



Understanding and promoting wellbeing within Secondary Schools in Wales

The realist evaluation of PauseUP

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed are my own. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The thesis has not been edited by a third party beyond what is permitted by Cardiff University's Use of Third-Party Editors by Research Degree Students Procedure.

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Abbreviations

- AoLE – Areas of Learning and Development
- BERA – British Educational Research Association
- CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- CASCADE - Children’s Social Care Research and Development Centre
- CMO – Context-Mechanism-Outcome
- CMOC – Context Mechanism Outcome Configuration
- CUREMeDE – Cardiff Unit for Research and Evaluation in Medical and Dental Education
- ERW – Education through Regional Working
- EU – European Union
- FSM – Free School Meals
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- HBSC – Health Behaviour in School-aged Children
- HoY – Head of Year
- HPS - Health Promoting School
- KESS – Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship
- LA – Local Authority
- NEF – New Economics Forum
- NIHR – National Institute for Health Research
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- PERMA – Positive emotion, Engagement, Positive relationships, Meaning, Achievement
- PES – Positive Emotional State
- PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment
- PPI’s – Positive Psychology Interventions
- PO – Positive Outlook
- PWB – Psychological Wellbeing
- QIF – Quality Implementation Framework
- RAMESES – Realist and Meta-narrative Evidence Synthesis: Evolving Standards
- RCT – Randomised Controlled Studies
- SaS – Saib a Sylwi
- SCWBS – Stirling Children Wellbeing Scale
- SDG’s – Sustainable Development Goals

- SDT – Self Determination Theory
- SEAL – Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
- SEL – Social and Emotional Learning
- SHRN – School Health Research Network
- SME – Small Medium sized Enterprise
- SOCSI – School of Social Science
- SWB – Subjective Wellbeing
- SWEMWBS – Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
- UKMRC – United Kingdom Medical Research Council
- UN – United Nations
- UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UNICEF – United Nations International Childrens Fund
- UNSDG's – United Nations Sustainability Development Goals
- WEMWBS – Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
- WHO - World Health Organization
- WISERD – Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research and Data
- WR – Wellbeing Representative
- WSA – Whole School Approach

Glossary of Key Terms

- Areas of Learning and Development (AoLE's) – Specific domains of educational focus in Wales that facilitate student growth and knowledge acquisition including Health and Wellbeing.
- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory – A theoretical framework for understanding human development within the context of the system of relationships that form one's environment.
- CMO configurations – A framework in realist evaluation that stands for Context, Mechanism, Outcome to understand more about how an intervention works, or why it does not.
- Convergence Region of Wales – Regions in Wales that are eligible for the highest level of funding from the European Structural Funds.
- Critical Realism – A philosophical stance emphasising the importance of structure and agency in understanding the social world.
- Domino Days – Term used during PausePoints delivery days to describe the build-up of stressors and their cumulative effects on wellbeing.
- Emotional Stability – A person's ability to remain balanced in their emotional responses.
- Equity and Inclusion – Policies and practices that ensure fairness and equality of opportunity, recognising and accommodating differences.
- Eudaimonia – A Greek term often translated as "the good life", referring to a state of living and happiness in accordance with one's true self or virtues.
- Flourishing – The pinnacle of good mental health.
- Generative Causation – The process by which certain conditions bring about an effect.
- Gwylan – The previous name of the wellbeing company partner supporting this thesis.
- If...then statements – Conditional statements that describe a relationship between a possible cause and an effect.
- Iteration – A process involving a series of steps that are repeated until a desired outcome is achieved.
- Iterative Development – A developmental process that involves repetitions of cycles to refine and improve a product or concept.
- KESS – Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships, the sponsorship scheme providing funding for this research project in collaboration with Raven Technologies (previously Gwylan) and Cardiff University.
- Languishing – The absence of mental wellbeing.

- Liminality - A transitional phase where normal structures are disrupted, allowing space for change and new possibilities.
- Logic Model – A representation depicting the shared relationship among the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of a programme.
- Mechanism – The process or means by which an effect is produced.
- Microsystem – The closest environment layer to an individual and involves immediate relationships and activities.
- Outcome – The result or consequence of an action or situation.
- PausePoints – The original bilingual and digital wellbeing resource created by the company behind PauseUP mainly used in Primary schools in Wales.
- PauseUP – The wellbeing programme implemented in schools for evaluation in this thesis.
- Positive Psychology – The scientific study of the positive aspects of human life.
- Programme theory – The assumptions and theories that explain how a programme's activities lead to the achievement of its objectives.
- Progression steps – Milestones or benchmarks in Welsh educational curricula that mark advancements in a learner's journey.
- Raven Technologies – Name of company partner supporting this wellbeing project
- Realism – A belief or theory that entities exist independently of perception.
- Realist Evaluation – A method for the evaluation of social programmes which seeks to explore how, why, for whom, and in what circumstances interventions or programmes might work.
- Reporting Standards – Agreed-upon conventions or norms for documenting and presenting information.
- Saib a Sylwi – Welsh named version of the wellbeing programme PauseUP
- Saib y Symud – Welsh named version of the wellbeing resource PausePoints used in Primary schools.
- Salutogenesis – A term describing an approach focusing on factors that support human health and wellbeing, rather than on factors that cause disease.
- Subjective Wellbeing – An individual's self-assessment of their life as a whole or specific aspects of it.
- Sustainable Development – A developmental approach that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- The Whole-School Approach (WSA) – An integrative method where the entire school community (students, staff, parents, and others) work collaboratively to create a conducive environment for student wellbeing and learning.

- The Welsh Curriculum – An educational framework implemented across schools in Wales, covering an array of subjects and disciplines. This curriculum reflects the devolved nature of education in Wales, allowing for tailored educational strategies that are separate from other countries within the United Kingdom.
- Wellbeing for Future Generations Act – Legislation in Wales that aims to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of the country, focusing on long-term sustainability.

Abstract

This thesis examines PauseUP, a bilingual, digital wellbeing programme designed for secondary schools in Wales. Aiming to improve the emotional and psychological health and wellbeing of adolescents in school settings, PauseUP was piloted and assessed during the pandemic through a realist evaluation approach grounded in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. This theory contextualizes the school environment as a complex microsystem with many factors impacting student development.

The evaluation began with a pilot study, which involved 575 students aged 11-15 across four schools, employing a mixture of methods including staff interviews, student surveys, and wellbeing scales. The subsequent main study then focused on a slightly younger cohort of students (ages 11-14, n=376), across four schools, expanding the qualitative data with additional interviews, student focus groups (n=4), and observational site visits, alongside continued use of student surveys and wellbeing scales to obtain an oversight of quantitative trends in engagement with the programme and to explore wellbeing changes.

Findings suggest PauseUP's potential in promoting emotional wellbeing among younger adolescents (11–13 years) in supportive contexts, highlighting the necessity for the programme's adaptability to the dynamics of the developing adolescent and the individual school and classroom settings. Key factors influencing the success of PauseUP include a supportive school environment, engaged leadership, and proactive teacher involvement, which it is argued are all needed for the integration of new wellbeing programmes, especially in contexts of significant social disruption like the pandemic.

This research contributes to the academic discourse on student wellbeing by offering theoretical insights and exploring practices and conditions that may facilitate the implementation of school-based wellbeing initiatives. The findings have implications for curriculum development, and the design of future programmes aimed at supporting the holistic development of young learners in secondary schools.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis focuses on the implementation of PauseUP, a bilingual, digital wellbeing programme for secondary schools in Wales, aimed at improving students' wellbeing through short, daily activities. The introduction of PauseUP coincided with the pandemic, school closures and the new curriculum introduced by the Welsh Government which includes health and wellbeing as an area of learning and experience (Hwb 2022).

PauseUP's development was supported by the Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS 2), involving Welsh universities and businesses, led by Bangor University and co-funded by the European Social Fund via the Welsh Government. KESS aimed to facilitate the research capacities of Small Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Wales, particularly in economically challenged regions like West Wales and the Valleys, promoting innovation and growth in key sectors, including health and bioscience (KESS 2 2020). This research, within the KESS category of health sector innovation, relates to mental health and wellbeing of young people in schools. It represents a collaboration between Raven Technologies Ltd. (formerly named Gwylan UK Ltd.) and Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences (SOCSI), evaluating PauseUP as an educational and mental health intervention for teachers to use digitally in classrooms.

Evaluating PauseUP was challenging due to the complex nature of wellbeing, influenced by factors like family environment, peer relationships, personal history, and socio-cultural influences (Ross et al. 2020). Effective programmes must be complex and adaptable (Bonell et al. 2014; Littlecott et al. 2018a). School environments, with their unique interpersonal relationships and cultural norms, add further complexity (Littlecott et al. 2019). Traditional evaluation methods might not capture the dynamic classroom interactions and wellbeing considerations (Werner-Seidler et al. 2017; Johnstone et al. 2018). A realist evaluation approach was adopted to understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and why, by exploring the mechanisms producing outcomes and the contexts enabling or constraining these mechanisms (Pawson and Tilley 1997). This approach adds a critical layer to wellbeing promotion discourse in schools, emphasising the need for context-specific implementation (Lendrum and Humphrey 2012; Craig et al. 2018).

The evaluation focused on PauseUP's pilot stages, identifying interactions between the school context and the programme as mechanisms for wellbeing change. Findings aim to inform the design of future iterations of PauseUP or similar programmes, ensuring they engage with secondary school students and their specific settings. The study underscores the importance

of adaptability and understanding the interactions between intervention activities, school context, and engagement of students and staff. The research highlighted the importance of involving teachers, students, and other school stakeholders in developing and evaluating wellbeing programmes, grounding them in the practical realities of school life. A unique context for this study was the role of liminality within the school system during the pandemic—a period of transition and disruption that may have created a unique condition for introducing a new initiative (Sharma 2013; Shields 2013; Jamjoom 2022). It is argued that this liminal phase allowed for the reimagining of traditional school practices and the rapid introduction and adaptation of a wellbeing programme to fit within these changing dynamics, illustrating how moments of crisis can drive social change within conducive contexts.

The thesis, beginning with this opening chapter, is structured to elaborate on the research process, from the context and frameworks for wellbeing within schools in Wales, through literature review, methodological approaches, findings, and discussions.

Chapter 2 explores wellbeing within societal contexts, introducing Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) as a framework for observing systemic factors influencing wellbeing. It aligns the study with global sustainable development goals (SDGs) and pertinent Welsh policies, stressing the importance of adolescent wellbeing support in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3 then reviews literature on mental health and wellbeing, identifying factors for promoting these concepts in schools and discussing theories on social change and implementation challenges schools may face. It introduces PauseUP and the research context of having to introduce a new digital programme during the pandemic, concluding with the research questions and objectives guiding the evaluation process.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology, justifying the choice of realist evaluation and introducing the methods used across the two studies, including stakeholder discussions for developing initial programme theories.

Chapter 5 reports on the pilot study, presenting preliminary findings instrumental in refining PauseUP and developing initial programme theories.

Chapter 6 covers the main study, exploring student perspectives on wellbeing and the research objective used to test the initial programme theories, highlighting the iterative nature of the evaluation process.

Chapter 7 discusses the entire evaluation, examining the findings to explore the research objectives and themes taken from the initial programme theories, relating findings to the

literature and theoretical implications. This chapter explores the research questions and the strengths, limitations and possible directions for future research.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, reiterating study objectives and offering practical recommendations for shaping wellbeing programmes in schools. It advocates for adaptable strategies sensitive to the diverse needs of students and school contexts, supporting flexibility, continual assessment, and contextual awareness in programme design and implementation.

The findings and contributions of this research challenge a "one size fits all" methodology that may often be applied in educational approaches to wellbeing. Instead, it promotes a more holistic, adaptable strategy that is sensitive to the diverse needs, and variables of the student demographic, principles that are duly required in creating school environments in which all students can flourish.

Chapter 2: Setting the Context.

In exploring health and wellbeing promotion in schools, various models provide frameworks, each offering perspectives on the topic. The biomedical model, detailed by Farre and Rapley (2017) and critiqued by Gutkin (2012), focuses on biological aspects of health, attributing challenges to disease or pathology. However, it may not fully capture systemic factors inherent in school environments (Trickett and Rowe 2012).

The social model of health, as discussed by Jackson (2011), includes social determinants and stresses addressing social inequities through multi-sectoral collaborations. This model is particularly relevant in schools, acknowledging that student wellbeing is influenced by various factors, including social and physical environments, healthcare access, poverty, and educational policies (Littlecott et al. 2019). This approach shifts the focus from individual health to the role of social structures and policies in health promotion (Wold and Mittelmark 2018).

Ecological models, blending elements of biomedical and social models, recognise the interaction between individual health behaviours and environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner 1999). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and later bioecological systems theory emphasise interactions across multiple systems (Bronfenbrenner 1988, 2005; Rosa and Tudge 2013). These systems shape development through the interaction between biological progression and environmental forces (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006, 2007; Merçon-Vargas et al. 2020).

The individual is at the centre, surrounded by the microsystem, including family, school, and peer groups. This model highlights the importance of wellbeing determinants, from the school's physical and social environment to its values and structure. Viewing schools as complex social systems (Hawe and Potvin 2009; Keshavarz et al. 2010; Hawe 2015; Moore et al. 2019), this approach considers multiple layers influencing student wellbeing, from individual attributes to institutional practices (explored further in the literature review section 3.2).

The mesosystem connects various microsystems, such as interactions between school and family (Gaias et al. 2018). This perspective emphasises cohesive relationships across a child's primary contexts, suggesting that experiences in one microsystem can affect others. The exosystem includes wider social systems that indirectly influence development. For example, a parent's workplace conditions can affect family dynamics, influencing a child's trajectory (Crouter 1984; Bronfenbrenner 1986). This theory highlights the interconnectedness of social environments and external pressures on individual experience.

The macrosystem encompasses cultural, economic, and societal systems shaping development, including norms, policies, and ideologies (Heffernan et al. 2014). The macrosystem's influence is significant, as it includes values informing micro- and meso-level interactions.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory grounds this research, enriching the evaluation of the wellbeing programme PauseUP. This approach requires a multi-dimensional analysis to understand student health and wellbeing in schools, which are characterised by interacting factors such as policies and societal influences (Bonell et al. 2014). The success of wellbeing programmes depends on their alignment within the school as a microsystem, viewing them as components of an interconnected system (McIlsac et al. 2016).

The chronosystem incorporates time, acknowledging life transitions and socio-historical events' roles in shaping an individual's life course (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2007; Gonzales and Gonzales 2020). The chronosystem was particularly relevant considering the Covid-19 pandemic's timing and circumstances, affecting both immediate and long-term contexts. Immediate challenges included young people's wellbeing and educational hurdles during school closures, while longer-term effects involved prolonged school closures and the need for 'catching up' with learning (Egan and Pope 2022; Sarvan and Muslu 2022).

The unique circumstances of the pandemic created a distinct backdrop for this study, influencing the implementation and evaluation of PauseUP. These systemic factors and situational contexts are needed in understanding the interaction between health and wellbeing promotion and individual development. This chapter therefore outlines the contextual theoretical framework for this research, structuring the various influences on adolescent wellbeing in Wales. It begins with historical and global perspectives on wellbeing, forming part of the macrosystem. This context includes the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), encouraging global commitments to health and wellbeing, relevant to this research under a KESS 2 scholarship.

The chapter then transitions to focus on how these global imperatives relate to Welsh Government policies influencing educational strategies, particularly in achieving SDG 3 – good health and wellbeing. This is illustrated through Wales' education curriculum, integrating health and wellbeing as an Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE), advocating for a Whole School Approach (WSA). Further, the chapter discusses adolescence, and how curriculum and policies in Wales may be timely in impacting the mental health and wellbeing of these young people. Finally, it reflects on the pandemic's influence, an event in the chronosystem, affecting all layers of the bioecological model and reshaping the educational and wellbeing landscape for these young learners.

2.1 Historical Context of Wellbeing

The concept of wellbeing has a long history, deeply rooted in various historical and cultural contexts (Bergdolt 2008). Ancient Greek philosophy, notably Aristotle and Socrates, strongly influenced the conceptualisation of wellbeing. Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia links individual fulfilment to societal welfare, contrasting with today's often hedonic interpretations but still influencing modern perspectives (Broadie 2007; Kraut 2018).

Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism advocate for a balance of mind, body, and spirit, emphasising harmony with nature and inner peace as central to wellbeing (Keown 1996; Kohn 2001; Billington 2002). These traditions support the integration of individual and community needs, aligning with holistic approaches increasingly recognised in global health promotion. Additionally, other global religions contribute significant views on wellbeing. Concepts like the Islamic 'Afiyah,' Judaism's 'Shalom,' and Christian spiritual wellness highlight the connection between wellbeing, community, ethical living, and spiritual health (De Lange 2000; Feuerbach 2004; Joshanloo and Weijers 2019; Joshanloo et al. 2021). These perspectives underscore the necessity of a globally inclusive understanding of wellbeing for effective health strategies in multicultural settings.

Historically, perceptions of wellbeing evolved from the Middle Ages' focus on religious devotion to the Enlightenment's advocacy for individual rights, and later, the Industrial Revolution's emphasis on material wealth and physical health (Kahneman et al. 1999; McMahon 2018). This shift towards a hedonic model of happiness has been supplemented by research advocating a comprehensive approach, including emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions (Ryff 1989; Diener et al. 1999; Ryff et al. 2021).

Through Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, these contributions are discerned within the chrono and macrosystem layers. These layers encapsulate historical contexts and cultural values, beliefs, and customs influencing individual development. Practices and beliefs rooted in these layers shape norms, values, and behaviours across the exo, meso, and microsystems, such as within families, schools, and communities. Highlighting these influences reveals their collective impact on the contemporary understanding of wellbeing in multicultural societies. The collection of spiritual and philosophical literature provides resources for health promotion strategies within education settings in our increasingly globalised world, reinforcing the necessity for wellbeing strategies attuned to human diversity.

Today, the understanding of wellbeing is marked by scientific advancements and increased psychological and sociological research (Stoll 2014). Wellbeing is now recognised as a holistic construct embodying multiple interconnected dimensions. Modern interpretations are

influenced by global efforts, notably the UNSDG's (United Nations 2020), which highlight the need for good health and wellbeing as a means towards sustainable advancement.

2.2 Sustainable Development and Wellbeing

The notion of sustainable development, as recognised today, can be traced back to the 1987 United Nations' report "Our Common Future" - more familiarly known as the Brundtland Report (Brundtland et al. 1987). This document, named in recognition of Gro Harlem Brundtland, the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, introduced the definition of sustainable development as,

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). Our Common Future, p. 43)

"Our Commons Future" aligned its core inquiries and assertions with the UNSDG's. In the context of this research those Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) pertaining to health and wellbeing are of particular interest, along with the cultivation of strategic partnerships, and the assurance of quality education (as detailed in Table One). These goals, which collectively strive for global sustainability, identify the necessity of integrated approaches in tackling some of the challenges currently facing societies worldwide.

SDG 3, which advocates for "Good Health and Wellbeing," identifies the imperative for securing healthy lives and promoting wellbeing at all ages. This goal recognises the important role of health for development, affirming that societal progress is linked to the physical and mental health of all people (World Health Organization 1986, 2004). SDG 4, advocates for "Quality Education," and the right to inclusive and equitable education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all which has been linked to better health outcomes at both individual and community levels (Howden-Chapman et al. 2017). Education, some argue, can prompt immediate improvements in health through behavioural changes or the adoption of new technologies (del Carmen Ortega-Navas 2017).

Table 1 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Goal Number	Goal	Description
1	No Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2	Zero Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3	Good Health and Well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4	Quality Education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5	Gender Equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10	Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13	Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14	Life Below Water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
15	Life on Land	Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.
16	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17	Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

2.2.1 SDG Goals and Education

Sustainable development's link with education has been identified as essential for achieving sustainability goals. McKeown et al. (2002) and Rieckmann (2017) discuss using education to actualise the SDGs, providing adaptable learning topics and objectives for educational decision-makers. Education, by nurturing critical knowledge, skills, and values, equips individuals to confront global challenges and supports sustainable societal progress.

Regarding SDG 3, Rieckmann (2017) advocates for an approach encompassing cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural aspects. He argues for the holistic promotion of health-sustaining behaviours, with learners understanding preventative strategies for physical and mental health. This perspective positions schools and education as key in promoting wellbeing.

