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Strengthening School and College Governance to Support Pupil and Student Wellbeing

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Abstract

Whole School and College Approaches (WSCA) to mental health and wellbeing are increasingly promoted in education policy to support positive learning environments and improve pupil and student outcomes. Effective implementation requires engagement across school and college staff, senior leadership, and governing bodies. However, across three prior studies using the WSCA Measurement Toolkit in the UK, governance was consistently identified as a comparatively underdeveloped area of WSCA implementation, highlighting a need for clearer guidance and support for governors. To address this gap, we engaged in a co-production process with school and college governors and sector stakeholders to explore governors' awareness, confidence, and support needs in relation to pupil and student wellbeing. This collaboration drew on survey responses from 267 school and college governors, consultations with five Governors Associations, and a Governors Sounding Board involving four governors. Contributors expressed strong commitment to wellbeing but highlighted low awareness of WSCA in practice, limited access to meaningful wellbeing measurement, and inconsistent approaches across school and college settings. At the same time, governors showed strong appetite to engage where guidance was practical and aligned with governance responsibilities. In response, we co-developed an evidence-informed infographic and Governors' Guide, to be launched nationally in England in April 2026, designed to translate WSCA principles into practical governance actions and support more confident strategic oversight of pupil and student wellbeing. Future work will examine dissemination, uptake, and implications for governance practice within and beyond the UK.

Keywords: Co-Production; Educational Governance; Implementation; Pupil And Student Wellbeing; Whole-School And College Approaches