging among a community sample of adolescents to understand the interrelationship with school belonging predicting depression. 502 adolescents aged 13–17 from four geographically distinct Australian schools participated. General belonging partially mediated the

association between school belonging and depressive symptoms. General belonging more than school belonging was the largest independent correlate of adolescent depressive symptoms, but general belonging is strongly influenced by school belonging in this adolescent age group.

Partridge, L., Strong, F.L., Lobley, E., & Mason, D. (2020). Pinball Kids, *Preventing School Exclusions*. London: RSA.

This report examines the growing number of school children in the UK being suspended or expelled from schools. The report summarises findings from speaking with school staff and local authorities. The report gives recommendations to school leaders and policy makers.

Pesonen, H., Kontu, E., Saarinen, M. & Pirttimaa, R. (2016). Conceptions associated with sense of belonging in different school placements for Finnish pupils with special education needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31(1), 59-75.

DOI: 10.1080/08856257.2015.1087138

The study examined conceptions associated with sense of SB in Finnish general and special school placements for 5 pupils with SEN. The findings revealed 6 major themes. Barriers to SBB were poor individualisation- teacher did not pay attention to their unique characteristics; victimisation and rejection because of their unique characteristics; stigma- they felt being SEN stigmatised them. Facilitators of SBB were pupil relationships with various adults- pupils had relationships with teachers; equality among adults- more adults working together-they felt head teacher has created a sense of equality in the school; a respectful and supportive school climate- adults supported pupils unique characteristics and adapted their methods to meet pupils' needs.

Pittman, L.D., & Richmond, A. (2010). Academic and psychological functioning in late adolescence: the importance of school belonging. *Journal of Experimental Education, 75*, 270-290. http://doi.org/10.3200/JEXE.75.4.270-292.

This study explored the associations between a sense of school belonging and academic and psychological adjustment. Data was collected from 266 late adolescents in their first year at a regional state university in America. The findings suggested that students reporting of belonging at university and high school were significant in predicting current academic and psychological adjustment.

Porter, J. & Ingram, J. (2021). Changing the exclusionary practices of mainstream secondary schools: the experience of girls with SEND. 'I have some quirky bits about me that I mostly hide from the world'. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 26(1), 60-77.

DOI: 10.1080/13632752.2021.1900999

The study investigated pupils' experiences of barriers and supports in their school and the relationship between these and pupils' sense of belonging or being connected to the school, in Year 8 – 9 girls (age 12–14 years) with or without self-disclosed SEND, at 4 schools in England. Girls with self-disclosed SEND were significantly more likely

to rate their experiences across settings as worse than other girls. Taking the average, all settings were rated more poorly by the SEND group, with the widest discrepancies for contexts that all girls rated worst – tests and assessments, homework, and lessons.

Porter, J., McDermott, T., Daniels, H., & Ingram, J. (2021). Feeling part of the school and feeling safe. *Educational Studies,* doi:10.1090/03055698.2021.1944063

This study examines and explores responses from 595 students at UK schools from a questionnaire designed to inform schools on the barriers and supports to participation in school life and its relationship to students' feelings of belonging. Students frequently mentioned relationships with teachers and peers and often in the context of feeling safe to be themselves. This suggests that feeling part of the school and feeling safe are intertwined. Overwhelming is the importance of student individual identify rather than having identity in relation to attainment.

Prince, E. J., & Hadwin, J. (2013). The role of a sense of school belonging in understanding the effectiveness of inclusion of children with special educational needs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 17(3), 238-262. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2012.676081

The review was to draw together two areas of research to suggest that a SOSB is fundamental to understanding the effectiveness of educational inclusion for pupils with SEN. The study synthesised the research papers to suggest that a sense of school belonging is important in understanding the relationship between school placement and developmental outcomes for pupils with SEN.

Ridge, T. (2011). The everyday costs of poverty in childhood: a review of qualitative research exploring the lives and experiences of low-income children in the UK. *Children and Society,* 25, 73-84. Doi: 10.1111/j.1099-0860.2010.00345.x

A qualitative review of 10 years of research on disadvantaged children in UK. The review revealed poverty penetrates into the heart of childhood including marginalisation.