The responsibility of schools for young people's wellbeing, particularly emotional and social development, has evolved. Initially, families and religious organisations were responsible for wellbeing, with schools focused on academic learning. Post-World War II, industrialisation, urbanisation, and changing family structures shifted some wellbeing responsibilities to schools (Bergdolt 2008). This period saw the emergence of the school counsellor profession to address students' emotional needs (Gysbers and Henderson 2001). By the late 20th century, schools increasingly addressed holistic student wellbeing, driven by educational psychology advancements, child and adolescent mental health research, and legal changes in education policy (Jimerson et al. 2007; Docking 2018). Collaboration among schools, families, and communities became necessary for improving young people's wellbeing (Epstein and Van Voorhis 2010). Today, schools' role in supporting student wellbeing is more pronounced. Initiatives like the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools framework combine the whole-school environment, community engagement, and curriculum teaching to support students (Macnab et al. 2014).

2.2.2 The Whole School Approach to Health and Wellbeing

Schools now serve as environments for nurturing wellbeing, given their direct engagement with a large population of young individuals who spend significant time there during their formative years. They can also be settings where wellbeing interventions or programmes are most effectively and economically delivered (Langford et al. 2014). Research has reported a relationship between student wellbeing and academic outcomes (Bonell et al. 2014), with a

direct connection between better health and wellbeing outcomes and higher academic achievement (Suhrccke and de Paz Nieves 2011; Bradley and Greene 2013). Education and health are linked, and healthy young people are more likely to learn more effectively (Young et al. 2013).

Nel Noddings' works on the ethics of care revolutionised educators' perspectives on student wellbeing. Noddings' work positions caring relationships in schools as fundamental to learning. She strongly argued that education should include the nurturing of ethical and empathetic individuals. Her approach advocates for a holistic education system where students' emotional and moral development is given as much importance as their intellectual growth. This philosophy underscores the importance of empathy, compassion, and the development of strong, trusting relationships between teachers and students (Noddings 2006, 2018). Schools, utilising these relationships, should, some argue, fundamentally prepare young people to shape sustainable change in a desirable direction (Sterling and Orr 2001). Noddings' ethics of care therefore serves as an educational theory positioning individual practices with broader societal transformation, positioning education and schools as important levers for social and wellbeing change.

Another name for the Whole School Approach (WSA) to wellbeing is the Health Promoting School (HPS), which the WHO defines as one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning, and working (World Health Organization 2021). This aligns with Noddings' philosophy, recognising the interconnectedness between educational practices and health, and advocating for an integrated strategy to meet the diverse needs of students. In this model, the school is viewed as a holistic system where curriculum, teaching practices, school policies, and the physical environment all play a role in fostering a conducive learning space. The WHO's framework is a model that aims to improve health and educational achievements, placing schools as ideal settings for health promotion activities. The strength of this approach lies in its holistic thinking that requires consistency in policies and practices, and wellbeing promotion as a shared responsibility (Weare and Markham 2005).

However, the increased push for promoting wellbeing for young people, especially in the educational context, has sparked some debate. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) argue that this approach may lead to a therapeutic culture focused more on the education of self and emotions, potentially increasing vulnerability rather than advancing intellectual potential (Ecclestone 2017). Brunila and Siivonen (2023) express concerns about the pathologisation of normal student experiences, suggesting it could diminish resilience and self-efficacy. These critiques reflect a tension between supporting wellbeing and maintaining intellectual development. This shift in the development of wellbeing as a subject in schools raises ethical

and practical questions about the responsibility of schools in promoting the concept. The WSA's emphasis on creating a nurturing school environment is backed by research on the benefits of this support for healthy learners (Littlecott et al. 2018a, b), yet the approach must continually navigate the complexities of balancing emotional and intellectual development.

The debate about the role of schools is therefore a question of balance and prioritisation, ensuring schools have the resources and support they need to fulfil their academic mission while also addressing some of the wellbeing needs of their students. This requires ongoing dialogue and research to understand how best to achieve this balance. Research shows the interconnectedness of academic achievement and wellbeing, suggesting that schools can effectively promote both (Durlak and Weissberg 2011; Clarke 2020). Currently, there is a consensus on the need for multidisciplinary collaborations backed by policy support and resource allocation, to holistically support children's wellbeing (Koller and Bertel 2006). Recognition of this within the UK was introduced by Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 (UK Government 2005), which tasked inspectorates with reporting on the contributions schools made to the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of students and the contribution made by the school to the wellbeing of those pupils. This UK Government Act is particularly important within the context of this research taking place in Wales and in efforts made within Wales for reaching the sustainability and wellbeing goals of the UN.

2.3 The Wellbeing of Future Generations in Wales

The sustainability commitment of the UNSDG's manifest themselves in the 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015', a legislation which requires Welsh public bodies to accentuate long-term sustainability (Gov.Wales 2015). As the first of its kind to legally require public bodies to adhere to the sustainable development principle, the Act marks a substantial advancement in policy and political thought (Davies 2018).

The Act presents seven objectives as shown in figure 1, offering a collective vision for public bodies to strive towards. These goals are strategically framed to focus on the long-term consequences of decisions instead of temporary benefits. In a similar vein to the SDGs, the wellbeing goals acknowledge the interconnected nature of the objectives, where advancement in one area can stimulate development in others.



Figure 1 Goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 taken from gov.wales (Welsh Government 2015)

The importance of education in attaining these goals, is highlighted in the Welsh Government's 'Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-2021' (Gov.Wales 2017). This plan signals a transition, propelling a new curriculum which encompasses a WSA to education aimed at preparing students in Wales for the uncertainties of a rapidly changing world, giving them what some call '21st century skills' (Rotherham and Willingham 2010).

There is also a need within policy in Wales to incorporate the views of young people to facilitate these changes aligning with the nations progressive stance on children's rights, notably with its adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law (Lyle 2014; Hoffman 2020). This adoption signifies a commitment to embedding children's rights in all aspects of governance and policymaking, including education (UK Government 2001; Welsh Assembly Government 2004). The 'Right Way' framework produced by the Children's Commissioner for Wales provides a guide for ensuring that all actions and policies affecting children in Wales are aligned with their rights (Children's commissioner for Wales 2017). The 'Education in Wales' plan, with its commitment to an inclusive approach was written in alignment with these principles (Children's commissioner for Wales 2021). Therefore, these policy changes in education were made to be seen not just as a pedagogical shift but as a move towards a rights-based approach to learning, wellbeing, and sustainability (Murphy and Waters-Davies 2022).

2.3.1 Health and Wellbeing for Schools in Wales

The school inspectorate in Wales, Estyn, has produced guidance on how wellbeing should be assessed, emphasising that all pupils should be a part of school life, feel healthy and safe in school, and be included in decision-making (Estyn 2015). This guidance is also found in documents on Personal and Social Education (PSE) in schools (Hwb 2008), the Welsh Government strategy ‘Together for Mental Health’ (Gov.Wales 2012), and the School Effectiveness Framework (DERA 2008).

As previously discussed, the trajectory of schools evolving into sites for promoting wellbeing can be traced back to the mid-20th century, when several nations first acknowledged the role of wellbeing in learning (World Health Organization 1986; Organization 2021a, b). Recent years have seen the surge of the WSA, which has been adopted by the Welsh Government through the introduction of statutory guidance—the “Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach To Emotional And Mental Well-Being”—guiding every school in Wales to facilitate this approach (Gov.Wales 2022). This framework seeks to infuse mental health and wellbeing into all aspects of school life, thereby attempting to create an environment that nurtures mental health and provides timely support to students in need (Weare 2013). The WSA framework in Wales encourages the development of action plans, incorporating case studies and examples of good practice to aid in effective implementation and evaluation (Gov.Wales 2022). It recommends the involvement of all members of the school community to work across various areas of school life, consistent with the bioecological systems perspective of multiple layers working together to influence the development of young people (Bronfenbrenner 2005).

The decision in Wales to promote a WSA was partly initiated in 2018 when the National Assembly Children, Young People, and Education Committee called for improvements in mental health support for young people through its “Mind Over Matter” report (Senedd 2018). The report stressed the need for improvements to emotional and mental health services in school settings, advocating for an approach within schools to address the needs of young people. They reported that three children in every average-sized classroom are estimated to have a mental health issue and that half of all mental health problems start by the age of 14.

Research by Littlecott et al. (2018a) from almost half (n=100) of secondary schools in Wales measured the embeddedness of health promotion policies and practices. The measure combined self-report scale scores (0-3) for the topics of health education, school ethos, and engaging with family and community, all of which are encouraged in promoting a WSA to wellbeing. The accumulated scores ranged from 0.31 to 2.43, with a mean of 1.40, suggesting

wide variability in preparedness between schools across the country and a possible need for support within schools to embed a WSA.

In response to the growing need for a unified approach to mental health support in schools, the Welsh Ministers for Education and for Health and Social Services convened a multidisciplinary team comprising experts from health, education, and the third sector. This team was tasked with crafting the WSA framework aimed at guiding Welsh schools in formulating their mental health strategies. The essence of this initiative was to foster uniformity and equity in mental health support for all learners. To evaluate the proposed framework's efficacy and relevance, a 12-week consultation period was held from July to September 2020. This consultation, conducted predominantly online, solicited feedback through a series of targeted questions designed to assess the framework's capacity to standardise mental health approaches, its support for school staff, and its potential to enhance collaboration among schools, statutory bodies, the third sector, and families (Gov.Wales 2022).

The consultation garnered 142 responses, indicating interest from education and health organisations. Analysis of the feedback revealed that over 70% of respondents endorsed the guidance for promoting consistent WSAs to positively impact the emotional wellbeing and mental health of learners and staff. Nonetheless, a significant minority, 28.3%, expressed reservations, highlighting areas in need of support, such as more experiential learning opportunities for emotional literacy and ethical decision-making. Similarly, when questioned about the guidance's support for school staff and leadership in embedding best practices for a WSA to emotional wellbeing and mental health, 62.6% of participants acknowledged its adequacy. However, 29.3% were sceptical, pointing out ambiguities regarding the alignment of schools' expectations with available resources and support.

Another evaluation assessment of the WSA was commissioned by the Welsh Government, informed by semi-structured focus groups and interviews with stakeholders from health and education sectors, as well as from parents (Duggan et al. 2022). Findings indicate that the effectiveness of this approach in Wales may be hindered by existing pressures on schools, such as staff time constraints and mental health challenges among the staff themselves. Successful implementation, it was suggested, could be facilitated by providing clear guidance, allocating sufficient funding for staff time and training, and ensuring stakeholder involvement throughout the process of change. The assessment also highlights the need for monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of such systemic changes (Brown et al. 2023). Facilitating a WSA in schools has been suggested by some researchers as an important route for recovery from some of the detrimental effects of the pandemic. In an article highlighting

research priorities for mental health in schools, Baker et al. (2021) report on the importance of this collective approach in the development of wellbeing.

Changes to the Curriculum in Wales

This study ran parallel to the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales, launched in September 2022 (Hwb 2022). The curriculum reform impacts learners aged 3 to 16 in state-maintained schools, introducing six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) to replace the conventional subject-based curriculum. It is marked by five distinctive progression steps, a strategy that maps educational growth. The reform envisions a change in the teaching profession too, giving increased autonomy and versatility to educators (Hwb 2019).

As delineated in Professor Graham Donaldson's report, "Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales" (Donaldson 2015), the Health and Wellbeing AoLE was designed to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to lead healthy and fulfilled lives. The AoLE contains key thematic areas, from physical and mental health to social, moral, and spiritual development. The decision to include these areas used feedback from young people who reported on the importance of these aspects of learning in their school experience. The review also extended to the overall school environment, examining how factors like school climate, food provisions, collaborations with health and social work services, and opportunities for physical activity can support students (Hwb 2022). The new curriculum encourages interdisciplinary learning, connecting health and wellbeing with other subjects and AoLEs. This AoLE associates with "The Right Way" and the protection rights for young people in Wales (Children's Commissioner for Wales 2022). These include rights related to provision, non-discrimination, decision-making, freedom of expression, cultural participation, play, religion, and privacy, addressing issues such as equality, accessibility, the right to life, and health. Further guidance for the implementation of children's rights within the curriculum is structured around three key elements: learning about, through, and for human rights to acquire knowledge and skills, to develop values and attitudes, and to motivate social action and active citizenship (Children's Commissioner for Wales 2017, 2021, 2022). With the inclusion of children's rights, progression steps, and health and wellbeing, the new curriculum in Wales captures an approach to education that reflects developmental psychology and educational neuroscience (Thomas et al. 2019). It highlights the interconnectedness of academic, social, and emotional development, noting the interaction of these factors in a student's growth process (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007; Immordino-Yang 2015). The World Economic Forum (2020) also notes that the labour market of the future will increasingly demand a broader spectrum of skills, including social-emotional intelligence.

Research in Wales combined data on free school meals (FSM), educational outcomes, and attendance from government sources with data from the School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ) on health improvement actions. Findings showed that there were positive correlations between most health improvement activities and achievement at the Key Stage 3 level (progression step 4, 11–14-year-olds). The study concluded that health improvement initiatives do not harm educational outcomes, and there is potential evidence suggesting health-focused schools might even achieve better academically, adding support for the inclusion of Health and Wellbeing as an AoLE (Littlecott et al. 2018a). Further discussion of the curriculum changes in Wales is encapsulated in a special issue paper involving ten research pieces that explore this curriculum overhaul (Taylor and Power 2020). A recurring theme was the imperative of an inclusive curriculum that caters to the diverse spectrum of the learner's wider socio-economic environment. The papers collectively conclude that the fruition of this 'once in a generation' curriculum across the schooling system requires concerted efforts, inventive problem-solving approaches, and investment.

In 2021, the Welsh Government commissioned a study to evaluate these curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales. This included a survey on the readiness for the new curriculum, revealing positive feedback and progress in various educational aspects but also challenges in readiness among teachers, especially in secondary schools, and expressed concerns about assessment methods. The subsequent qualitative research further highlighted these challenges, emphasising the need for more practical support and professional learning. The final report in July 2022 recommended the need for research and evaluation efforts for these reforms to take place more effectively, to which the Welsh Government responded affirmatively, recognising the need for a detailed evaluation aligned with these educational reforms to observe the process of change (Gov.Wales 2022).

As understanding of wellbeing continues to evolve, so does the expected role of schools, adapting and expanding as necessary (Alam 2022). This thesis aligns with these advancements, examining the implementation and evaluation of PauseUP in secondary schools. This research is expected to complement the curriculum changes and the WSA to wellbeing by providing findings and discussions on implementation. The study aims to give guidance for schools through assessing and addressing the needs and challenges involved in introducing PauseUP. This may prove useful and timely in providing varied practical approaches to mental health and wellbeing promotion, aligning with the policy context and educational trajectory of schools in Wales to support future generations.

2.4 Adolescence and Wellbeing

In this thesis, the developmental stages of adolescence are categorised into early adolescence, representing majority students in years 7 and 8 (ages 11 to 13) and mid-adolescence, students in year 9 and 10 (ages 13 to 15) (Nakkula and Toshalis 2020). These stages are used to describe the primary participants in the evaluation of PauseUP, who are situated within these developmental periods as outlined in Key Stage 3 and 4 or Progression Step 4 merging with 5 of the new curricula for Wales (Hwb 2022). This age range is particularly noteworthy due to its transformative nature, encompassing major physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. Understanding these developmental transitions is needed, as adolescence represents a context for addressing wellbeing, characterised by unique challenges and opportunities (Steinberg and Morris 2001; Steinberg 2005; Blakemore and Mills 2014; Steinberg 2014; Fuhrmann et al. 2015; Blakemore 2019).

2.4.1 Why Adolescence?

The concept of 'adolescence' only began to take shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when social and scientific understanding advanced (Demos and Demos 1969). The work of psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who is often referred to as the founder of adolescent psychology, was pivotal (White 2002). Hall suggested that adolescence was a unique and turbulent phase of human development, characterised by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. Hall published "Adolescence," (Hall 1916) in which he characterised this period as one of storm and stress, full of turmoil and behavioural inconsistency. His theories laid the groundwork for future research into adolescent development and wellbeing and as society changed and young people faced different challenges, the understanding of adolescence also expanded (Goossens 2020). Adolescence is now seen as an important juncture in human development.

This period is a formative phase where young people establish habits, attitudes, and behaviours that can have an influence on their future health and wellbeing (Patton et al. 2016). Patton's work reports on the influence of global trends on the health and wellbeing of young people, the largest generation of 10 to 24-year-olds in history. This research posits that the period of adolescence is identified as a dynamic phase in the human lifespan and an opportunity to acquire a range of resources that form the foundation for health and wellbeing

in adult life with the potential to shape the future of society (Sawyer et al. 2012; Patton et al. 2014).

One of the key physiological developments during adolescence is brain maturation, especially in regions associated with executive function which contributes to decision-making, and emotional regulation. For instance, the prefrontal cortex, integral to impulse control, the ability to make decisions and long-term plan, undergoes significant development during adolescence (Blakemore and Mills 2014). Additionally, the limbic system, which contributes to emotional processing, also undergoes substantial changes (Ernst et al. 2006). These neurological adjustments have implications for behaviour, impacting thought processes which also effects emotional responses. This period of intense brain development, while creating challenges to mental health, also signifies an opportunity to instil positive habits and attitudes and cultivate effective coping strategies (Sawyer et al. 2012; Viner et al. 2015).

Adolescence, some suggest also marks a transition point where individuals move from a socialised mind, heavily influenced by others' thoughts and expectations, towards a self-authoring mind, where they begin to form independent beliefs and values (Kegan and Lahey 2010; Bauger et al. 2021). This transition period therefore may provide an optimal window for the promotion of self-understanding and growth, highlighting the need for initiatives supporting adolescent mental health and personal development. The literature supports these theoretical positions. For example, Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2016) report that better self-understanding during adolescence is associated with improved mental health outcomes. Similarly, Sebastian et al. (2008) posit that the development of self-awareness during adolescence is important for navigating social interactions and forming a stable sense of identity.

As an adolescent progresses through this developmental phase, good mental health and wellbeing play an important role in cultivating an authentic sense of self, thereby promoting resilience and personal growth (Marcia 1966; Steinberg and Morris 2001). Given the importance of mental health in the context of self-development, it has become a key focus in relation to wellbeing promotion programmes, especially those targeting adolescents, who may in the current era be facing more pronounced challenges.

2.4.2 The Need for Adolescent Mental Health Support

Adolescent mental health concerns are increasingly apparent. According to the WHO (2021), up to 20% of young people globally experience mental health issues, contributing to 13% of

the global disease burden among 10- to 19-year-olds. In the UK, 18% of children aged 7 to 16 years experienced probable mental disorders in 2022, up from 12.1% in 2017 (NHS Digital 2023), leading some to recognise this as a crisis point (Gunnell et al. 2018).

Collishaw (2015) highlights an increase in adolescent psychiatric conditions and changes in emotional and antisocial behaviours, particularly in affluent nations. This trend aligns with Jean Twenge's analysis of cultural shifts, such as increased individualism and changes in parenting styles, linked to rising mental health issues among young people (Twenge 2009, 2013; Twenge et al. 2018). In "iGen" (2017), Twenge discusses the significant role of technology and social media in exacerbating feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety among adolescents.

Unaddressed mental health issues can persist into adulthood, causing various health and societal problems. In the US, data from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication showed that anxiety and impulse-control disorders typically begin around age 11, with half of all lifetime mental health disorders starting by age 14 (Kessler et al. 2005). A 25-year longitudinal study in New Zealand linked frequent adolescent depression to ongoing mental health issues and socioeconomic setbacks in adulthood (Fergusson et al. 2007). An Australian study found that over half of adolescents with high levels of depression and anxiety symptoms had at least one more mental health problem in early adulthood (Patton et al. 2014a).

Mental health issues hinder social skills and emotional intelligence, essential for successful relationships and social functioning (Brackett et al. 2004). Depression, anxiety, and behavioural issues are primary drivers of illness and disability in the global adolescent population (WHO 2021). Suicide, strongly linked to mental health disorders, is now the fourth leading cause of death in 15- to 19-year-olds globally (WHO 2021). Patton et al. (2016) noted that adolescents worldwide face similar mental health challenges.

The 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey showed a decline in life satisfaction scores among 11- to 15-year-olds (Inchley et al. 2020). In Wales, life satisfaction among young people has shown increasingly low levels as students get older (Page et al. 2021). A study by Anthony et al. (2023) reports a rise in emotional problems among adolescents in Wales from 2013 to 2019, particularly among girls and those from less affluent families, highlighting the urgency of implementing strategies to address this growing problem.

2.5 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

In April 2020, amid the upheavals caused by the pandemic, this research began under circumstances that highlighted existing vulnerabilities to adolescent mental and emotional health. The pandemic disrupted learning logistics and spotlighted escalating mental health issues among young people (Quinn et al. 2021), amplifying the urgency of SDGs related to education and health (Priyadarshini 2022).

Studies showed an intensification of symptoms like depression, anxiety, and loneliness, especially among at-risk adolescents (De Miranda et al. 2020). New supportive strategies emerged, though their effectiveness remains unmeasured. Concerns were raised about decreased physical activity and its detrimental health impacts, with vulnerable groups, particularly those with pre-existing mental health disorders and from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, being more affected. The role of schools in supporting mental health gained renewed importance, with recommendations for targeted mitigation strategies (De Miranda et al. 2020).

Protective buffers for mental health during the pandemic varied across individual, familial, and community resources, fostering resilience among some adolescents and highlighting the variability of pandemic experiences (Branje and Morris 2021; Jones et al. 2021; Alamolhoda et al. 2022). Disrupted routines and social isolation has detrimental effects, necessitating preventive support and early interventions (Loades et al. 2020). Secondary stressors, including direct virus-related fears and socio-economic impacts, further strained mental health (Guessoum et al. 2020; Prime et al. 2020).

Research in Wales examined pandemic influences on young people's wellbeing. A study from September 2020 to February 2021, involving 6,291 responses from individuals aged 8–25, found that secondary school students, girls, non-binary individuals, and those of mixed ethnicity reported the lowest wellbeing levels, highlighting the need for more mental health support in schools (James et al. 2021). Another study of 10–11-year-olds showed an increase in emotional difficulties from 17% to 27%, though school connectedness remained high (Moore et al. 2022). Supporting young adolescents' emotional recovery is highlighted as a priority. However, secondary school students have also expressed notable dissatisfaction with their schools and learning content during the pandemic, due to inconsistent online learning, inadequate home study environments, and challenges for children with additional needs. Disadvantaged backgrounds exacerbated these issues, as noted by the Estyn School Inspectors Report (2022).

Young Minds surveys highlighted evolving mental health challenges during different pandemic stages (Fisher et al. 2021; James et al. 2021). The initial survey in March 2020 revealed that 83% of young people with pre-existing mental health needs reported worsening mental health. Subsequent surveys during easing restrictions and return to school periods showed continued mental health declines, feelings of isolation, and inadequate school support. The final survey in early 2021 found that 75% of participants found the second lockdown harder and 67% anticipated long-term negative effects on their mental health. Despite challenges, 79% hoped for mental health improvement once restrictions lifted (Young Minds 2021).

These findings underscore the need for accessible and sustained mental and emotional health support for young people in schools. The heightened vulnerabilities and systemic challenges during the pandemic highlight the importance of a WSA and the new curriculum in Wales, particularly its emphasis on children's rights and health and wellbeing as an AoLE. The curriculum aims to cultivate healthy, confident individuals which should address some of the challenges exposed by the pandemic, equipping young people with skills to confront difficulties. Evaluating a wellbeing programme during this time sought to develop functional strategies to assist in raising adolescent wellbeing levels.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." - Aristotle

Aristotle's timeless wisdom sets the stage for this exploration of wellbeing and its integration into education. This literature review examines research pertinent to promoting health and wellbeing in schools, aiming to unravel the complexities inherent in such efforts. The primary objective is to guide the main research inquiry in the understanding and promoting of wellbeing within secondary schools.

The review begins by exploring differing perspectives on wellbeing, identifying various definitions from health, psychological, social, and student viewpoints. This foundation is essential for understanding frameworks for wellbeing promotion in line with positive education and social and emotional learning, emphasising their relevance to young people in schools. Following this introductory section, the review reports on the literature surrounding the school environment as a complex system, highlighting its significant influence on the wellbeing of both school staff and pupils.

Next, the chapter examines literature on social change and implementation and relevant factors to consider when introducing a new programme to schools. This section addresses contextual factors necessary for wellbeing programmes like PauseUP to be effective and produce intended outcomes. Internal factors influencing change within the school system are explored to support early hypotheses for the implementation of PauseUP.

The concluding section of this chapter introduces the digital wellbeing programme under evaluation, PauseUP. It reports on the programme's design, strategic approach, and the evidence base supporting its various activities and interventions. Additionally, this section addresses the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the coinciding timeline of the pandemic, which significantly impacted the implementation and evaluation of PauseUP. These considerations establish the context for the subsequent realist evaluation, which investigates how wellbeing may be promoted using PauseUP within the secondary schools participating. The chapter concludes by presenting the research questions and objectives that guide the thesis and realist evaluation approach.

Adopting a social science lens, the literature review integrates perspectives from sociology, psychology, implementation science, and education, reflecting an interdisciplinary ethos. This approach seeks to provide an understanding of wellbeing informed by the dynamics of social structures, relationships, the brain and body, and behaviour change. An important recognition throughout this thesis is the role schools play as environments for holistic development,

thereby influencing wellbeing. Schools are viewed not only as academic centres for learning but also as social institutions that shape the development of young people as they navigate their journey to adulthood.

The review employs a narrative style to explore a wide range of subjects alongside the extensive research within the fields of wellbeing and education (Grant and Booth 2009). To ensure a thorough exploration of the topic, a variety of academic databases were utilised, including Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, ERIC, PubMed, Education Research Complete, and the Social Science Citation Index. Recognising the cross-disciplinary nature of wellbeing, the review also consulted databases such as OpenGrey and EthOS. Additionally, Cardiff University's institutional repository, ORCA, and Google Scholar were used. Key search terms included 'adolescent', 'wellbeing', 'mental health', 'school', 'education', 'intervention', 'programme', 'policy', and 'evaluation', among others. These terms were combined in various ways to provide a broad perspective on the research field.

While the review was open to studies from global contexts, emphasis was placed on research relevant to environments like secondary schools and the cultural context of Wales, where the PauseUP evaluation takes place. The focus was on literature discussing wellbeing specifically in school settings or through approaches aiming to promote the concept, with a preference for larger studies showcasing reliable methodological designs or offering practical insights for introducing change into schools and for implementing PauseUP.

3.1 Exploring Wellbeing

Understanding wellbeing is complex, with varying definitions and terminologies (La Placa et al. 2013). The term can be spelled as "wellbeing" or "well-being," with the hyphenated version traditionally used in psychological and health literature (Moore and Keyes 2003). This thesis uses "wellbeing" for consistency and clarity.

Researchers' terminology can influence study framing, data interpretation, and policy implications (Fletcher 2016). Definitions of wellbeing must account for cultural and contextual variables (Dodge et al. 2012), with terms like happiness, wellness, or welfare sometimes used interchangeably (La Placa et al. 2013). Wellbeing as a term in social sciences is increasingly preferred (Diener et al. 2009a), encompassing various dimensions from a medical, philosophical, and psychological perspective (Svane et al. 2019).

The conceptualisation of the concept of being well also changes depending on wider contextual factors. For example, rates of mental illness are affected by natural disasters and war (Williams 2006) making wellbeing for many young people in the world more about moving from violence to peace. Another important factor lays in considering the wellbeing of people living in underdeveloped countries, where poverty is widespread. In these cases, the concept becomes focussed on moving from the difficulties of life and poverty to having enough to sustain existence (Burke 2020). A Lancet study revealed that 43% of children below 5 years old from low- and middle-income countries are at risk of poor health and nutrition (Richter et al. 2017) highlighting the global disparities influencing perspectives on what wellbeing might mean. In Wales, the concept is tied to the education system and policies aimed at improving young people's mental health and wellbeing (Gov.Wales 2017, 2018, 2022; Hwb 2019, 2022). Wellbeing is seen as multi-dimensional, promoting a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable society.

3.1.1 Mental Health and Wellbeing

The WHO defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing," reflecting a holistic perspective (WHO 1946, 1986, 2021). Mental health is a key component, with "no health without mental health," (WHO 2018). Recent awareness acknowledges mental health's role in overall wellbeing, shifting from a disease-focused view to a holistic one (Antonovsky 1996). Aaron Antonovsky's perspective of Salutogenesis relates to what keeps people healthy, aligning with the dual continua model that views mental health and illness as two interconnected dimensions (Suldo and Shaffer 2008; Westerhof and Keyes 2010). Optimal mental health is described as dynamic, encompassing a state of wellbeing where individuals realise their potential (WHO 2004). Good mental health in this sense results from internal capacities and external contributions, which must be addressed to promote wellbeing (Keyes 2002, 2007).

Internal capacities like personality traits influence mental health outcomes (Diener 1996; Furnham and Cheng 1997). Social relationships and community engagement also play a role (Baumeister and Leary 2017; Diener et al. 2018). Positive family dynamics, friendships, and social networks are protective factors for mental health (Furstenberg and Kiernan 2001; Demir and Weitekamp 2007). Education can also influence mental health, with research linking educational attainment to greater psychological wellbeing (Ryff and Singer 2008a; Witten et al. 2019).

3.1.2 The Psychological Perspective

The current psychological perspective stems from differentiating between the concepts of hedonic and eudaemonic wellbeing (Ryan and Deci 2001). The hedonic view emphasises the role of pleasure and pain, suggesting that maximising pleasure and minimising discomfort are essential for a good life (Kahneman et al. 1999). In contrast, eudaemonic wellbeing centres on the idea of functioning well, living authentically and in alignment with one's true self, suggesting that a meaningful life filled with purpose is important, even if it does not always bring immediate pleasure (Ryff 1989).

Psychologists took these overarching concepts and deconstructed them into theories using research on behaviours and attitudes whilst also finding ways to measure outcomes (Diener 2009). This began the journey into creating interventions and programmes designed to promote wellbeing (Burke 2020). Initially, two main models of wellbeing were created for exploring the concept in the field of psychology. The philosophical hedonic perspective was named 'subjective wellbeing' and contained emotional aspects and satisfaction with life. Whereas the eudaemonic perspective representing deeper-level wellbeing was named 'psychological wellbeing'.

Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) is often equated with the term 'happiness' and involves individuals' internal evaluations of their lives, including emotional responses and cognitive judgements of life satisfaction (Diener et al. 2009b). SWB may be influenced by how individuals perceive and interpret life events, which affects their emotional states, such as joy, contentment, sadness, and stress (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005; Diener 2009). Cognitive judgements, another component of SWB, involve how people assess their circumstances against personal standards, which can fluctuate with life changes and challenges (Pavot and Diener 2008; Schimmack 2008).

Ed Diener's research advanced the understanding of SWB, examining the interaction of emotions, life satisfaction, and having a sense of purpose (Diener et al. 1999). The SWB model, focusing on life satisfaction and the balance of positive and negative emotions, emerged from research surveys identifying contributing factors (Diener et al. 2002). This led to the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) being developed (Diener et al. 1985; Watson 1988; Crawford and Henry 2004).

Emotional regulation (ER) plays an important role in maintaining SWB and refers to the strategies individuals use to manage and respond to their emotional experiences, influencing both the intensity and duration of these emotions (Thompson 1994; Gross 2014). Effective ER helps mitigate negative emotions like anxiety and depression while supporting positive experiences, thereby a contributing factor towards improved SWB (Gross and John 2003; Ford et al. 2018).

Adolescence, as described in section 2.4.1, can be seen as a critical period for developing ER skills, with implications for mental health. Poor ER during this stage is linked to a higher risk of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems (Aldao et al. 2010; Schäfer et al. 2017). Interventions that focus on improving ER can promote psychological resilience and mental health outcomes for adolescents (Zimmermann and Iwanski 2014; Compas et al. 2017). These interventions, such as cognitive-behavioural strategies and mindfulness practices, work as mechanisms by altering how individuals perceive and respond to emotional stimuli. For example, cognitive reappraisals may help individuals reinterpret challenging situations to reduce anxiety and promote adaptive emotional responses (Gross 2002; Hofmann et al. 2012). Mindfulness practices, derived from Buddhist thought, encourage a non-judgmental awareness of emotions, seeking emotional balance and reducing negative emotional intensity (Kabat-Zinn 1990; Keng et al. 2011).

Research shows that ER-focused interventions in schools, particularly those incorporating mindfulness and elements of emotional learning, could be particularly effective in reducing stress and anxiety among adolescents (Zenner et al. 2014; Domitrovich et al. 2017; Taylor et al. 2017). These interventions may empower individuals to regulate their emotions more effectively, leading to improved mental health and SWB (Diener 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000).

Psychological Wellbeing

The Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) model, rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, suggests that a good life aligns with one's true self and virtues (Annas 1999). Carol Ryff and Burton Singer developed the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing, incorporating six components: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These components reflect the view that psychological wellbeing entails positive psychological functioning (Ryff 1989b; Ryff and Keyes 1995; Ryff and Singer 1998, 2001, 2008a). This model challenges the notion of wellbeing as only hedonic pleasure, and emotional response, advocating for a wider understanding of human flourishing (Ryff 2013).

The PWB model integrates psychological theories. It reflects the importance of positive relationships, grounded in the innate human need for connection as described by Baumeister and Leary (2017). Albert Bandura's concept of self-efficacy is shown in the model's focus on environmental mastery (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997, 2000, 2004). Autonomy, central to the model, aligns with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT), highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation for psychological health (Deci and Ryan 2008, 2013; Niemiec and Ryan 2009). Viktor Frankl's (1985) work on finding meaning and life's purpose is echoed in the model, with Steger et al. (2006) supporting the role of purpose as a mental health protective factor. Self-acceptance draws on Carl Rogers's client-centred therapy and Neff's work on self-compassion (Rogers 1977, 1995; Neff 2011) and the personal growth aspect resonates with Maslow's self-actualisation theory (Maslow 1943, 1968, 1973).

Despite its breadth, the PWB model still faces challenges in practical application and empirical assessment. The interrelated nature of its constructs, such as personal growth, purpose, and autonomy, complicates their distinct measurement (Ryff and Singer 2008; Springer et al. 2006). Additionally, cultural, and individual variations in interpreting these constructs may affect their measurement and generalisability (Gopalkrishnan 2018). Nonetheless, the PWB model remains an important framework for understanding wellbeing and human potential, guiding research on promotion and application in psychological and sociological contexts (Van Dierendonck et al. 2008).

Positive Psychology

The rise of positive psychology in the late 20th century marked the transformation and development of new models which combined the two principal psychological models of SWB and PWB. This movement aimed to explore the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions. This redirection in focus opened new directions for wellbeing promotion and research, exploring factors that make life more fulfilling (Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman 2000; Seligman 2011; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Positive Psychology has gained more interest in recent years as one approach to supporting young people (Kim 2018) with an aim to direct attention to aspects of human functioning as a more preventative approach to mental health and wellbeing (Norrish and Vella-Brodrick 2009).

Positive psychology and its link with education, offers an approach that could address issues like emotional difficulties, life satisfaction, and social cohesion (Seligman et al. 2009; Waters 2011). Positive education, as explained by Waters (2017) and Kern & Wehmeyer (2021), focuses on balancing traditional educational skills with aspects of happiness and wellbeing,

demonstrating its applicability in promoting mental health management from an early age in schools (Boniwell 2013). Positive Psychology's multidimensional approach to wellbeing, involving various life domains, is particularly relevant in classrooms where wellbeing interventions can be tailored to student and school-specific needs (Keyes 2007; Lerner et al. 2009). Recent case study research discusses the effectiveness of using positive education interventions in schools, both before and during the pandemic and stresses the importance of creating a structured framework, including staff training, and wellbeing initiatives for students and staff in creating a shared approach (Waters 2022). In the context of Wales, national policies and the curriculum provide a structural framework for WSAs, encapsulating national standards and priorities (Gov.Wales 2015, 2022; Hwb 2022). Positive Psychology focuses on balancing traditional education with happiness and wellbeing, relevant to this study on promoting this concept for adolescents in secondary schools (Seligman et al. 2009; Waters 2011).

However, the growing integration of Positive Psychology in wellbeing programmes, particularly in school settings, as is within the focus of this study, necessitates a critical examination. While these models are based on research, they often reflect the subjective perspectives of the researchers, potentially leading to a culturally biased understanding of wellbeing (Frawley 2015; Ford et al. 2015). This subjectivity poses challenges in defining wellbeing universally, as different cultures may have varying interpretations and values related to the concept (Yakushko and Blodgett 2021).

The critique by Christopher and Howe (2014) of Positive Psychology's emphasis on individualism is particularly noteworthy. They argue that this focus may overlook the impact of external factors, including cultural norms and institutional constraints, on an individual's wellbeing (Christopher 2008). Such a perspective risks simplifying the complex interactions between individual agency and the wider socio-cultural environment in determining wellbeing outcomes. Young people's wellbeing may be dependent on the agency they are given within a school (Fattore et al. 2009; Francesconi 2018).

Garside and Klimes-Dougan (2002) point out the limitations of intervention strategies that devalue or disregard negative emotions, which positive psychology may often do. This oversight highlights a need for an improved understanding of emotional experiences within Positive Psychology-focused interventions. Dejonckheere (2021, 2022) notes the paradoxical increase in depressive symptoms resulting from societal pressures to avoid negative emotions. Similarly, an overemphasis on positive emotions and avoidance of negative experiences may lead to increased rumination and inhibit effective processing of negative thoughts and feelings, necessary for overall emotional wellbeing (Mcquirk et al. 2018;

Donaldson 2015). Research by Mauss et al. (2011) and Ford et al. (2014) further illustrates that the pursuit of happiness can sometimes lead to unhappiness and higher levels of depression which could be attributed to the anxiety associated with maintaining a state of happiness. This issue becomes relevant for young people, as Gentzler et al. (2019) found that an excessive preoccupation with achieving happiness can sometimes lead to anxiety about its potential loss, even while experiencing it. A self-focused pursuit of happiness might increase loneliness, whereas focusing on others could lead to greater happiness (Mauss et al. 2012; Nelson et al. 2016).

While Positive Psychology offers models into promoting wellbeing, its application in school contexts must be approached with a balanced understanding. This involves acknowledging the importance of both positive and negative emotions for wellbeing and considering cultural diversity, individual differences, and external factors in wellbeing approaches. In the context of this study which evaluates a programme that incorporates ER and Positive Psychology theories on promoting wellbeing, these critiques stress the need to consider the context and systemic influences on the programme and the range of wellbeing outcomes, both positive and negative. They also highlight the importance of recognising the complexity of student emotional experiences and responses to programmes that use these theories in attempting to promote wellbeing.

Generally, less is known about the mechanisms through which some of the positive psychology interventions work (Schueller and Parks 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand how and in what circumstances they may fit in within a school setting so that they can be designed most effectively. The field of positive psychology is now experiencing a change towards embracing greater complexity, exploring the groups and systems in which individuals operate (Lomas et al. 2021). It has been recommended that researchers and practitioners in schools work collaboratively to overcome some of the theoretical challenges and barriers that hinder the integration of wellbeing and positive education strategies (White 2016). With a focus on strategies for implementation and creating tools to facilitate and sustain the changes needed to facilitate this movement towards flourishing (Lomas et al. 2021).

3.1.3 Social Wellbeing

Keyes et al. (2002) synthesised the idea of flourishing, encompassing emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing. Keyes criticised the dominant models of SWB and PWB for underrepresenting social aspects, arguing that mental health is deeply embedded in social contexts (Keyes 1998). His model includes social wellbeing as an essential component,

aligning with WHO's definition of wellbeing and Wales' policy on creating healthy, confident individuals who contribute to society (WHO 2021; Hwb 2022).

Socioeconomic factors like income, education, and employment can significantly impact mental health and wellbeing. Societies with greater income inequality experience worse health outcomes and more social problems, including mental illness (Pickett and Wilkinson 2015). While acknowledging the objective impact of social factors, Keyes' (1998) suggests that individual perceptions of social experiences can still greatly influence wellbeing. For instance, personal feelings of social integration or acceptance has been shown to affect mental health regardless of the actual level of support an individual receives (Thoits 2011). For wellbeing programmes in schools, consideration of both objective social structures and subjective personal experiences, is needed for devising effective strategies (Keyes 2006, 2007).

Many perspectives on wellbeing pivot around the individual as the nucleus of experience, emphasising subjective wellbeing while sometimes sidelining the objective social conditions that invariably influence it, especially in schools (Keyes 2006). Such a stance posits wellbeing as an attainable outcome through personal development, honing skills, and engaging with one's strengths and vulnerabilities. This perspective has notably propelled the early development of wellbeing programmes, suggesting that wellbeing can be 'learned' or 'improved' through specific strategies and activities (Fordyce 1983). It is within this context that a substantial body of wellbeing promotion research, which this thesis engages with, has emerged, particularly concerning the improvement of social and emotional skills.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL programmes aim to develop key competencies in students, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Elias et al. 1997). These competencies are essential for effective ER, as they provide students with the tools to navigate their emotions, understand the emotions of others, and engage in healthy interpersonal interactions (Payton et al. 2008).