Riley, K. (2022). Compassionate leadership for school belonging. London: UCL Press.

This book was written in response to a global recognition of young peoples' sense of belonging at school being in decline. Two sides of the book: a reflection on the unacceptable state of affairs which characterise school systems; and compelling evidence of a strong relationship of a students' sense of school belonging with happiness, confidence and academic performance.

Riley, K., Coates, M., & Allen, T. (2020). Place and Belonging in School: Why it Matters Today: Case Studies. National Education Union.

Provides case studies from 4 primary schools and 1 secondary school in England, that support the conclusions from Allen et al. (2020).

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Sanchez, B., Colon, Y., & Esparza, P. (2005). The role of sense of school belonging and gender in the academic adjustment of Latino adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34,* p. 619-628. http://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-8950-4

This study examined the roles of sense of belonging and gender in the academic outcomes of 143 12th-grade Latino adolescents in an urban, midwestern public high school. Females consistently had more positive outcomes than males. A sense of school belonging significantly predicted academic outcomes, including academic motivation, effort and absenteeism.

Sancho, M., & Cline, T. (2012). Fostering a sense of belonging and community as children start a new school. *Educational and Child Psychology, 29,* 64-74. http://doi: 10.53841/bpsecp.2012.29.1.64

This study explored UK primary school children's views and experiences after their first few weeks at a new school. Peer acceptance was a salient factor for participants. Also the concept of 'valued involvement'. Overall the findings have implications for how schools create a sense of belonging and community for pupils.

Sari, M. (2012). Sense of school belonging among elementary school students. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal, 41,* 1-11. http://egitim.cu.edu.tr/efdergi.

This study investigated sense of school belonging in 364 students in sixth-, seventh-and eighth-grade in Adana, Turkey. Female students had significantly higher sense of school belonging and lower feeling of rejection in school, differences were also found in favour of students who have higher academic achievement.

Schweitzer, R.D., Mackay, S., Hancox, D., & Khawaja, N.G. (2021). Fostering belonging in CALD school environment: learning from a research collaboration with a refugee and migrant school community in Australia. *Intercultural Education,* 32, 593-609. Doi:10.1080/14675986.2021.1985803

The paper used digital storytelling workshops to capture explicit knowledge of inclusive schooling practices among 31 participants aged 11-18 years, and their parents. Three key themes were promoting student acculturation by helping students adapt to the new environment; fostering socially supportive relationships; and fostering a student's SB.

Shaw, E. (2019). 'How do I know that I belong?'. Exploring secondary aged pupils' views on what it means to belong to their school. *Educational & Child Psychology, 36,* 79-88.

This study aimed to explore pupils' perceptions of school belonging across the age range.in 2 UK secondary schools. The findings revealed themes of familiarity, identification with others and with the school, and reciprocity of relationships. Belonging had slightly different focus across the year groups.

Shochet, I.M., Smith, C.L., Furlong, M.J., & Homel, R. (2011). A prospective study investigating the impact of school belonging factors on negative affect in adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 40,* 586-595. http://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2011.581616.

The longitudinal study explored the relations of three factors, caring relations, acceptance and rejection with negative affect, in 504 Australian Grade 7 and 8 students. Each school belonging factor contributed to the negative affect; acceptance factor predicted subsequent negative affect for boys and girls, rejection factor was significant for girls.

Sirin, S.R., & Rogers-Sirin, L.(2004). Exploring school engagement of middle class African American adolescents. *Youth & Society, 35,* 323-340. http://doi:10.1177/0044118X03255006.

This study explored psychological and parental factors in relation to academic performance, with 336 middle-class African American students and their biological mothers. The findings suggest for African American middle class students, educational expectations and school engagement have the strongest relation to academic performance.

Slaten, C.D., Ferguson, J.K., Allen, K-A., Brodrick, D.V. & Waters, L. (2016). School Belonging: A review of the history, current trends, and future directions. *Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 1-15. DOI: 10.1017/edp.2016.6

This article, despite misquoting the Goodenow and Grady definition, provides a useful, brief overview of knowledge at the time regarding school belonging at both a school and university level. It covers the theoretical foundations of belonging, variables related to school belonging, predictors of school belonging, school belonging in university settings, and future research needs, such as a needed focus on more marginalized populations.