The theoretical basis for SEL is grounded in developmental psychology, particularly the work of theorists like Lev Vygotsky, who accentuated the importance of social interaction in cognitive and emotional development (Vygotsky 1987; Newman and Holzman 2013). SEL programmes are designed to be integrated into the school curriculum, providing students with continuous opportunities to practice ER skills in real-life social contexts. SEL's importance has increased over the years, particularly post-pandemic, for imparting social and emotional competencies (Baker et al. 2021).

A large-scale review of over 200 studies involving 270,000 students found SEL programmes significantly improve social and emotional skills, behaviour, and academic performance. Effective implementation leads to reductions in conduct problems and emotional distress and improvements in academic achievement (Durlak and Weissberg 2011). A meta-analysis of 82 school based SEL interventions showed long-term positive impacts on wellbeing, regardless of students' backgrounds (Taylor et al. 2017). In the UK, the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) programme aimed to integrate SEL across schools (Gov.UK 2010). However, evaluations showed marginal improvements, suggesting challenges in implementation and the need for a shared WSA to embed SEL effectively (Wigelsworth et al. 2012). Integrating SEL skills within daily interactions and practices, rather than as standalone programmes, is recommended for efficiency and effectiveness (Jones and Bouffard 2012).

Implementing a WSA and SEL programmes involves multiple strategies and stakeholders, making outcomes complex (Weare 2013). Challenges include quality assurance in implementation, translation, dissemination, and evaluation. Time and resource constraints are significant barriers in schools (Hargreaves and Fullan 2015). The MindMatters programme in Australia provides a case study to observe these challenges. While beneficial for many schools when implemented well, it faced issues like limited curriculum space, teacher attitudes, and inadequate training (Hazell et al. 2002; Askell-Williams et al. 2005; Ainley et al. 2006).

Evaluations of programmes like MindMatters highlight the potential of a WSA for SEL programmes, but they also reveal the challenges in achieving consistent outcomes. Effective SEL programmes require meticulous planning, coordination, and adaptation to contextual disparities in schools (Botvin et al. 2006). Ensuring fidelity and understanding the programme's nature and context are necessary for successful outcomes (Blank et al. 2010). The variability in results underscores the necessity for developing programmes that prioritise the feedback of teacher and student end-users to assess the change process and the efficacy of interventions across different circumstances within and across school organisations.

3.1.4 The Student Perspective of Wellbeing

Historically, research has often relied on adult-centric models, potentially marginalising student voices and not fully capturing their perspectives on wellbeing (Hamilton and Redmond 2010). This can be a limitation, especially when attempting to understand what wellbeing means to children and young people. Including their voices not only upholds their rights but also provides essential insights into their perceptions (Sixsmith et al. 2007; Crivello et al. 2009;

Ben-Arieh 2010). Engaging young people in discussions about their wellbeing can also have substantial benefits for their social and emotional health (Graham et al. 2011). In Wales, the 'Right Way' framework advocates for aligning policies with children's rights, making it appropriate to ground research in young people's experiences. The Children's Commissioner for Wales (2017, 2022) highlights that integrating student voices can improve the development of wellbeing programmes in schools, ensuring they are responsive to young people's realities.

Young people have previously defined wellbeing in multi-dimensional terms, including physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual aspects (Pollard and Lee 2003; Awartani and Looney 2015). Research from Australia, ties student wellbeing to academic outcomes and social-emotional functioning (Fraillon 2004; Noble et al. 2008). Studies have also shown that students value relationships, autonomy, and participation in decision-making as key components of their wellbeing (Powell et al. 2018; Carrillo et al. 2021).

In Wales, limited research exists on young people's views on wellbeing in schools. However, studies have highlighted the importance of relationships, social activities, and the environment in shaping their wellbeing (Parry et al. 2010; Newton and Ponting 2013). During the pandemic, an online study found that young people valued safety and health, suggesting that psychological models of wellbeing may need adjustment to better reflect their experiences, especially in periods of significant social disruption (Lauran 2021).

Although the Welsh curriculum increasingly positions wellbeing as an area of learning, incorporating student voices may be key to defining and developing the concept within schools. While quantitative data from the School Health Research Network (SHRN) is valuable, understanding wellbeing qualitatively in specific contexts and adapting to changing circumstances, like the pandemic, is essential. Research has shown that students associate wellbeing with being heard, respected, and involved (Anderson and Graham 2016), which underscores the importance of integrating student feedback in this study. Fattore et al. (2019) highlight the dynamic nature of young people's wellbeing, influenced by specific historical and contextual factors. Capturing students' voices can therefore lead to strategies that resonate with them, supporting the new curriculum's implementation in Wales and ensuring it reflects children's rights and diverse experiences (Children's Commissioner for Wales 2022).

This review has explored the multifaceted nature of wellbeing, highlighting the importance of the relationship factor across individual, and social contexts. As the focus of this thesis shifts to the current study, conducted in multiple school settings, it is necessary to acknowledge the relational dynamics that may influence the introduction of new programmes in school systems. Understanding how these dynamics may interact is important for implementing new wellbeing initiatives.

3.2 The School System

Understanding the school as a system requires recognising the complex array of factors that influence wellbeing. Social relationships, community bonds, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms all affect wellbeing, alongside intrinsic psychological factors (Cockerham 2005, 2007; Marmot and Wilkinson 2005). Individuals are embedded in social systems that continuously shape their health (Kawachi and Berkman 2000).

In schools, student behaviour is shaped by a combination of individual characteristics, immediate environments, and broader societal influences (Bonell et al. 2013). Research supports moving beyond individual actions to consider influencing factors like school climate, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions (Thapa et al. 2013; Wang and Degol 2016; Roorda et al. 2017; Allen et al. 2021). John Hattie's "Visible Learning" highlights that the school environment, particularly teacher-student interactions and classroom management, play a critical role in student achievement (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Hattie 2008). Implementing new practices in schools requires acknowledging the complexity of this environment, where interactions among staff, students, families, and communities shape outcomes (Hawe 2015; Langford et al. 2015). Schools are dynamic ecosystems, with various stakeholders and processes influencing student wellbeing (Morrison et al. 2002; Weare 2006).

Adopting a systems approach is necessary for developing and evaluating programmes in schools (Rutter 2017). This approach recognises that school dynamics are shaped by interactions among internal subsystems and organisational factors, which must adapt to change (Hawe et al. 2009; Keshavarz et al. 2010). Introducing a new wellbeing programme, like PauseUP, into schools therefore requires an understanding of their complex, adaptive nature, especially in the context of challenges like the pandemic and ongoing curriculum changes. SHRN research in Wales operates under a complex adaptive systems model and exemplifies how collaborative, data-driven methods can enhance health and wellbeing in schools (Murphy et al. 2021). In reading MRC guidance, this study acknowledges the importance of understanding interventions within their specific contexts to evaluate how changes in parts of a complex social system may affect overall outcomes (Craig et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2019; Skivington et al. 2021). In doing so, it views the school as a microsystem.

The School Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory frames the school environment as a microsystem—a setting where young individuals actively engage with their surroundings (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006). Schools are critical contexts for

developing social connections and interacting with authority figures, both of which significantly shape social and emotional development (Eccles and Roeser 2011). Promoting wellbeing in schools involves addressing determinants at multiple levels: individual, relational, and collective (Evans and Prilleltensky 2007).

Within this microsystem, the development of interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and a sense of autonomy and belonging is paramount (Bonell et al. 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships, for instance, are key to influencing student wellbeing, as improved teacher wellbeing directly correlates with better student outcomes (Jamal et al. 2013; Harding et al. 2019). Peer dynamics are equally influential; while positive peer relationships foster a sense of belonging, negative experiences like bullying can significantly impact self-worth (Wentzel and Watkins 2002; Juvonen and Graham 2014). Research in Wales has shown that strong peer and staff relationships are critical for student wellbeing, particularly for those with less support at home (Moore et al. 2018). In this research, schools are viewed as complex and adaptive microsystems, where relational dynamics, socio-cultural norms, and institutional practices all influence student mental health and the effectiveness of wellbeing programmes. Applying Bronfenbrenner's theory to the evaluation of PauseUP encourages a view of the programme as a new addition to the school's existing microsystem rather than an isolated intervention.

3.3 Implementing Change

Promoting wellbeing in schools often requires changes to traditional practices, which can present significant implementation challenges. In Wales, where new policies and curriculum reforms are still being integrated, there is limited data on these challenges (Gov.Wales 2022). This study aims to address this gap by gathering direct feedback from schools and understanding participants' perspectives on wellbeing. Research consistently shows that implementation is often the primary challenge in school-based interventions (Durlak and DuPre 2008; Weare and Nind 2011). Therefore, this section of the review will explore factors influencing the implementation and change process, anticipating the challenges and opportunities associated with deploying PauseUP as a case study in Wales.

The implementation of wellbeing programmes in schools is connected to the broader processes of organisational change within these institutions (Barry et al. 2017). Schools are subject to various internal and external influences that can either facilitate or hinder the adoption of new ideas or interventions (Hargreaves 2005; Fullan 2007). Understanding these

dynamics is essential for appreciating the challenges and opportunities of implementing new programmes and ensuring their sustainability.

The study of change, a field that spans multiple disciplines, provides theories for understanding the implementation process. Kurt Lewin's model of social change offers a framework by describing change as a process consisting of three key stages: 'unfreezing,' 'movement,' and 'freezing' (Cummings et al. 2016; Burnes 2020). In the context of schools, 'unfreezing' may involve developing awareness of the need for change and creating motivation for adopting new practices. This initial stage is needed for overcoming resistance, which often stems from entrenched practices or fear of the unknown (Kotter 1996; Oreg et al. 2011). Lewin's force-field analysis suggests that the initiation of change requires that driving forces for change outweigh the restraining forces (Burnes 2004). Gathering and presenting data that highlights discrepancies between current outcomes and desired goals can be one way of motivating the school community to embrace new approaches (Marsh 2012). Additionally, creating social support networks is required in maintaining this motivation throughout the change process (Little 2010).

As the school moves toward adopting new practices, resistance is likely to emerge. Resistance is a natural part of the change process and can be both a barrier and a source of valuable feedback (Fullan 2007). Managing resistance productively involves acknowledging and addressing the concerns of those who are hesitant about the change. This might include providing additional resources, adjusting timelines, or allowing space for reflecting on old practices (Little 2010). In the context of promoting wellbeing, resistance might arise from teachers who are wary of the additional responsibilities or from concerns about the reallocation of resources away from academic objectives.

Commitment to the new programme is essential for its sustainability, and this requires active and meaningful participation from all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. According to Fullan (2009), commitment is achieved through sustained engagement and involvement in the change process. This includes creating opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to decision-making and providing ongoing professional development to ensure that staff are equipped to implement the new practices effectively. The 'freezing' stage in Lewin's model, which involves stabilising the new practices and preventing regression, is critical for ensuring that the change is embedded within the organisation (Burnes 2004, 2020).

Fullan (2015) offers a framework for understanding the components necessary for systemic change in education settings. Successful change requires clear direction and engagement from leadership, including establishing a compelling vision, setting goals, and creating partnerships within the educational sector. In the case of introducing a new approach to

wellbeing, this might involve collaboration between school administrators, teachers, and external wellbeing experts to ensure alignment with the school's overall mission. Building capacity is essential for achieving desired outcomes, which involves equipping staff with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to implement new approaches effectively (Fullan 2015). In referring to SEL programmes, capacity-building might include professional development workshops on ER and the integration of SEL into and across the curriculum (Taylor et al. 2017).

Effective change also requires supportive infrastructure and leadership at all levels, including government, district, and school leadership. Leaders must balance the details of implementation with the broader vision for change, ensuring that necessary structural adjustments are made. In any complex system, distractors such as bureaucratic hurdles, financial constraints, and personnel challenges must be managed to keep the focus on the primary goals. Schools implementing wellbeing programmes may need to deal such challenges, ensuring that these distractors do not disrupt the initiative. Continuous assessment is required for validating and refining the change process. This involves regular evaluations to assess the effectiveness of strategies used and making necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances (Fullan 2015)

The integration of these organisational change theories with the implementation of new wellbeing programmes highlights the complexity of the educational change process. In gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics of change educators and programme developers can better grasp the challenges of implementing new programmes (Fullan 2021). The combination of Lewin's stages of change and Fullan's theory of educational change provides a framework for supporting knowledge around how wellbeing programmes are introduced and embedded within the school system.

3.3.1 Implementation

Implementation science addresses the gap between "science-to-practice" in delivering services across various sectors (Forman et al. 2013; Cabassa 2016). Effective implementation strategies are essential to achieve programme benefits, particularly for WSA's aimed at improving wellbeing (Fixsen et al. 2015; Quinlan and Hone 2020).

The process of implementing a new programme is complex and influenced by various factors and conditions across different levels (Werner-Seidler et al. 2021). Key aspects of the educational change process include organisational dynamics, teacher characteristics, and the

nature of the transformation itself (Fullan 2001, 2007). These factors, along with local conditions and external policy influences, shape the educational ecosystem and programme objectives (Fixsen et al. 2012).

Evaluating the implementation of PauseUP in secondary schools necessitates understanding these factors, drawing from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (2005) and the concept of schools as complex adaptive systems (Moore et al. 2019; Murphy et al. 2021). Factors influencing programme success span various levels and are interconnected, such as organisational commitment and culture (Schein 2010; Moore et al. 2016) and the interaction between teacher characteristics and programme design (Ransford et al. 2009).

Macro-level factors include policies, financing, and community–university partnerships, while school-level factors encompass mission-policy alignment, decision structures, resources, administrative leadership, school culture, and climate. Individual-level factors within these schools involve professional and psychological characteristics, self-efficacy, and perceptions of the programme itself (Domitrovich et al. 2008; Lyon and Bruns 2019). This study focuses on the internal dynamics of schools and the implementation of PauseUP within a unified national policy framework in Wales. By concentrating on microsystem factors, this research aims to explore immediate contextual and programme elements pertinent to PauseUP's outcomes.

3.3.2 School-Level Factors

Organisation and Leadership

Research indicates that implementation quality in schools tends to be low, suggesting the need for better programme integration, planning, training, and staff support (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2002). Organisational and contextual factors, including leadership and teacher characteristics, play critical roles in adopting and succeeding with health promotion programmes (Datnow 2002; Hoagwood and Johnson 2003; Kallestad and Olweus 2003; Ringeisen et al. 2003; Datnow 2005; Leger et al. 2022).

Both formal and informal leaders influence staff through advocacy, setting expectations, and offering incentives (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2002; Leithwood et al. 2020). Teacher psychological experiences and perceptions of support from school administration affect curriculum implementation quality (Ransford et al. 2009). Staff wellbeing is positively influenced by appreciation, relationships, and a sense of belonging within the school (Wigford and Higgins 2019). Successful implementation is facilitated by structured support and committed leadership (Langley et al. 2010). Moore et al. (2016) found variability in health

improvement activities among secondary schools in Wales. Findings from 67 schools show schools with higher organisational commitment to health report more extensive health improvement activities.

School and Classroom Climate

A positive school and classroom climate influences wellbeing (Aarons and Sommerfeld 2012; Wang and Degol 2016; Aldridge and McChesney 2018). Relationships within schools create this positive climate and facilitate improved wellbeing (Thapa et al. 2013). A lack of socioemotional support in classrooms strongly correlates with mental health challenges like anxiety and depression (Wang et al. 2020). Teachers' own wellbeing and professional development affect their capacity to implement wellbeing initiatives effectively (Roeser et al. 2000; Roeser and Eccles 2015; Dreer 2023). A supportive school climate and improved teacher psychological wellbeing increase teachers' readiness to support students with mental health issues (Sisask et al. 2014).

The Role of the Teacher

A literature review by O'Toole (2023) found that while most secondary school teachers recognise their role in supporting students' mental health, many feel ill-equipped due to insufficient training. Adequate training and professional development are necessary for implementing new approaches (Darling-Hammond 2010; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). Teachers' positive attitudes and confidence in wellbeing programmes are key determinants of successful adoption and implementation (Askill-Williams and Lawson 2013; Askill-Williams 2017).

High stress levels among UK teachers due to workload pressures are a concern (Education Support 2022). Teacher wellbeing is correlated with student wellbeing, highlighting the importance of considering teacher wellbeing when implementing new programmes (Harding et al. 2019). Unrealistic expectations related to wellbeing initiatives may diminish teachers' wellbeing and effectiveness, impacting programme implementation and causing what some name a 'wicked problem' (Bache et al. 2016; Svane et al. 2019).

3.3.3 Towards the Process of Implementing a new programme in Schools

Durlak and DuPre's (2008) extensive review of over 500 studies highlights the importance of implementation quality for programme success. They found a strong link between

implementation efficacy and programme effectiveness, with well-executed programmes being up to three times more effective than poorly implemented ones. Key elements for successful implementation include fidelity (adherence to the original plan), dosage (intensity and amount of the programme), quality (overall standard of delivery), participant responsiveness (engagement level), programme differentiation (distinctiveness), monitoring the control condition (oversight of non-intervention groups), programme reach (extent of influence), and programme modifications (context-specific changes).

Weare and Nind (2011) corroborate the role of accurate implementation in mental health interventions. The Dataprev project, analysing 52 systematic reviews and meta-analyses, showed that school interventions' benefits heavily depend on their implementation quality. Clarity, intensity, and fidelity are essential, especially in larger WSA's due to their complexity and scope (Weare and Gray 2003; Weare and Markham 2005; Weare 2013). Clarity ensures that the objectives, methodologies, and expected outcomes of the programme are well understood and transparent to all stakeholders, facilitating a unified effort towards its goals.

Intensity relates to the depth of resources, effort, and commitment invested in the programme, including financial and material resources, training, and curriculum integration (Weare 2013). Payne et al. (2006) found that engaging stakeholders and local planning improve implementation intensity. Fidelity involves adhering to the original design and protocols of a programme, ensuring that what is delivered matches the intended curriculum and teaching methods developed (Blase and Fixsen 2013; Fixsen et al. 2019).

Dowling and Barry's (2020) study on the MindOut programme in Ireland exemplifies the importance of implementation quality in school based SEL programmes. Using a cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) with data from 675 students across 32 schools, the study found that positive outcomes were significantly observed in the high-implementation group, with quality of delivery being a key factor.

Implementing mental health and wellbeing programmes in schools involves balancing fidelity, dosage, and sustainability with practicality. This requires recognising educators' key role in the process while addressing their often-reported lack of preparedness (Weissberg et al. 2015). Effective programmes require ongoing assessment, and feedback, which may vary depending on the duration of the programme (Kurki et al. 2006; Sterbinsky et al. 2006; Guhn 2009; Rowling and Samdal 2011).

Meyers et al. (2012) further contribute to this understanding with their Quality Implementation Framework (QIF), offering a structured approach through various phases, from initial contextual considerations to the optimisation of programme applications. In their realist systematic review, Pearson et al. (2015) offer further contributions to understand the

implementation phases of health promotion programmes in schools, delineating a series of interconnected theories that cover various stages of the process. This framework addresses the complexities of introducing health initiatives in school settings and matches with some of the phases developed by Myers et al. (2012).

The 'Preparing for Implementation' theory stresses the importance of systematic planning and active stakeholder engagement. This initial phase is used for aligning the programme with the school's existing culture, as supported by Domitrovich et al. (2008). Effective planning requires the setting of clear objectives whilst understanding the school's capacity for implementation. Engaging with stakeholders during this preparation ensures the programme's relevance to the school context which is more likely to lead to a successful introduction.

In the 'Initial Implementation' theory, the focus moves to the content of the programme and its resonance with students. Research highlights the need for developmentally appropriate content that engages and connects with students, especially in adolescence (Gootman and Eccles 2002; Sawyer et al. 2018). The effectiveness of the content within a programme as described by Pearson et al. (2015) is improved when it is meaningful and relevant to the student population it serves. Malti et al. (2016) demonstrate that existing SEL programmes often overlook the developmental differences of users. An important aspect of this approach is understanding how differences in young people's development shape engagement with various components of a complex programme. For instance, young people with different levels of social-emotional development may respond differently to the same intervention due to baseline developmental differences (Ng et al. 2016). The tailoring of intervention strategies to developmental needs and understanding the timing of interventions within a dynamic setting like a school are important factors to consider for improving programme effectiveness (Malti et al. 2016).

Sustainable integration into the school is a central theme in the 'Embedding into Routine Practice' and 'Adaptation and Evolution' programme theories developed by Pearson et al. (2015). This involves integrating programmes into the school's everyday practices and culture, an important concept supported by Samdal and Rowling (2011) and Langford et al. (2015). Basch (2011) also mentions the importance of continuous support, both administratively and in terms of resources, for the longevity of programmes. The necessity for programme adaptation is raised numerous times by Pearson et al. (2015) and this perspective acknowledges that school environments and student needs are constantly evolving, necessitating flexible and responsive programmes.

Darlington et al. (2018) contributes further to the understanding of health promotion programme implementation, particularly on the role of contextual factors. Their realist

evaluation approach reveals that success of these programmes requires training and hierarchical support with an emphasis on the programme's design and its congruence with the specific environment and needs of each school. This perspective aligns with the theories proposed by Pearson et al. (2015), showing the importance of a tailored approach in the 'Preparing and Initial Implementation' stages. Darlington et al. (2018) describe the importance of adapting content and delivery methods to each school's context and logistical realities. Gobat et al. (2021) conducted a case study on a secondary school-based wellbeing intervention in Wales, highlighting the importance of understanding schools as complex and adaptive systems and engaging stakeholders in the process for supporting effective change.

Gee et al. (2021) explored the complexities of implementing psychological interventions for adolescents in school settings. Their analysis, using over 2,500 records, led to the selection of 50 studies, which collectively draw attention to several themes. These themes match with the findings of Pearson et al. (2015) and Darlington et al. (2018), highlighting the need for preparation, adaptability, and context-specific approaches. Factors affecting acceptability include the intervention's helpfulness, enjoyability, developmental appropriateness, design quality, and delivery format (Sekhon et al. 2017). Practicality emerged as another factor, with interventions needing to fit within school routines and calendars (Gee et al. 2021).

Group delivery formats were common in the reviewed studies and generally positively received due to their ability to utilise adolescent peer relationships. For instance, in the study by Riley (2012) they found that some students preferred group settings as they reduced feelings of isolation and provided opportunities for friendship and mutual support. However, group delivery also posed challenges to acceptability for some students. Issues included the unsuitability of the group setting for certain individuals, such as those with behavioural issues or those showing feelings of discomfort in front of peers. Such challenges sometimes hindered the effective conduct of intervention sessions and their influence.

In considering group dynamics, the effectiveness of wellbeing programmes in classrooms may vary among individuals, partly due to genetic environmental sensitivity (Pluess et al. 2015, 2018). This concept proposes that individuals differ in their responsiveness to environmental influences, with some being more susceptible to changes in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours than others (Lionetti 2018). This sensitivity is often heritable (Greven et al. 2019) and those sensitive to negative environmental situations may respond more positively to interventions, indicating a potential for greater growth (Kennedy 2013, Bailey 2019). This is an area of consideration within classroom settings, as it explains why some students may benefit more from certain interventions (Nocentini et al. 2018). This creates a need to consider individual differences in implementing group-based wellbeing programmes. A review of health-promoting

programmes has previously shown negative effects on some students, with reports on them feeling ignored or not taken seriously enough (Griebler et al. 2017). Not all interventions will have lasting impacts on every student, and some may need to engage more frequently, others may simply not need the wellbeing support and see it as a distraction from academic subjects.

The reviewed study by Kaplinski (2007) highlighted frequent interruptions to scheduled intervention sessions due to school activities. The lack of appropriate spaces in schools also emerged as a barrier. Group formats were again generally seen as a practical way of delivering interventions, particularly in resource-limited schools, due to more efficient resource use. However, the presence of stigma was seen as a potential barrier in some settings, with concerns about peer stigma leading to lower student participation. In other cases, school-based psychology interventions were seen as less stigmatising compared to traditional mental health treatments and in the study by Crisp et al. (2006) they found that students did not perceive stigma as a major barrier. This emphasizes possible challenges and opportunities in delivering group-based programmes in schools.

This current research and evaluation of PauseUP is designed to deepen understanding of the practical application of wellbeing approaches in secondary schools. With a focus on implementation it aims to contribute to discussions on the change process, alongside strategies used by schools, particularly in Wales, a country in which policies advocate for promoting wellbeing (Hwb 2022). This evaluation is especially pertinent given critiques of implementation science, which suggest that the field has been slow in evolving and requires more research approaches that aim to translate and apply scientific evidence into practical settings (Grimshaw et al. 2014; Wensing and Groll 2019).

PauseUP as a digital wellbeing programme, co-developed using research and in collaboration with schools, aims to holistically address the wellbeing needs of students by combining physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. An understanding of its inception, and framework is needed for assessing its implementation efficacy and potential impact on student wellbeing within schools and will be explored in the next part of this literature review.

3.4 Introducing PauseUP

The WHO defines a health intervention as any action undertaken to assess, improve, maintain, promote, or modify health, functioning, or health conditions (WHO 2017). This can include a variety of activities aimed at addressing health or mental health and wellbeing challenges.

Wellbeing or positive psychology interventions specifically aim to boost positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, focusing on improving aspects like self-esteem and life satisfaction (Sin and Lyubomirsky 2009; Parks and Biswas-Diener 2013). A wellbeing programme, as defined by Burke (2020), groups together multiple interventions that collectively work to improve wellbeing. Within the scope of this research, PauseUP is described as a programme because it includes a diverse range of activities and interventions. PauseUP, or *Saib a Sylwi* in Welsh, was conceived through a collaborative effort with a wellness-focused organisation in Wales known at both local and national levels for developing wellbeing approaches for schools, particularly in the primary sector, through their digital resource PausePoints.

PausePoints, or *Saib y Symud* in Welsh, was specifically designed for primary school contexts to promote movement, mindfulness, and calm in classrooms through brief, 3–5-minute movement sessions followed by a designated pause. This feature is accessible via software installed on teachers' laptops transferred using a USB, with content displayed on interactive whiteboards for whole class engagement. These pauses are integrated into the school day, with teachers activating the resource when they choose and students following the activity provided. The integration was co-designed with teachers to fit into their daily schedules in an attempt not to add to existing workloads.

PausePoints has previously received positive feedback in schools, including recognition by education inspectors in Wales (Estyn 2018). Estyn's evaluation, which involved direct observations, discussions with pupils and teachers, and feedback from parents, highlighted its influence. Although PausePoints was not explicitly named in the Estyn report, it was described as a yoga initiative that helped pupils find calm during the school day, aided their focus during lessons, and promoted relaxation (Estyn 2018). Additional information on PausePoints and *Saib y Symud* can be found in Appendix A.

While Estyn's comments provide some support for implementing PausePoints in schools, it is important to approach these observations with caution and avoid overgeneralising. The positive feedback from Estyn and the anecdotal evidence from schools where PausePoints has been implemented well offer valuable perspectives; however, they do not replace the need for systematic evaluation. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) emphasise, evaluations are necessary to move beyond the intuitive sense that something is working to a deeper understanding of how, why, and under what circumstances it works. This understanding is needed for generalising findings to different contexts, ensuring the sustainability of programmes, and refining them based on evidence. Without systematic data generation, collection and analysis across contexts, it is difficult to determine whether any observed effects are due to the programme itself or other confounding factors (Durlak and DuPre 2008).

Evaluations are particularly important when scaling or transitioning a programme to new contexts, such as from primary to secondary schools (Moore et al 2021). The differences in developmental stages, educational environments, and social dynamics between these settings necessitate a careful assessment of whether and how the programme needs to be modified. Moreover, systematic evaluations can help identify the specific elements of the programme that are most effective, allowing for targeted improvements and more efficient resource allocation (Movsisyan et al 2019).

3.4.1 Developing PauseUP from PausePoints

PausePoints was designed for simplicity, aiding schools and staff in supporting wellbeing. The approach uses the metaphor of a 'domino days' concept, highlighting how stressors, like falling dominos, can trigger a cascade of negative effects, as described by James Clear in "Atomic Habits" (Clear 2018). Stressors can accumulate and interconnect, leading to overwhelming experiences for some young people that disrupt the school day (Pascoe et al. 2020). This understanding reflects research on stress indicating the cumulative and interconnected nature of stressors on the body and brain (Pearlin 1989; Slopen et al. 2018; Mann et al. 2021).

To counter this domino effect, PausePoints advocates removing one or two 'dominos' daily by incorporating brief pauses for activities that help reset and recharge. These targeted breaks are hypothesised to disrupt the stressor chain, allowing for recuperation and stress management. Such strategies have been supported by research showing that school-based interventions using physical activities improve health outcomes and academic achievement (Watson et al. 2017; Bedard et al. 2019). The positive impact on brain function is also notable (Donnelly et al. 2016; Schmidt et al. 2016), and teachers have expressed a preference for quick, manageable activity breaks during school time (Dinkel et al. 2017; Podnar et al. 2018).

Adam Grant's discussions on recovery periods accentuate the benefits of strategic pauses, advocating that such intervals replenish cognitive reserves, optimising performance (Grant and Shandell 2022). This is shown in the Finnish education system where students receive a 15-minute break for every 45 minutes of instruction, often involving outdoor activities that contribute to cognitive and overall wellbeing (Walker 2017). Dr. Rangan Chatterjee's "Feel Better in 5" highlights the potency of brief, routine health-boosting activities, advocating a holistic 'Mind-Body-Spirit' health model (Chatterjee 2020). This approach is seen in Japan's '10-minute breaks' between classes, where students engage in "radio taiso," a structured physical exercise promoting relaxation and concentration (Nakayasu 2016; Hardasari and Diana 2020). Cultural practices like the Swedish "fika" and the UK's "Daily Mile" illustrate the

transformative power of small, consistent actions for wellbeing (Clear 2018; Pink 2019; Uusimäki 2020; Harris et al. 2020). Singapore's holistic approach to education, pairing academic schedules with regular breaks and co-curricular emphasis also shows an awareness of students' holistic needs (Soo et al. 2023).

PausePoints integrates yoga-based movements, breathwork exercises, and mindfulness interventions through pre-recorded videos on a digital platform. This technological approach to supporting student wellbeing and physical activity underscores the potential of digital tools in educational settings (Hamel et al. 2011; Lau et al. 2011; Russ et al. 2015). Similar digital interventions, such as Brain Breaks® Physical Activity Solutions endorsed by the Anna Freud Centre, demonstrate the effectiveness of using technology to promote physical activity among school-aged students, with research indicating the global applicability of these tools in classrooms (Masini et al. 2020; Mok et al. 2020).

Haleem et al. (2022) highlight the transformative impact of digital technologies on education, noting how these tools have redefined traditional educational practices by fostering more interactive and participatory learning experiences. The pandemic accelerated this shift, embedding digital tools into the fabric of education, making them a requirement for remote learning (Dhawan 2020). Technologies like mobile devices and smartboards have influenced educational productivity and accessibility, offering new ways to engage students (Darling-Hammond et al. 2020). However, integrating digital technologies also poses challenges, such as exacerbating the digital divide and revealing the variable effectiveness of these tools across different educational contexts (Selwyn and Jandrić 2020; Zhao 2020). These challenges underscore the need for carefully planned strategies that prioritise inclusivity and address the diverse needs of schools. Selwyn (2023) critiques the uncritical adoption of digital technology and explains how the increased digitisation of education may have widened educational disparities, reinforced corporate control over education, and contributed to environmental degradation through the lifecycle of digital products. This perspective challenges the assumption that more digital technology in education is always beneficial, stating the need for thoughtful and context-sensitive planning for implementation and evaluation.

The successful integration of digital tools is closely linked to the adequacy of supporting infrastructure and the digital literacy of both students and teachers. Research shows that ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to effectively incorporate these tools into their daily routines (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010; Hutchison and Reinking 2011). Furthermore, researching the adaptability of digital interventions like PausePoints to different educational contexts is necessary, especially for secondary school teachers or

students who may have distinct needs and technological proficiencies compared to their primary sector peers with younger learners (Greenhow et al. 2009; Livingstone 2012).

In designing PausePoints (Figure 2), a deliberate effort was made to eliminate the need for passwords or constant internet access, offering teachers the autonomy to integrate the tool into their classrooms. This approach affiliates with the principles of digital degrowth, as discussed by Selwyn (2024), where the use of digital technologies is reimagined around goals of minimal resource consumption, voluntary simplicity, and context-sensitive application. This choice in design aims at minimising potential barriers to implementation. As Selwyn (2023) points out, aligning the use of digital technologies with context and broader goals of environmental sustainability is imperative to avoid contributing to further consumption and exploitation.

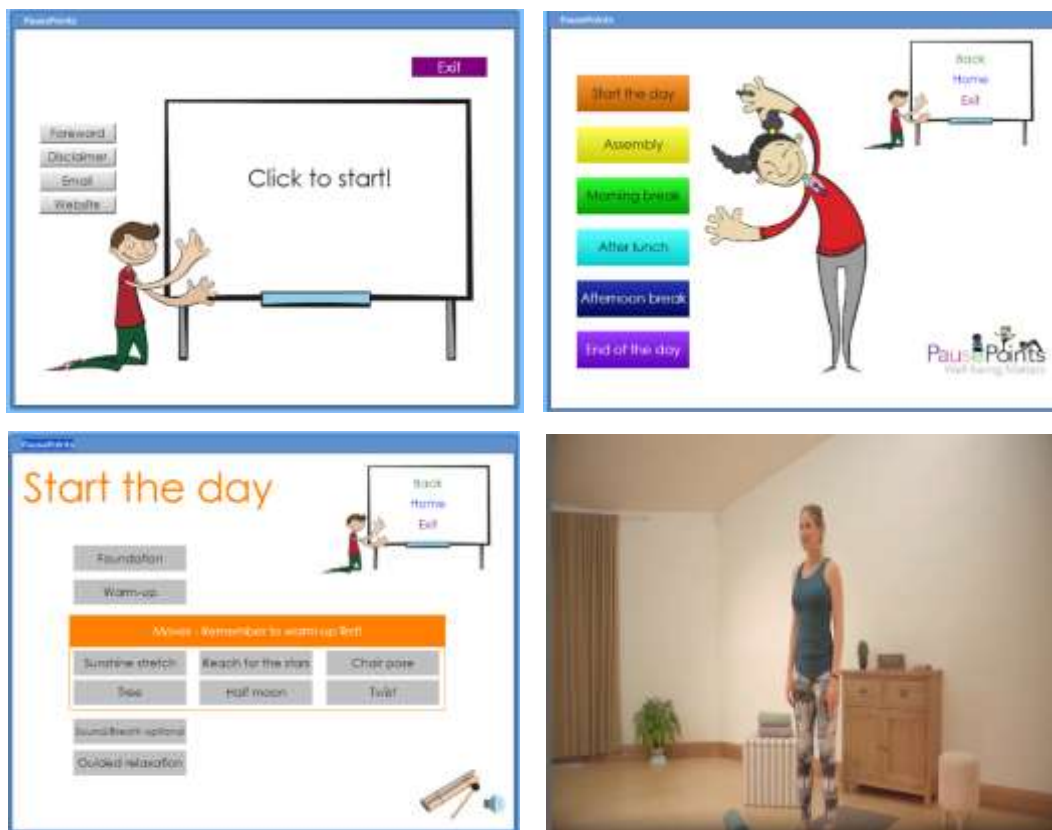


Figure 2 Screenshots of PausePoints Digital Interface.

PausePoints' implementation in primary schools involves a company representative introducing 'domino days,' cumulative stress, and the programme's strategy in a 30-minute class session. An after-school meeting for all staff facilitates questions and an understanding of the programme's purpose and methodology, consistent with literature emphasising teacher involvement in successful school initiatives (Byrne et al. 2018; Waters and Loton 2021).

Introducing PausePoints into secondary schools presented various logistical challenges due to complex timetables, multiple classrooms, and numerous teachers (Eccles and Roeser 2011). The increased staff cohort adds to the complexity (Weare and Nind 2011). Secondary students' interactions with multiple teachers and different developmental needs require programme flexibility (Gootman and Eccles 2002; Dean and Dean 2012; Pianta et al. 2012; Longobardi et al. 2016; Malti et al. 2016; Sawyer et al. 2018). Adapting programmes to new contexts is often resource-efficient but does not always guarantee success, highlighting the importance of stakeholder involvement (Movsisyan et al. 2019; Evans et al. 2021; Moore et al. 2021). Stakeholder engagement in PauseUP's development ensured more accurate context sensitivity, supported by Pearson et al.'s (2015) 'Preparing for Implementation' theory and literature on increasing acceptance through user-driven design (Greenhalgh and Papoutsi 2018).

Consultations in late 2019, pre-pandemic, with the partner company, school wellbeing representatives, and the local education consortium wellbeing lead provided thoughts on adapting PausePoints to secondary schools in Wales. Recommendations included integrating activities into the school schedule, dividing the programme into physical, emotional, and spiritual sections (figure 3), and scheduling during transitional periods to minimise curriculum disruption. Developing PauseUP with activities from PausePoints, SEL, and Positive Psychology began in early 2020. Staff training and site visits, like PausePoints, were also planned as part of the implementation process.

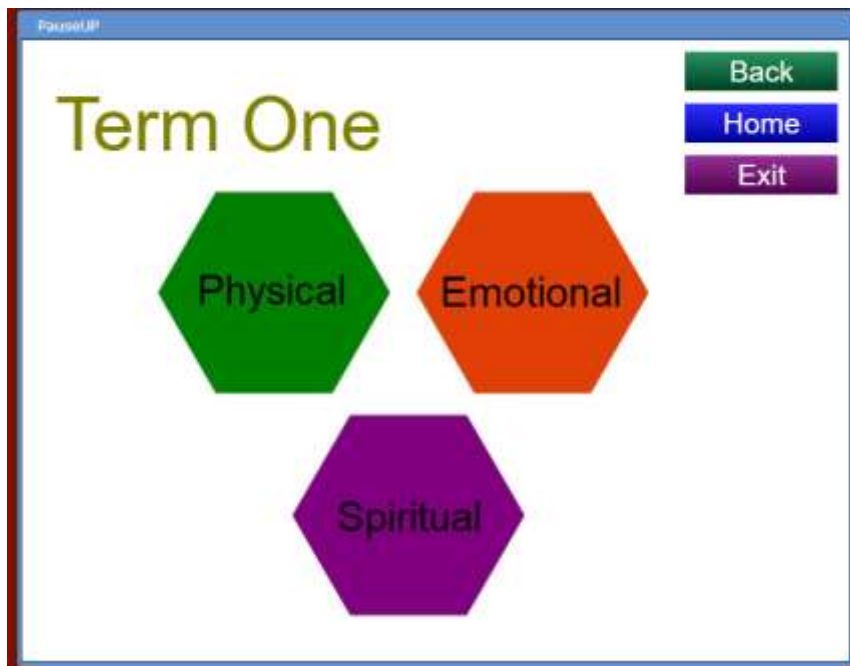


Figure 3 Screenshot of PauseUP's Preliminary Three Sections.

Deciding on the appropriate duration for an intervention or programme in a school setting is important as it can influence the programme's feasibility, acceptance, and overall impact (Durlak and Weissberg 2011). For PauseUP, the consensus among stakeholders was that a 12-week duration, roughly one school term, would be sufficient to demonstrate initial impacts and allow for a pilot study. It was also decided that the programme would be implemented three times a day, three times a week. See Appendix B for more information related to PauseUP and Saib a Sylwi.

The Physical and Emotional Sections of PauseUP

PausePoints, as previously described as the inspiration for developing PauseUP, provides a series of concise yoga-inspired activities, breathwork exercises, and mindfulness interventions. These were integrated into PauseUP via pre-made videos, an example of which can be seen using screen shots of these sections in figure 4.



Figure 4 Screenshot of the Emotional and Physical activity components from PauseUP.

Yoga, a mind-body intervention, incorporates physical postures, breathing techniques, meditation, and relaxation (Khalsa 2007). Evidence supports yoga's benefits for resilience, mood, and self-regulation in young people (Khalsa and Butzer 2016), with systematic reviews showing positive impacts on psychological and physical functioning (Serwacki and Cook-Cottone 2012; Chung 2018; Miller et al. 2020). These studies suggest that yoga interventions are feasible and potentially beneficial in school contexts.

Despite the supportive evidence, the variability and limitations of the studies must be acknowledged. Most research focuses on younger pupils in primary schools within the United States and India, which limits generalisability. Ferreira-Vorkapic et al. (2015) found positive

effects of yoga on mood regulation and cognitive functions, though the limited number of studies warrants cautious interpretation. Butzer et al. (2016) proposed a theoretical model linking school-based yoga with SEL and positive outcomes. However, research on yoga in schools is still developing, relying heavily on preliminary designs like small-scale RCTs. Larger studies with robust methodologies are needed to solidify these findings and understand the contextual requirements for effective delivery within complex school environments (Hart 2022)

PauseUP incorporates breathing exercises linked to yoga and reported effective in PausePoints for younger students. Controlled breathing, such as diaphragmatic breathing, induces physiological relaxation, reducing heart rate and blood pressure, aiding stress, and anxiety management (Saradananda 2017; Zaccaro et al. 2018; Nestor 2020). Studies show positive effects on stress responses and various functions (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a, b; Ma et al. 2017; Saoji et al. 2019).