The Good Childhood Report (2022). The Children's Society.

This is the 11th annual report on wellbeing of children in the UK. It presents the most recent trends in children's subjective wellbeing and looks at how children feel about school.

Tian, L., Zhang, L., Huebner, S.S., Zheng, X., & Liu, W. (2016). The longitudinal relationship between school belonging and subjective wellbeing in school among elementary school students. *Applied Research Quality Life, 11,* 1269-1285. doi 10.1007/s11482-015-9436-5

This study explored the relationship between school belonging and subjective wellbeing in school. 890 students at public elementary schools in Guangdong province of southern China, aged 9-14 years, completed a measure of school belonging and subjective wellbeing. Pupil's subjective wellbeing had a significant bidirectional relationship between school belonging and subjective wellbeing. The study highlighted the importance of the role of school belonging in elementary school age children's subjective wellbeing.

Ullman, J. (2022). Trans/gender diverse students perceptions of positive school climate and teacher concern as factors in school belonging: results from an Australian national study. *Teachers College Record*, 124, 145-167. Doi: 10.1177/01614681221121710

The paper explored school well-being for transgender students, inclusive of student's sense of their teachers concerns for personal and academic well-being, and its relationship to students' perception of their school climate; among 685 transgender/diverse students from years 7-12, in Australia. Results indicated the influence of an accepting and supportive schooling environments for gender and sexuality diversity on transgender students' sense of school belonging.

Vetoniemi, J., & Karna, E. (2021). Being included -experiences of social participation of pupils with special education needs in mainstream schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25, 1190-1204. Doi:10.1080/13603116.2019.1603329

A Finnish qualitative study of experiences of 4 elementary school pupils with SEN in a mainstream school, aged between 13-15 years. Pupils' experiences and emotions relating to the school environment were often negative. They were less popular, they had fewer friends and they felt fear, anger, frustration, loneliness and restricted participation. All the pupils had personal abilities and competences which protected them from the experience of total segregation. Pupils' strengths were enhanced by interactions and social participation with peers. Through their strengths (related to hobbies, motivation, academic or social strengths), the pupils got feelings of empowerment, competence and a sense of belonging.

Wagle, R., Dowdy, E., Nylund-Gibson, K., Sharkey, J.D., Carter, D., & Furlong, M.J. (2021). School belonging constellations considering complete mental health in primary schools. *Education and Developmental Psychologist, 38*, 173-185. http://doi.org/10.1080/20590776.2021.1964071

This study sought to better understand primary school children experiences of school belonging and how they correspond to mental health outcomes. 619 upper elementary school students in California, USA participated. The majority of students had low to moderate school belonging profiles. Females were more likely to experience high belonging than male students. High school belonging reported higher psychological strengths and lower psychological distress.

Wagle, R., Dowdy, E., Yang, C., Palikara, O., Castro, S., Nylund-Gibson, K., & Furlong, M. (2018). Preliminary investigation of the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale with primary school students in a cross-cultural context. *School Psychology International*, 39(6), 568–586. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034318803670.

This study investigated the utility and psychometrics of the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM), with primary school samples (aged 8-13 years) from the United States, China, and the UK. Exploratory factor analysis revealed good fit for a unidimensional factor structure, resulting in a modification of the original 18-item PSSM, to a shorter 9-item version for this age range. There were significant positive relations of the PSSM-P total belonging score with gratitude and prosocial behavior, and significant negative relations with symptoms of distress.

Wallace, D. (2018). Safe routes to school? Black Caribbean youth negotiating police surveillance in London and New York City. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88, 261-286.

The study reported on Black Caribbean school pupils encounters with stop and search programs in London. 25 of the 60 Black Caribbean pupils experienced stop and frisk

search between 2007-2014. 11 were male pupils in London all travelling home from school. 57 witnessed ethno-racial minorities being frisked by the police during their journeys from home to school. For those who were searched, those street encounters affected their sense of security and belonging.