Mindfulness, defined as an open, curious awareness to any experience (Shapiro and Carlson 2009; Germer et al. 2016), involves focused attention and adaptive information processing (Bishop et al. 2004; Siegel et al. 2009). The inclusion of mindfulness in PauseUP builds on its use in PausePoints and empirical evidence. Zenner et al. (2014) found moderate improvements in cognitive performance, stress, and resilience among students, though study design diversity necessitates careful interpretation. Carsley et al. (2018) reported small to moderate improvements in mental health and wellbeing from mindfulness interventions, highlighting the importance of context and implementation factors.

Dunning et al. (2019) evaluated mindfulness-based interventions in children and adolescents through 33 RCTs, involving 3,666 participants, finding significant positive effects on executive functioning, attention, depression, and anxiety/stress. However, Johnson et al. (2017) found no significant differences in wellbeing outcomes in their RCT on the UK. b (dotbe) Mindfulness in Schools Project, highlighting mixed results and the need for further refinement in school settings. Implementing mindfulness programmes in schools is complex, requiring considerations of school culture, teacher training, and contextual adaptation (Weare 2019). While the integration of yoga and mindfulness into PauseUP's physical and emotional sections is informed by research and PausePoints, ongoing evaluation and revision are essential to ensure relevance and effectiveness for secondary school users.

PauseUP's initial format included repetitive physical and emotional activities, featuring a fixed warm-up and a choice of yoga-based movements, or breathing and mindfulness exercises. This limited choice aimed to simplify integration into school routines. Example screenshots of these sections are shown in Figure 5.

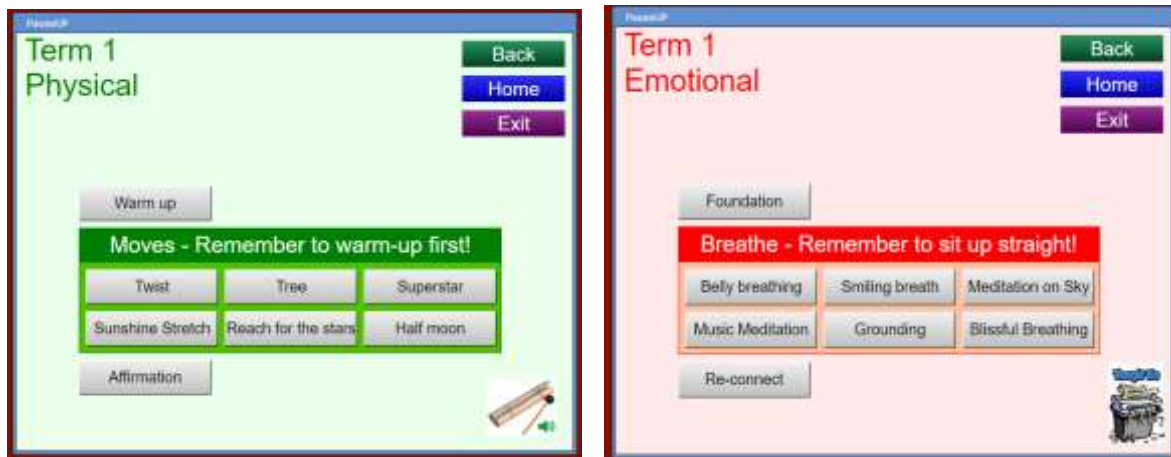


Figure 5 Screenshot of Physical and Emotional Digital interface from PauseUP.

The practical elements of PauseUP are based on a theoretical framework that highlights ER and stress management as key mechanisms for improving adolescent mental health and SWB. Interventions targeting ER are particularly effective during periods of heightened emotional reactivity and stress (Jacobs and Gross 2014; Sloan et al. 2017). Research shows that strong ER skills can lower the risk of internalising disorders like depression and anxiety, which are common in adolescence (Rogier et al. 2019; Velotti et al. 2021) and may be even more critical given the increased stressors from the pandemic (Hu and Qian 2021; Waite et al. 2021). Poor ER skills are linked to a higher risk of mental health issues (Pedrini et al. 2022a), while well-developed ER skills support better social relationships, academic performance, and mental wellbeing (Brackett et al. 2011). Conversely, maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse or self-harm may emerge from poor ER (Espeleta et al. 2018).

School-based programmes incorporating these practices have been effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, especially in high-risk adolescent groups (Houck et al. 2016; Pedrini et al. 2022b). Integrating ER into the curriculum may offer adolescents tools to manage stress and emotional challenges.

The Spiritual Section of PauseUP

The spiritual component of PauseUP, distinct from PausePoints, integrates frameworks of flourishing and Positive Psychology for education (Keyes 2007; Seligman et al. 2009; Seligman 2015; Waters and Loton 2021). This includes activities inspired by SEL programmes (Durlak et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2017) and Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) (Sin and Lyubomirsky 2009; Waters 2011), aiming to promote student wellbeing and development.

SEL interventions show lasting positive impacts on student outcomes (Durlak et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2017) across diverse backgrounds (Greenberg et al. 2003; Hoffman 2009; Hecht and Shin 2015; Weissberg et al. 2015). They contribute to academic success and long-term wellbeing (Sørensen et al. 2015; Domitrovich et al. 2017). However, challenges in integrating SEL into daily curricula and addressing teacher readiness assert the need for context-sensitive approaches and evaluation (Greenberg et al. 2003; Ainley et al. 2006; Khan et al. 2011; Jones and Bouffard 2012).

PPIs, adaptable and effective in enhancing wellbeing and reducing depression, are supported by meta-analyses (Sin and Lyubomirsky 2009; Bolier et al. 2013; Hendriks et al. 2020; Carr et al. 2021; van Agteren et al. 2021). Positive education emphasises systemic implementation across schools (Kern and Wehmeyer 2021), though challenges include resource limitations and teacher training needs (Froh et al. 2008; Marques et al. 2011; Shoshani and Steinmetz 2014; Seligman 2015; Green et al. 2021). Gee et al. (2021) highlight practicality as key for successful implementation, aligning with Pearson et al. (2015) on embedding health-promoting programmes into school routines.

Shankland and Rosset (2017) advocate for Brief Positive Psychological Interventions (BPPIs), which are reported on as practical and adaptable. These include mindfulness, character strengths, gratitude, and positive relationships activities. Mindfulness exercises (Kabat-Zinn 2003; Kuyken et al. 2013; Kabat-Zinn 2023), character strengths (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Linley and Harrington 2006), gratitude practices (Emmons and McCullough 2004; Froh et al. 2008; Froh et al. 2011; Bono et al. 2022), and positive relationship-building activities (Roffey 2011) align with literature on SEL interventions and may also make positive changes to benefit the school and classroom environment (Collie et al 2012). BPPIs in PauseUP build on established models and theories for promoting wellbeing (Keyes 2002; Ryff and Singer 2008; Seligman 2011). These frameworks are hypothesised to support personal growth and continuity for students transitioning from PausePoints in primary school to PauseUP in secondary school, aligning with the curriculum in Wales and concept of 'progression steps', moving from step 3 (10–11-year-olds, year 5 and 6) to step 4 (11–13-year-olds, year 7 and 8) (Hwb 2022).

Stakeholder discussions led to implementing the spiritual component activities in a modular, progressive format. Each week of the 12-week programme contains three activities centred around a common wellbeing theme, such as gratitude, introduced in session 1A and continued through sessions 1B and 1C as depicted in figure 6. Six initial themes - meaning, empathy, kindness, optimism, savouring, and gratitude - were chosen based on PPI research to compliment character strengths and positive relationships activities (Parks and Biswas-Diener

2013; Parks and Titova 2016). This was also a decision strengthened by the wellbeing partner company being asked to produce bilingual training materials on these themes for schools in Wales. See Appendix C for a link and information to these materials.

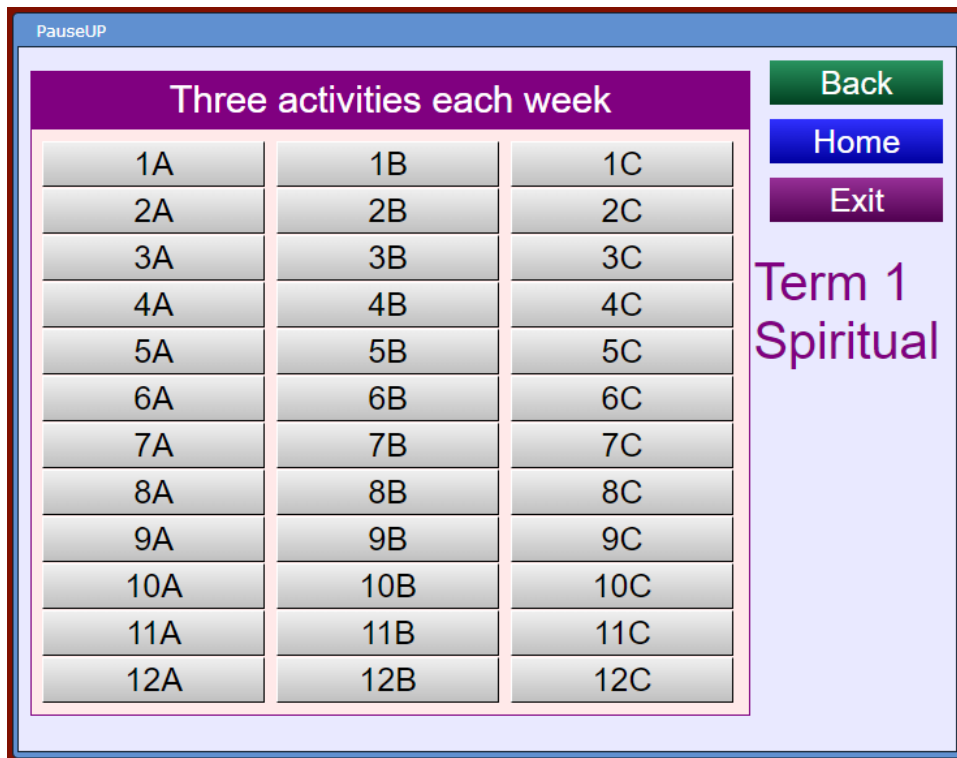


Figure 6 Screenshot of Preliminary Spiritual section Digital interface of PauseUP.

The theoretical framework underlying PauseUP's spiritual component is supported by a body of literature on SEL and PPI's. In introducing these evidence-based practices into the school curriculum for student users to observe and practice, PauseUP is posited to have a positive influence on student wellbeing (Sin and Lyubomirsky 2009; Durlak et al. 2011).

However, when implementing wellbeing interventions in schools it is necessary to recognise the potential for such programmes to also cause unintended harm, as emerging research in the field suggests. While PauseUP is designed as a mechanism to improve emotional regulation, stress management, and overall wellbeing, it is important to acknowledge that not all students may benefit equally from these interventions. In some cases, the structured nature of school-based mental health programmes could inadvertently exacerbate distress or lead to negative outcomes, particularly among students who are already vulnerable (Foulkes and Stringaris 2023).

The concern of iatrogenic harm—where the intervention itself may cause or worsen symptoms—has been documented in various school-based mental health initiatives (Foulkes et al. 2024). For instance, research has shown that some CBT-based interventions can

increase internalising symptoms such as anxiety and depression compared to control groups, indicating that the uniform application of wellbeing strategies may not be appropriate for all students (Guzman-Holst et al. 2022; Andrews and Schweizer 2023). Additionally, a study on mindfulness interventions found that adolescents with elevated baseline mental health symptoms experienced a slight increase in depressive symptoms post-intervention, highlighting that certain individuals might be negatively impacted by approaches that may generally be beneficial to others (Montero-Marin et al. 2022).

Although PauseUP is grounded in theories on improving ER, stress management, SEL, and positive psychology skills, which are typically associated with benefits to wellbeing, it is essential to recognise that these interventions may not be suitable for every student. The group-based format of PauseUP, like many other school interventions, might pose a risk of amplifying distress through peer influence, particularly if discussions of thoughts and feelings occur in a collective setting (Gee et al. 2021). Therefore, it is critical that the introduction of PauseUP includes mechanisms for monitoring and addressing any adverse effects that may arise within classrooms.

The Welsh Context

The Welsh Government is committed to promoting the Welsh language across all public sectors, aiming to cultivate one million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Gov.Wales 2024), underscoring the importance of cultural and linguistic preservation (Lovell 2018; Davies 2020). Schools are vital in this strategy as they are primary conduits for language learning (Gorrara et al. 2020). In the development process, stakeholders identified the need for an equivalent Welsh version of PauseUP, named Saib a Sylwi. This decision was essential for two main reasons. Firstly, aligning with Wales's linguistic heritage, launching a Welsh version alongside the English one created a connection between wellbeing and Welsh cultural identity, enhancing the relevance of the Health and Wellbeing AoLE. Secondly, offering both versions provided schools the flexibility to choose the most suitable language for their student demographics.

International programmes demonstrate the benefits of offering bilingual and native language options. In New Zealand, programmes like "Te Kotahitanga" and "Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga" integrate Maori language and cultural elements (Bishop et al. 2009; Durie 2011). Similarly, schools in the USA with large Hispanic populations implement bilingual education programmes that have shown to improve academic outcomes and foster cultural identity and

self-esteem (Collier and Thomas 2004). These examples underscore the inclusivity and cultural relevance bilingual programmes can offer.

Initial stakeholder discussions also revealed the importance of engaging the wider community to complement PauseUP interventions. Implementation plans included school site visits by community members to discuss wellbeing. However, the pandemic required a shift to video recordings of local community members speaking about various wellbeing themes in both English and Welsh highlighted in figure 7. These videos were integrated into the spiritual section of PauseUP, maintaining community engagement in a modified, pandemic-appropriate digital format. This approach preserved the community aspect but also leveraged digital tools for accessibility and inclusivity during challenging, locked down times. The development and adaptation process of PauseUP and Saib a Sylwi reflect the integration of cultural and linguistic elements, aiming for relevance in promoting student wellbeing in Wales.



Figure 7 Screenshot of local community member, speaking for PauseUP on ‘Savouring the Moment’, his chosen theme of wellbeing.

In further developing PauseUP, stakeholder discussions focused on identifying the most suitable evaluation methods for assessing initial responses to the activities within the three sections of the programme. This evaluation aimed to shape the programme's future direction and refinement beyond the initial 12 weeks. Collaboration with participating schools was essential to ensure an effective process. A consensus emerged that a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, would provide the most comprehensive data on PauseUP's influence. This approach acknowledges the need to

capture measurable wellbeing outcomes for schools to make informed decisions about their strategies while also understanding the experiences of students and teachers involved.

Integrating complexity and implementation science with an understanding of context is required for making scientific theory both practical and applicable (Pfadenhauer et al. 2017; Braithwaite et al. 2018). As highlighted in this literature review, the successful implementation of wellbeing programmes in schools requires the active participation of all stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, helping to connect theory and practice (Nilsen 2020). However, the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, which coincided with the start of this research project, introduced challenges to stakeholder involvement. These unprecedented circumstances forced a re-evaluation of how educational and organisational practice could be effectively delivered and investigated during an 'extraordinary' period of global crisis (Loblay et al. 2022).

3.4.2 Conducting Research during the Pandemic

The pandemic dramatically disrupted global education, triggering an abrupt shift to remote learning. Described as a "supernova" causing "undeniable chaos" (Azorín 2020; Hargreaves 2021), the pandemic impacted over a billion students worldwide, necessitating a rapid reorganisation of teaching practices (Zhao 2020). With schools closing suddenly, educators, students, and parents were forced to adapt to online learning with minimal preparation, revealing disparities in access to technology, particularly in the U.S. and U.K. (Darling-Hammond 2020). These disparities, especially for students from low-income households and rural areas, highlighted the urgent need for more equitable educational practices (Selwyn and Jandric 2020).

The transition to remote learning exposed significant challenges, as many schools were unprepared for the sudden change despite advancements in educational technology (Chakraborty and Maity 2020; Dhawan 2020). School leaders had to quickly redesign models, while parents managed work and their children's education, and students struggled with online engagement (Lucas et al., 2020). Studies in the United States revealed widespread issues with access to technology and internet connectivity (Gross and Opalka 2020; Hamilton and Ercikan 2022).

The pandemic also disrupted educational research, as lockdowns and social distancing measures forced delays and cancellations of projects (Bradley-Dorsey et al. 2022). In-person data collection was halted, pushing researchers toward virtual methodologies that faced challenges such as participant access, digital literacy, and tool reliability (Bond 2021; Corell-

Almuzara et al. 2021). However, this period offered an opportunity to study rapid shifts in education, particularly the role of wellbeing initiatives and technology in research.

The crisis highlighted the need for context-responsive leadership, as traditional practices became obsolete (Harris and Jones 2020). School leaders balanced operational challenges with the emotional wellbeing of their communities, emphasising the importance of self-care alongside technological skills (Netolicky 2020). Distributed leadership proved essential, with responsibilities shared across the system (Azorín et al. 2020), while teachers took on new roles in instructional delivery and collaboration (Aslan et al. 2020; Torrance et al. 2023). The pandemic created a unique context for evaluating PauseUP. As complex adaptive systems, schools were compelled to experiment with new methods of curriculum delivery, aligning with the principles of self-organisation within these systems (Walker et al. 2004; Lanham et al. 2013; Delobelle et al. 2024).

The concept of liminality—a transitional phase where established structures are in flux—offers a valuable perspective for understanding the pandemic's impact on education during this time. According to Victor Turner, a cultural anthropologist, liminality represents a state of "anti-structure," where familiar systems are dismantled, creating ambiguity whilst also providing space for radical transformation (Bamber et al. 2017; Turner 2017). This state was reflected in the shift to online learning and 'social bubbles' during the pandemic, with teachers and students facing a rapidly changing, uncertain landscape (Bayrakdar and Guveli 2023). Policymakers faced the challenge of balancing public health priorities with the adverse effects of school closures on student wellbeing and education (Reimers and Schleicher 2020). Turner highlights the creative potential of liminality, where moments of disruption can lead to *communitas*—a sense of collective unity and purpose (Turner 2017). During the pandemic, this was evident as teachers and administrators had to collaborate to find solutions, fostering creativity and solidarity in certain contexts (Bayrakdar and Guveli 2023). *Communitas* often emerge during crises, presenting opportunities for growth as individuals transcend traditional boundaries to work toward common goals (Buechner et al. 2020).

In this context, the suspension of normal routines may have facilitated the introduction new ideas and practices. The pandemic's liminal phase may have offered schools the opportunity to rethink their approaches to student wellbeing, facilitating the integration of new initiatives (Rodríguez-Mejía et al. 2024). Lewin's model of change, which articulates the process of 'unfreezing' established behaviours to enable transformation, is particularly relevant here (Cummings et al. 2016). The pandemic may have acted as a catalyst, disrupting the status quo and 'unfreezing' entrenched educational practices. The urgency of the situation may have accelerated the acceptance of new approaches. Fullan's model of educational change further

illuminates this process by highlighting the importance of systemic change driven by leadership, vision, and collaboration. According to Fullan (2007), successful change requires more than just the implementation of new practices; it demands a deep transformation in the culture and structure of educational systems. The pandemic may have facilitated the type of systemic change that Fullan describes (Fullan 2023). The exploration of wellbeing, complexity science, liminality, and theories of social change provide frameworks for understanding how such a crisis can drive transformations in the way educational systems function and implement new ideas and as such provide the theoretical basis for this research inquiry.

3.5 Research Questions

The literature review has provided an exploration of the complexities involved in promoting student wellbeing within secondary schools. Wellbeing is understood as a multi-dimensional concept, shaped by a range of psychological, social, and contextual factors, requiring a holistic approach for its effective promotion. This perspective extends past a narrow, pathology-focused view of mental health to embrace a broader understanding of wellbeing that integrates both internal capacities—such as emotional regulation—and external supports, including the creation of nurturing social spaces.

Schools, functioning as dynamic ecosystems, are important contexts in shaping student wellbeing. The interactions within these environments are determinants of student development and wellbeing. Conceptualising schools as complex adaptive systems underscores the necessity of considering the multitude of interrelated factors influencing student wellbeing when implementing new initiatives (Hawe et al. 2009; Rutter 2017). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory further highlights the importance of understanding these interactions within the school microsystem, where students actively engage and grow through their social connections (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Eccles and Roeser 2011).

The digital transformation of education, accelerated by the pandemic added another layer of complexity to these dynamics. Digital technologies have redefined traditional educational practices, fostering more interactive and participatory learning experiences (Haleem et al. 2022). However, this has also brought challenges, such as the digital divide and varying effectiveness of these tools across different contexts (Selwyn and Jandric 2020; Zhao 2020). The integration of digital tools has necessitated a thoughtful and context-sensitive approach,

particularly in ensuring inclusivity and addressing the diverse needs of schools when introducing new approaches to learning.

Implementing change within these organisational contexts is inherently challenging. Successfully navigating this process requires addressing potential resistance, engaging stakeholders, and balancing the fidelity of the programme with the flexibility to adapt to local contexts. Leadership, infrastructure, and sustained professional development are critical to ensuring that new ideas and initiatives are not only adopted but also embedded within the school culture (Fullan 2023). Theories of organisational change and implementation science offer guidance for understanding the processes required to effectively integrate health promoting programmes into schools (Pearson et al. 2015).

PauseUP, developed as an adaptation of the primary school programme PausePoints, serves as a case study in this thesis to explore these broader themes of wellbeing promotion, programme implementation and the change process. Designed to meet the unique needs of secondary school students, PauseUP incorporates physical, emotional, and spiritual components, drawing on evidence-based practices from yoga, mindfulness, positive psychology, and SEL. The design reflects a mindful integration of digital elements, deliberately avoiding barriers like internet access, which aligns with a more thoughtful and context-sensitive use of digital technology in classroom contexts (Selwyn 2024). However, the challenges of adapting and implementing PauseUP, particularly in the context of significant social disruptions like the pandemic, underscore the need for evaluation to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in extraordinary times.

The literature review thus not only sets the stage for understanding the complexities of promoting wellbeing in schools but also positions PauseUP as an illustrative example of how these challenges and opportunities may be met. This understanding has informed the formulation of the following research questions, which guide this thesis:

1. What factors and conditions within the school microsystem influence the implementation of new wellbeing initiatives during periods of significant social disruption, such as the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How can the findings from the implementation of various wellbeing interventions in schools during extraordinary times inform broader educational practices and curriculum development to support student wellbeing?

To address these questions, the evaluation pursues the following objectives, with a particular focus on implementing PauseUP as a case study:

- Explore participants' perceptions of wellbeing within the scope of this study, providing insights into their subjective experiences.
- Identify which activities within PauseUP are most effective, and for whom, to understand the differential impacts across various contexts.
- Investigate the influence of incorporating PauseUP into the school context on student wellbeing, considering both potential positive and negative outcomes.
- Analyse the mechanisms and contextual factors influencing the programme's outcomes, including how these factors interact to shape the effectiveness of introducing new wellbeing interventions in schools.

In positioning PauseUP as a focal point within the broader discourse on educational change and wellbeing promotion, this research aims to contribute findings that can inform both educational practice and future research. The decision to adopt a realist evaluation approach, detailed in the following chapter, reflects the complexity of the school environment and the need for a methodology that can accommodate diverse data types and perspectives. This approach, which includes wellbeing scales, student surveys, staff interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observational data, aims to provide a better understanding of the various factors influencing the implementation and outcomes of wellbeing approaches within different school contexts.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for evaluating PauseUP, explaining the rationale behind using a realist approach and its application in research. Key terminologies in realist evaluation are defined, and the processes for gathering data on what works, for whom, and in what circumstances are outlined. The chapter details how these approaches were applied in the study design, investigating how PauseUP interacts with schools, detailing settings, participants, and ethical processes for studies (pilot and main study) and practical application.

The implementation of health-promoting programmes in schools, such as PauseUP, requires a contextually sensitive and adaptable approach to address the complexities of school environments and the evolving needs of students (Pearson et al. 2015; Darlington 2018; Gee et al. 2021). The realist evaluation methodology is particularly suited to PauseUP, a programme that integrates multiple intervention components and requires an understanding of how these interventions function within varied contexts.

Historically, the UK Medical Research Council (MRC) advocated for randomized controlled trials (RCTs) as the gold standard for evaluating interventions (Campbell et al. 2000). However, recent discussions within the research community have increasingly acknowledged the need for more flexible approaches that consider the complexities of real-world settings. While the MRC's formal guidance has gradually become more open to complex systems and realist perspectives, the integration of realist evaluation into programmes like PauseUP reflects a broader, ongoing shift towards methodologies that prioritise context-specific insights (Fletcher et al. 2016; Moore et al. 2019).

In evaluating PauseUP, the adoption of a realist evaluation framework provides a means to assess how the programme operates, why it produces certain outcomes, and under what conditions it is or is not effective. This methodology offers a deeper exploration of the interactions between context, mechanisms, and outcomes (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Given the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the Welsh education context—including the introduction of a new curriculum focused on wellbeing and the effects of the pandemic—realist evaluation is well-positioned to inform the ongoing refinement of PauseUP. This approach ensures that the programme remains responsive to the specific needs of schools and students, thereby maximising its potential to promote student wellbeing.

4.1 Realism in Research

Realism asserts that an external reality exists independently of our perceptions, with our understanding only approximating this reality (Bhaskar 2013). Direct realism argues that we perceive the world as it truly is, with our senses providing reliable, accurate representations of reality (Sievers 1999). For instance, seeing a tree or hearing a song is perceived as a direct, unfiltered experience of the world (Dretske 2003). Advocates of direct realism maintain that objects exist as we perceive them, independent of our consciousness (Armstrong 1961). This perspective supports observational research aimed at capturing phenomena as accurately as possible (Searle 2015).

Indirect realism, however, contends that our perception is not of the real world itself but of our brain's interpretation of it. Sensory information is processed and reconstructed by our minds, leading to a perceptual experience influenced by context, mental state, and past experiences (Russell 1912; Rock 1983). Thus, perception is a mental representation, not direct access to reality. Critical realism, commonly used in social research, acknowledges that social and cognitive factors shape our understanding (Bhaskar 1975).

Critical realism, foundational to realist evaluation, views reality as stratified, distinguishing between the real (independent of perception), the actual (events whether observed or not), and the empirical (shaped by interpretation) domains (Bhaskar 1975). It suggests that social phenomena, such as wellbeing in schools, are shaped by unobservable structures and cultural norms. Pawson (2013) aligns with critical realism but critiques its emphasis on causal laws and societal transformation, while Porter (2015) argues these critiques stem from misunderstandings.

In evaluating a wellbeing programme, realist evaluators measure observable outcomes (empirical domain) alongside deeper mechanisms and contextual factors (real domain), such as school policies, structure, and staff attitudes. These factors provide insights into how and why outcomes emerge, moving beyond surface-level observations. This multi-layered approach is well-suited for examining the complexity of wellbeing in schools (Pommier et al. 2010).

Realist evaluation explores why and how a programme works, and under what conditions it succeeds or fails, aligning with the complexity of wellbeing and school environments (Svane et al. 2019). By integrating critical realism with systems thinking, hidden mechanisms behind observed phenomena can be explored, offering generative, explanation-driven inquiry (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Callaghan 2008; Wong 2013).

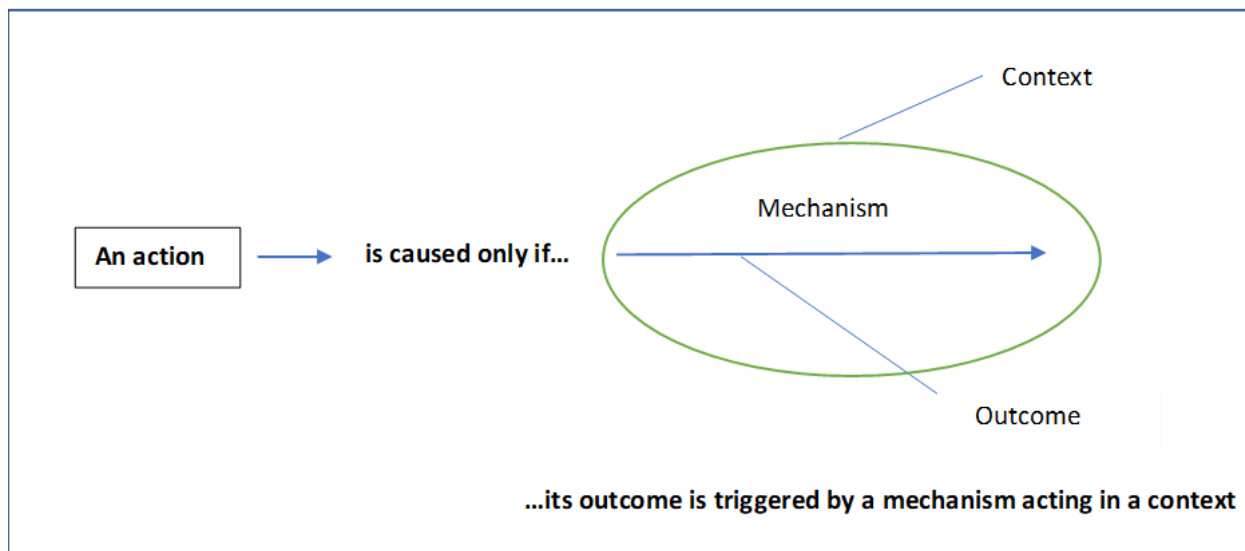
4.1.1 Generative Causation

Evaluation approaches may often oversimplify the dynamics of social phenomena by construing them into distinct cause-effect relationships (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Social phenomena are inherently complex, dynamic, and non-linear, involving multiple interrelated components that are often context-dependent (Byrne 2013; Pawson 2013). Evaluations focused solely on direct cause-effect relationships may fail to capture the full spectrum of influencing factors. For example, a student's academic achievement in school settings is influenced by parental involvement, teacher quality, personal motivation, and socio-economic status (Sirin 2005; Boonk et al. 2018; Nauzeer and Jaunky 2021; Göktaş and Kaya 2022; Selvitopu and Kaya 2023).

Astbury and Leeuw (2010) suggest that social programmes should be theory-driven, considering interactions among various actors and structures in specific contexts, leading to multiple, non-linear, and emergent outcomes. Realist evaluation addresses these complexities between contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes (Pawson 2006). Central to this is the principle of generative causation (Pawson and Tilley 1997), which searches deeper into programme effectiveness within social settings.

Generative causation recognises that social programmes are context-dependent, and their effectiveness can vary based on differing conditions and situations. Understanding the mechanisms that generate outcomes and the contexts in which they operate is key to the process (Rycroft-Malone et al. 2012). Generative causation, as illustrated in figure 8, attempts to provide a clearer understanding of complex social programmes.

Generative causation



(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 58)

Figure 8 Visual Representation of Generative Causation

Applying the concept of generative causation to the evaluation of PauseUP provides an exploration into how different factors and conditions within the school microsystem influence the implementation of the programme. Generative causation may help to explain why PauseUP might positively impact student wellbeing in one school, while failing to do so in another school. This framework aligns with the research question by examining the factors and conditions that shape the implementation of wellbeing initiatives like PauseUP in secondary schools during disruptive times.

Generative causation acknowledges that the success of PauseUP depends not only on its inputs and activities but also on the complex interactions between the programme's mechanisms and the specific contexts in which they are deployed. This approach moves beyond the simplistic question of 'Does PauseUP work?' to address more nuanced questions such as 'How and why does PauseUP work (or not), for whom, and under what specific circumstances?'

4.1.2 Challenges in Realist Evaluation

Realist evaluation presents challenges due to its complexity and resource demands. Its in-depth approach requires substantial expertise, time, and resources for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Salter and Kothari 2014; Greenhalgh et al. 2009). The process

involves developing, testing, and refining theories, and combining qualitative and quantitative data to construct programme theories, which can be logistically and resource-intensive (Pawson and Tilley 1997). In resource-limited settings, such as schools with constrained staff, time, or budgets, these demands can be particularly prohibitive (Marchal et al. 2012). The complexity of realist evaluation may also limit its accessibility and utility for stakeholders who are not well-versed in realist philosophy or research methodology.

To address these challenges, several strategies can be employed. Involving stakeholders from the beginning is recommended by the MRC (Skivington et al. 2021). This participatory approach integrates the perspectives and experiences of school staff and students, grounding the evaluation in practical contexts which may optimise time and resources. Implementing a phased approach to the evaluation, starting with a pilot study, is advised for initial testing and refining of theories on a smaller scale. This helps in early identification and resolution of issues, ensuring more efficient resource management (Hasson 2010; Pearson et al. 2015; Fletcher et al. 2016). Focusing on the most critical elements of the evaluation may also ensure that resources are allocated effectively (Pawson and Manzano-Santaella 2012). Providing this support and simplifying complex concepts helps demystify the realist methodology, fostering greater stakeholder participation and engagement (Jagosh 2017).

Therefore, despite the challenges, realism and realist evaluation offer a lens into the functioning of complex social programmes. The capacity of realist evaluation to elucidate the interaction between context, mechanisms, and outcomes makes it suitable for evaluating PauseUP. The detailed findings from such evaluations can provide educators and researchers with the information needed to optimise wellbeing strategies, acknowledging that programmes may have different effects in different contexts and for various groups of learners.

4.2 Key Terms in Realist Evaluation.

In realist evaluation, programmes are examined through a theoretical lens using the "context-mechanism-outcome" (CMO) configuration. This approach posits that results are observed from the interaction between context (C), mechanisms (M), and outcomes (O).

4.2.1 Context (C)

Context encompasses the conditions that influence the functioning of mechanisms leading to specific outcomes. According to Pawson and Tilley (1997), this includes social, cultural, historical, institutional, and individual factors. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological

Systems Theory (2005), which asserts that individual development is influenced by various environmental systems. For instance, in the school setting, the ethos, available resources, teacher competencies, and support for the programme form part of the context. Studies highlight understanding context as both observable and dynamic features (Greenhalgh and Manzano 2022). For example, Mukumbang et al. (2018) showed how socio-economic conditions and cultural norms influenced health programme outcomes in South Africa. Similarly, Greenhalgh et al. (2009) highlighted the role of organisational readiness and stakeholder support in the success of health innovations.

4.2.2 Mechanism (M)

Mechanisms are the drivers of change, explaining the processes leading to specific outcomes. Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe mechanisms as the elements within a programme that trigger change. For PauseUP, mechanisms might include altering students' attitudes towards wellbeing or providing effective mental health strategies, aligning with Astbury and Leeuw's (2010) view on mechanisms involving changes in individuals' reasoning and available resources. Mukumbang et al. (2018) demonstrated how providing relatable information (resource) shifted students' understanding and attitudes towards sexual health, influencing their behaviours (outcome). However, mechanisms can be conceptually ambiguous, interpreted as programme components, participant reactions, or underlying processes (Linsley et al. 2015). In PauseUP, mechanisms may include psychological changes, such as improved ER, or behavioural changes, like increased engagement in other school activities, varying by school context.

4.2.3 Outcome (O)

Outcomes are the effects produced by a programme, resulting from the interaction between context and mechanisms. They can be positive, negative, or unintended (Pawson and Tilley 1997). For instance, Mukumbang et al. (2018) observed changes in student behaviours and attitudes towards sexual health. Pawson and Tilley (1997) illustrated this with a crime prevention programme where increased police presence (mechanism) in high-crime areas (context) led to lower crime rates (outcome). Kazi (2003) found that mechanisms such as improved self-esteem and problem-solving skills in a mentoring programme for young offenders led to outcomes of improved behaviour and reduced re-offending rates. Understanding outcomes in PauseUP involves anticipating both direct changes in student wellbeing and indirect shifts in teachers' attitudes towards the programme and its objectives.

4.2.4 Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) Configurations

The CMO configuration is at the core of realist evaluation, highlighting the interplay between context, mechanisms, and outcomes (Pawson and Tilley 1997). This framework allows for an active understanding of how social programmes function. For PauseUP, different school contexts could shape how the programme is delivered and its influence on student wellbeing. CMO configurations help refine the programme, optimise delivery, and inform strategy around wellbeing by identifying conducive classroom environments and common implementation barriers.

4.2.5 Programme Theory

Programme theory conceptualises the causal relationships within CMO configurations, hypothesising how and why a programme produces certain outcomes (Funnell and Rogers 2011). It derives from the programme's principles and assumptions, aiding in targeted evaluation design (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Developing programme theory is iterative, involving hypothesis testing about how a programme works in different contexts (Astbury and Leeuw 2010). Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) emphasise that a clear programme theory improves decision-making about data collection and interpretation, supporting the evaluation's focus and depth.

4.3 The Realist Evaluation Design for PauseUP

Realist evaluation requires precise reporting to understand the causal mechanisms, contexts, and outcomes achieved by a programme (Pawson and Tilley 1997). For school-based wellbeing programmes like PauseUP, this ensures that evaluation outcomes can be cross-checked, replicated, and further developed by other researchers, supporting a process of continuous learning and improvement.

This evaluation adheres to the eight standards provided by the RAMESES II project to ensure rigour, consistency, and transparency (Wong et al. 2016). Rigour ensures accurate methods throughout the research process. Consistency supports reproducibility and comparability of the study. Transparency upholds the evaluation's integrity and credibility.

The RAMESES II guidance includes articulating the evaluation's purpose and questions, understanding, and applying generative causation, developing, and refining programme theories, and designing the evaluation with clear justifications for the realist approach. It also

involves employing appropriate data collection methods, recruitment strategies, and iterative theory refinement (Wong et al. 2016). These standards structured the evaluation design for this evaluation.

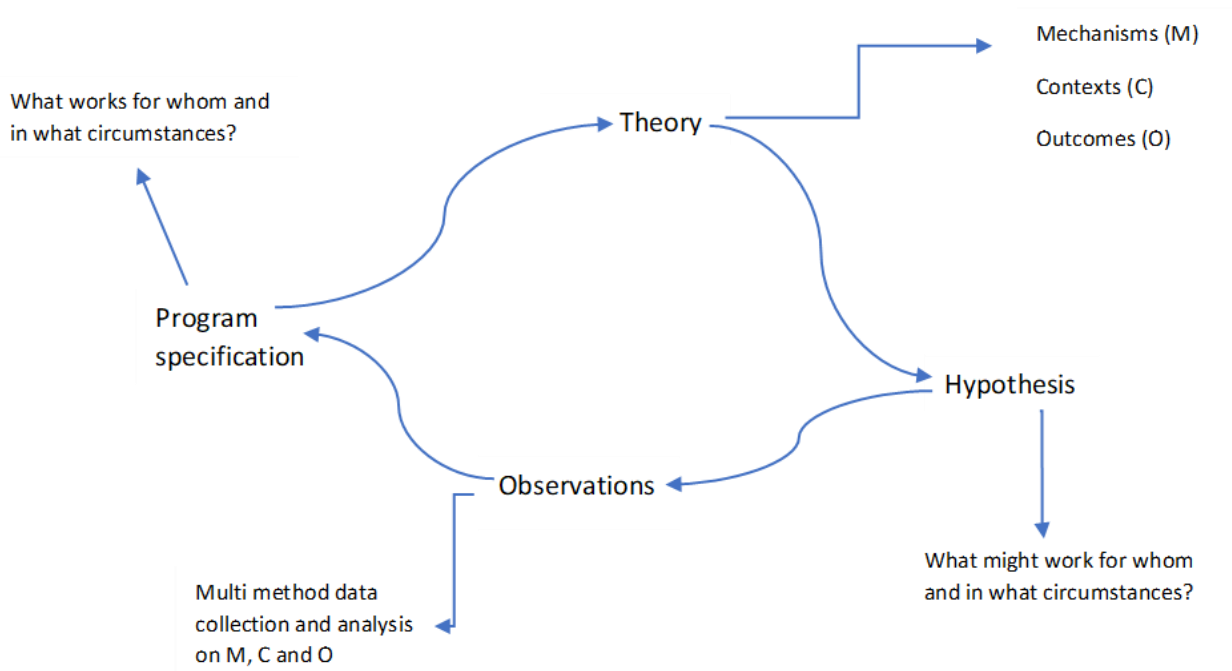
The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data, involving school staff and students participating in PauseUP. Pawson and Tilley (1997) posit that realist evaluations should not solely rely on a “...*broad hypotheses culled from the background Literature,*” but also incorporate, “*the ‘folk wisdom’ of practitioners.*” (Pawson and Tilley 1997 p. 107). This approach values participants' interpretations of their experiences, acknowledging their role in shaping their understanding of changes in thinking and behaviours (Martin and White 2003).

Quantitative data provided empirical evidence supporting or challenging hypothesised statements and programme theories. This data offered measurable information about the programme's outcomes, reach, and influence on target groups. Realist evaluation's strength lies in using quantitative data alongside qualitative feedback to uncover the interaction between different layers of context and their influence on mechanisms and outcomes (Astbury and Leeuw 2010).