Watson, J.C. (2017). Examining the relationship between self-esteem, mattering, school connectedness, and wellness among middle school students. *Professional School counselling,* doi:10.5330/1096-2409-21.1.108

This study sought to determine the influence of self-esteem, mattering and school connectedness on students' overall wellbeing. Data was collected from 254 middle grade students enrolled in a rural, southern school district in the USA. School connectedness significantly improved the amount of variance in student wellness accounted for by self-esteem and mattering alone.

Wilson, D. (2004). The interface of school climate and school connectedness and relationships with aggression and victimization. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 293-299.

This empirical study gathered longitudinal data from over 2,000 students at 9 middle and 10 high schools in the USA. A school connectedness scale related negatively to measures of physical and relational perpetration of aggression, and to being a victim of aggression.

Wilson, S., & McGuire, K. (2021): 'They'd already made their minds up': understanding the impact of stigma on parental engagement. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(5-6), 775-791. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2021.1908115

The paper draws on extensions of stigma. The perceptions of parents on stigma were recalled by parents who felt this negatively impacted on their engagement in their children's education. Findings were organised into two themes: stigma as feeling being viewed as a being 'lesser in some way' and stigma as undesired differentness. Feelings of powerlessness were expressed too.

Wingspread Declaration on School Connections (2004). *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 233-234.

A short document, based on evidence from the USA, on the importance of school connectedness, and the most effective strategies for increasing the likelihood that students will be connected to school. Based on US experience, but likely to be broadly helpful in the UK context.

Xu, Z. & Fang, C. (2021). The relationship between school bullying and subjective well-being: The mediating effect of school belonging. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, article 725542. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.725542

This empirical study used the PISA 2018 data and school belonging scale, from a large sample of students (11,631) aged 15-16 years from 4 areas of mainland China (represented by Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang). There was a negative relation of school belonging to bullying victimization. Also, the level of school

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belonging mediated the relationship between bullying victimization experiences and lower subjective wellbeing.

Ye, F., & Wallace, T. L. (2014). Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale: Method effects associated with negatively worded items. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 32, 202–215. doi:10.1177/0734282913504816

These authors examined the widely used Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale to assess school belonging. They pointed out that previous research examining the factor structure of the PSSM scale consistently identified a factor named perception of rejection that consists of only negatively worded items. They reported a study with a diverse U.S. high school sample of 890 9th to 12th grade pupils. In their own examination of the factor structure of the PSSM, they identified three substantive factors—identification and participation in school, perception of fitting in among peers, and generalized connection to teachers. These authors noted an imbalance of negatively worded items across these 3 factors. Considering potential method effects associated with negatively worded items, they argued that such method effects are best represented with a common negative wording factor, and that further research on the impact of this would be desirable.

You, S., Furlong, M. J., Felix, E., Sharkey, J. D., Tanigawa, D., & Green, J. G. (2008). Relations among school connectedness, hope, life satisfaction, and bully victimization. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45, 446–460. doi:10.1002/pits.20308

This empirical study investigated the role of school connectedness in mediating the relation between students' sense of hope and life satisfaction for three groups: Bullied Victims, Peer Victims, and Nonvictims.   Data was obtained from 866 pupils in grades 5 to 12 from 4 schools in California, USA. Children who were victims of bullying scored lower on all items of a school connectedness scale, especially when the victim experience involved a power imbalance. School connectedness partially mediated the relation between hope and life satisfaction for the Nonvictims only. The effect of hope on school connectedness was stronger for the Bullied Victims than the Nonvictims, and the effect of hope on life satisfaction was stronger for the Peer Victims and Bullied Victims than the Nonvictims group.

You, S., Ritchey, K., Furlong, M., Shochet, I. & Boman, P. (2010). Examination of the latent structure of the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 29(3), 225–237. DOI: 10.1177/0734282910379968

These authors examined the underlying factor structure of the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale, and its psychometric properties, to refine its utility for researchers and practitioners. They used a sample of 504 Australian high school students aged 12-14 years. Results from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the PSSM is a multidimensional instrument. Factor analysis identified three factors representing related aspects of students' perceptions of their school membership: caring relationships, acceptance, and rejection.