The realist evaluation cycle, as illustrated in figure 9 by Pawson and Tilley (1997), begins with programme specification, detailing intended operations and anticipated outcomes, progressing through an iterative process of theory formulation, observation, and hypothesis testing. This cycle begins with establishing a programme specification, informed by central research objectives, theoretical foundations from existing literature, stakeholder interviews, and preliminary observations (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

Observations inform hypotheses about the programme's mechanisms and outcomes, using a multi-method approach to gather and analyse data (Westthorp et al. 2011). Applying CMO configurations (Jagosh et al. 2015) reveals how mechanisms interact with specific contexts to produce outcomes, refining the programme theory and identifying conditions for its effectiveness (Pawson & Manzano-Santaella 2012). This iterative process (Wong et al. 2016) continuously tests and refines the theory, making it adaptable to the complexities of implementation and improving future programme development.

The realist evaluation cycle



(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 85)

Figure 9 Visual Representation of the Realist Evaluation Cycle adapted from Pawson and Tilley (1997).

This cycle typically unfolds across three distinct phases (Gilmore et al. 2019) - development of initial programme theories, testing of these theories, and refinement of the theories based on the gathered evidence as applied to this research and shown in figure 10. The evaluation design for PauseUP aimed at exploring how, when, and why the programme influences wellbeing in the secondary school settings that chose to pilot the programme.

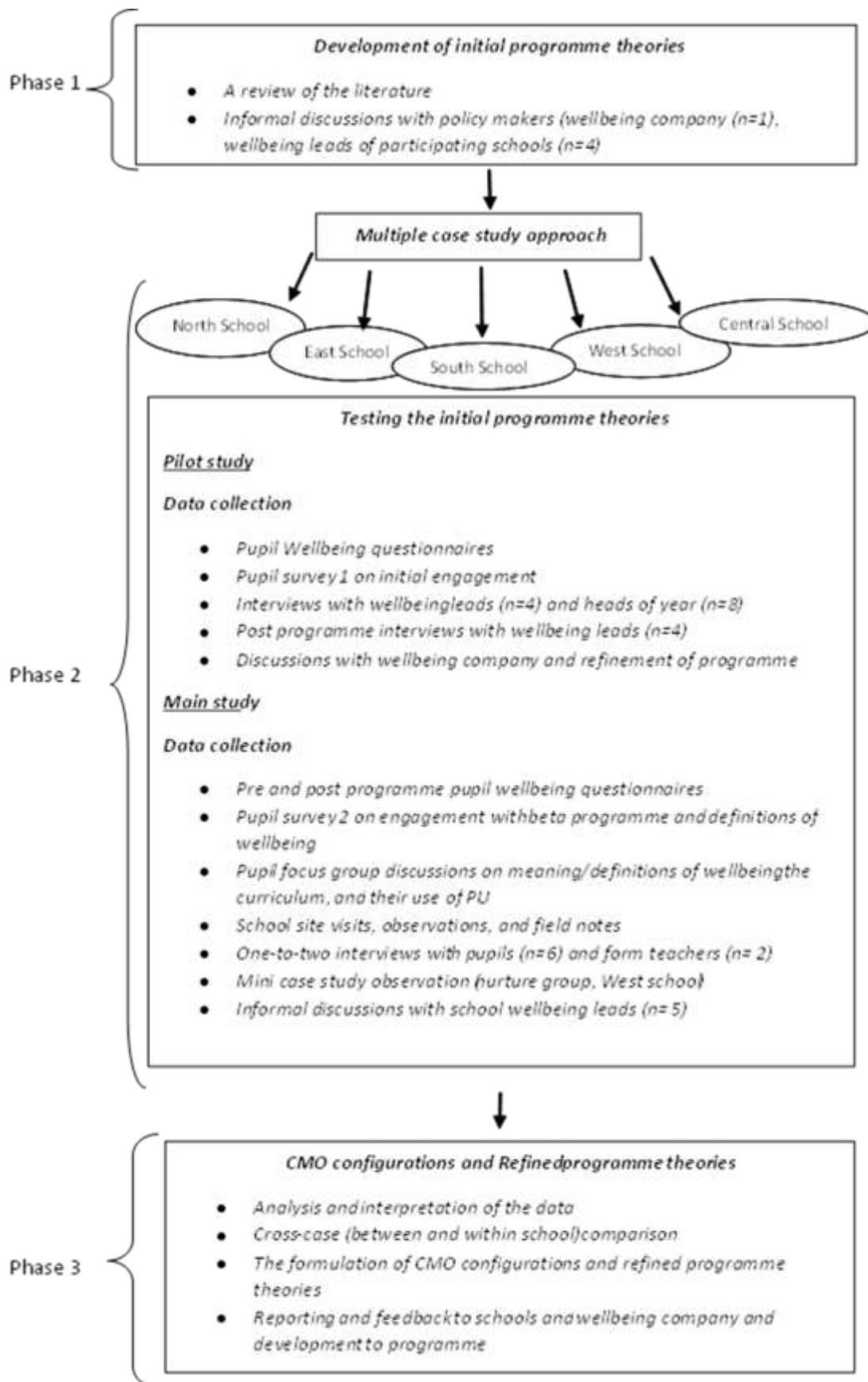


Figure 10 The Three Phases of Realist Evaluation applied and adapted from Gilmore et al. (2019).

4.3.1 Data Analysis

The primary goal of iterative refinement was to explore the CMO configurations that explain PauseUP's operation, contributing to future implementation and evaluation strategies aimed at improving the programme's effectiveness across different school settings (Pawson et al. 2005). This evaluation deviated from the traditional deductive approach of realist evaluation, which typically predefines sub-groups to assess how different contexts influence the activation of mechanisms (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Instead, each school was treated as a distinct sub-group, with variations in outcomes analysed post-hoc to determine the reasons behind implementation success or failure (Curran-Everett and Milgrom 2013). This approach was necessary due to the unpredictable and dynamic conditions presented by the pandemic.

To minimise the risk that observed variations were random rather than meaningful, the principle of 'abduction' was applied during data analysis, allowing the formulation of plausible, testable hypotheses based on the data (Sætre and Van de Ven 2021). These were refined as evidence emerged, aligning with the iterative nature of realist evaluation (Wong et al. 2016). Additionally, 'retroduction' was employed to uncover deeper mechanisms and conditions influencing outcomes (Sæther 1998; Chiasson, 2005; Bhaskar 2014), providing insight into why implementation varied between schools (Mukumbang et al. 2021).

The evaluation focused on identifying evolving, context-specific CMO patterns (Salter and Kothari 2014), comparing them with the programme's theoretical foundations to highlight areas of alignment or divergence. This process refined the programme theory, highlighting variable contextual factors like leadership, pre-existing wellbeing cultures, and staff adaptability in different school contexts (Jagosh 2017; Shearn et al. 2017). While exploratory, this approach adhered to the realist evaluation goal of understanding how, why, and under what conditions the programme worked (or did not work). School contexts, treated as evolving sub-groups, were shaped by the pandemic's real-world conditions. Therefore, by analysing dynamic CMO configurations, the evaluation identified causal pathways and conditions for success or failure, providing data into the mechanisms and contextual factors affecting wellbeing initiatives during significant social disruptions.

4.4 Phase One

Phase One of the evaluation, conducted between March 2020 and September 2020, focused on constructing hypothesised statements and developing the programme for implementation in schools. The initial theories developed were essentially hypotheses about how and why the

programme might yield its intended outcomes (Pawson and Tilley 2004). These were articulated as "if...then" statements (Jagosh 2019). As PauseUP was a new programme, these hypotheses articulated the presumed implementation interactions and how these may introduce the programme to the schools using it. These hypotheses are particularly important in pilot testing and form the basis for constructing the CMO configurations needed for realist evaluation (Fletcher et al. 2016).

General theories of change used for programmes may not always capture the unique mechanisms of a new initiative introduced to a new setting, highlighting the need for context-specific theories (Prestwich et al. 2014; Moore and Evans 2017). Pawson and Tilley (1997) note that the effectiveness of mechanisms within a programme is contingent on context, stressing the importance of new 'events' in systems like schools being responsive to the users they aim to support (Hawe et al. 2009). Theorising about implementation should be tailored with discussions with users rather than being an academic exercise unconnected to the realities of practice (Nilsen 2020). Therefore, the initial phase of evaluation for PauseUP aimed to gain a practical understanding of the programme's operation in secondary schools using a logic model to discuss initial thoughts with representatives from secondary schools.

4.4.1 Logic Model for PauseUP

A logic model provides a structured outline of the key components of a programme, including inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Knowlton and Phillips 2012). It serves as a tool for designing and implementing complex, multi-component programmes by illustrating the connections between the programme's processes (such as delivery and activities) and its intended outcomes (McLaughlin and Jordan 2015). The model offers a visualisation that supports effective health promotion practices (Goodstadt 2005; Renger et al. 2011).

The PauseUP logic model outlines essential inputs, activities, and expected outcomes, drawing on frameworks such as SEL, ER, Mindfulness, Yoga, and Positive Psychology. These theories suggest that improving self-regulation, emotional awareness, and relationship-building enhances wellbeing and life satisfaction (Durlak et al. 2011; Seligman 2011). PauseUP integrates brief, regular practices to promote ER and reduce stress, aiming to strengthen classroom relationships and emotional health (Kabat-Zinn 2003; Felver et al. 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory frames the school as a complex adaptive microsystem, where peer and staff interactions shape wellbeing (Bronfenbrenner and Morris

2006; Eccles and Roeser 2011). Embedding PauseUP's wellbeing practices in this dynamic environment, while adapting to specific contexts, may facilitate its effectiveness (Hawe et al. 2009; Pearson et al. 2015). The theory of change suggests that regular, brief, context-specific activities activate mechanisms like ER and social connectedness, leading to improved wellbeing for student users. PauseUP serves as a case study in understanding how structured interventions may influence wellbeing in schools. The logic model offers an initial exploration of the pathway toward refining the implementation strategy for the programme in complex, real-world environments.

Table 2 Logic Model for PauseUP

Category	Description
Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voluntary involvement of schools, strategic alignment with school wellbeing policy and timetable, and school leadership buy-in. 2. Introductory training, supportive school, and classroom environment, with teacher buy-in. 3. A variety of adaptable, brief, PauseUP wellbeing-focused activities and resources. 4. Training materials, including videos and webinars, to educate staff about the wellbeing themes covered on the programme. 5. Engagement and feedback from teachers and student participants.
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of brief activities into daily school routines, ensuring students regularly engage with the programme as planned. 2. Regular feedback and dialogue with staff to gauge their experiences and refine the programme accordingly. 3. Continued professional development in wellbeing themes connected to PauseUP for those staff members requiring the support.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of students engaging with activities. 2. Self-reports and observations on wellbeing by students and staff. 3. Regular incorporation into the school routine.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of wellbeing strategies to use in support of the new curriculum in Wales. 2. Improved emotional regulation and stress management skills among students. 3. Support for the adopted WSA to promoting wellbeing in Wales.
Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable improvement in the mental health and wellbeing of young people. 2. Long-term development of emotional self-regulation and stress management skills by students. 3. Positive shift in school culture and staff attitudes towards prioritising wellbeing for learning.

The development of the logic model formed the basis of the inquiry into how the programme might interact and yield outcomes. Findings from the literature review highlight the need for active and tailored support within schools for successful programme integration, careful consideration of the context, and a focus on making the programme relevant and engaging (Pearson et al. 2015, Darlington et al. 2018, Gee et al. 2021).

During the initial in-person meeting in 2019, bringing together representatives from schools, discussions considered the anticipated effects, the components of the programme presumed to drive these effects, and the contextual variables within school settings which may assist in this happening. During the meetings, the logic model was a focal point of discussion. The visual representation of the model helped with more structured discussions, to explore initial thoughts, the envisioned pathways of change required within the school for introducing the programme, and the potential challenges or opportunities PauseUP may encounter. The programme theories developed by Pearson et al. (2015) also provided useful discussion points in understanding the factors which may affect implementation into schools and can be found in Appendix D. This led to the following hypothesised statements for the inputs required for introducing the programme into the complex school microsystem.

4.4.2 Hypothesised if...then statements.

Hypothesised Statement One: Pre-delivery discussions.

It was hypothesised that effective adoption of PauseUP requires schools' readiness to integrate the programme, supported by pre-delivery consultations with school representative staff who had already established specific roles for health and wellbeing within their school contexts.

“If there are pre-delivery discussion with a school staff member who has a role in health and wellbeing within their school then the introduction of the programme is more likely to be successful.”

As an alternative to this, if there are not adequate discussions with schools, or they fail to address the content and delivery methods required for PauseUP, then there may be resistance or a lack of engagement, potentially leading to unsuccessful programme introduction.

Hypothesised Statement Two: Active engagement and school leadership support.

If these pre-delivery discussions have taken place successfully and the school is willing to use PauseUP then active school engagement from leadership will be needed for introducing the programme within their school context. This also includes providing the school and staff with the training and skills needed for delivering the programme effectively.

“If PauseUP secures active support from senior school figures who translate their wellbeing policies into actionable plans using PauseUP as a mechanism to support them, then the programme is more likely to be integrated into the school’s routine.”

As an alternative to this, if PauseUP lacks active and clear support from senior school figures, then the programme may face resistance. This resistance could be further compounded in a complex secondary school setting if the programme is not sufficiently adaptable to the timetable, leading to limited or inconsistent integration and engagement. Without a dedicated coordinator to drive the programme and encourage consistent delivery, it may not be used efficiently, and its potential influence not fully realised. Challenges could arise in conflicting engagement, potentially impacting the programme’s uptake.

Hypothesised Statement Three: Coordinated within existing school timetables and engagement of users.

If the programme receives active support from leadership and/or the staff member with responsibility for wellbeing in its initial stages and adequate information is provided to staff, then, the brief interventions included on the programme are expected to positively influence student mental health and wellbeing. It will require active teacher and student participation in the programme to facilitate these changes. However, if these activities fail to resonate with staff or students or cultural/personal barriers inhibit engagement, the programme’s effectiveness could be compromised. There may also be issues with group classroom dynamics as the activities are to be presented to students in a classroom setting with varying needs and possible peer pressure effects on engagement.

“If PauseUP is coordinated and implemented with existing school activities and timetables, receiving support from teaching staff in using it through shared school strategies, then it will become a routine practice, influencing its effective implementation and likely impact on student wellbeing.”

On the other hand, if PauseUP operates in isolation, without alignment with school activities and timetables or without active endorsement, then it may struggle with implementation.

Hypothesised Statement Four: Fidelity and Adaptation

A nurturing school environment with an existing wellbeing ethos and regular integration of the activities from PauseUP into school routines will be important factors for implementation success and sustainability. An unsupportive atmosphere or inconsistent activity integration may lead to reduced engagement and sporadic teacher and student participation.

“If PauseUP is implemented with fidelity to its components and planned duration, and there is an opportunity for teachers to openly discuss the programme with the support of senior staff and programme developers, then it is likely to be delivered consistently, towards achieving its intended outcomes of improving wellbeing while allowing for informed adaptations based on feedback.”

Conversely, if PauseUP is implemented without adherence to its activities and strategy or without a supportive, collaborative environment, then the delivery may become inconsistent without achieving its intended outcomes, and potentially diminishing engagement and relevance to supporting wellbeing. Continuous dialogue with staff or wellbeing representatives and a whole school or year group approach may be needed for effective implementation, supporting the evaluation process, and embedding a wellbeing strategy to support the use of the programme within the school. External factors, limited communication or cultural/systemic school barriers could hinder programme adaptability and implementation, impacting the evaluation and outcomes of the programme.

The four initial hypotheses for implementing PauseUP were designed to be refined as more data were collected during Phase Two and the pilot study, ensuring they remained responsive to the needs and contexts of each school, in line with realist evaluation principles (Wong et al. 2016). These hypotheses reflected early ideas on how the programme might function and considered factors that influence the success of health promotion programmes in schools, as discussed in the literature review.

Stakeholders' feedback during the initial in-person meeting, which was based on the logic model for PauseUP and programme theories from Pearson et al. (2015), helped shape these hypotheses. This meeting took place in late 2019, before the pandemic, when the programme was still in its early stages and only some activities were discussed. As the pandemic disrupted schools and communication moved online, further revisions were made to adjust to the new context. These hypotheses were refined after schools volunteered for the pilot study and ethics

approval was granted, as detailed in Chapter 4. This revision process allowed for adaptation to the evolving conditions faced by schools.

4.5 Phase Two

In Phase Two, the evaluation transitioned to a 'Feasibility and Piloting stage' (Craig et al. 2008; Lancaster 2015). This phase tested the practicality and acceptability of PauseUP in school settings. Pilot studies are essential to identify and refine programme components, including design and evaluation methods (Fletcher et al. 2016). This stage aimed to adapt PauseUP realistically to the contexts of secondary schools. A formative case study approach was employed to understand how different settings might influence the programme. This method aligns with Aventin et al. (2015), who discuss the importance of engaging with the target population and school gatekeepers to address school complexities.

Phase Two, spanning from October 2020 to July 2022, included two studies. The pilot study assessed initial engagement with PauseUP and observed its introduction and implementation within schools. Data collection methods and programme refinements were also tested. The main study introduced the amended programme to focus on testing initial programme theories and an understanding of participants' perceptions of wellbeing. Data were generated using quantitative methods (student surveys and wellbeing questionnaires) and qualitative methods (site visits, observations, interviews, focus groups, and field notes), adhering to the mixed-methods principle of realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Pawson 2006).

4.5.1 Settings and Participants

Purposive and convenience sampling methods, as outlined by Etikan et al. (2016), were employed. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research question (Palinkas et al. 2015). Convenience sampling, chosen for efficiency and ease, involves selecting participants based on their availability and willingness to participate (Sedgwick 2013). This approach facilitated swift data collection from accessible sources within schools, including students and staff. However, this method might not yield a fully representative sample due to its reliance on readily available participants (Etikan 2016). Despite this, both sampling methods are beneficial in exploratory research or when examining subgroups (Hallingberg et al. 2018).

Purposive sampling selected schools that could provide relevant feedback on implementing PauseUP, particularly those with staff members already engaged with the wellbeing company. Convenience sampling was pragmatic, involving schools willing and able to participate, geographically accessible, and available during the research period.

School Involvement

Participating schools were in Wales' Convergence areas, regions designated for receiving European Union (EU) funding to stimulate economic development and reduce disparities in wealth and opportunity (Gov.Wales 2006). These areas include West Wales and the Valleys, historically less economically developed compared to East Wales. Based on information from the wellbeing company, four schools initially showed enthusiasm for piloting the programme. Representatives from three of these schools attended initial stakeholder meetings in phase one. A fourth school joined after further discussions with the company. Between the pilot and main studies, data presentations were organised for local authorities (LAs) associated with participating schools. These presentations served as progress reports and feedback sessions. During these presentations, another school expressed interest in participating, increasing the total number of participating schools to five.

Each school represented a unique combination of socio-economic, cultural, and environmental contexts, broadening the study's scope and complexity. Understanding each school's context was required to comprehend the potential influence of introducing PauseUP. Pawson and Tilley (1997) note that a programme's success depends on conducive contextual conditions,

“a particular programme will only work if the contextual conditions into which it is inserted are conducive to its operation...programmes are suggestions and suggestions go down much better in some localities than others” (Pawson and Tilley 1997, p 52).

Social settings like schools are inherently dynamic and complex, with specific factors directly influencing decision-making and potentially impacting the implementation and operation of a new programme (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Continuous dialogue with Wellbeing Representatives (WRs) throughout the evaluation and with school staff during site visits, as well as observations of both the seen (e.g., classroom interactions, programme activities) and the unseen (e.g., reported underlying attitudes, school norms), aimed to capture the deeper social structures that may have influenced the programme's outcomes.

In this context, a "moral system", as described by Pawson (2006) refers to the shared values, ethical principles, and norms that guide behaviour and decision-making within each school community. Although this study did not deeply explore each school's moral system, some

elements were inferred from data sources such as discussions during site visits, email correspondences, and recent Estyn reports. For example, the roles of designated wellbeing representatives, such as Health & Wellbeing Coordinators or Deputy Heads, and their approaches to wellbeing initiatives provided insight into how each school may have prioritised and integrated new wellbeing practices.

Table 3 summarises key characteristics of the participating schools, such as language requirements, student demographics, and existing wellbeing reports. These factors highlight some aspects of each school's 'moral system,' like their commitment to the Welsh language or their focus on student wellbeing, evidenced by dedicated wellbeing staff. Schools with higher wellbeing ratings likely demonstrated a stronger commitment to student wellbeing, which may have eased the implementation of the programme. Other factors, such as socio-economic status (measured by the percentage of students receiving FSM), existing wellbeing initiatives, and support from LAs, offer indirect insights into each school's system. For instance, schools already familiar with wellbeing initiatives in feeder schools or primary departments may have been more inclined toward promoting consistency in student wellbeing.

While this study didn't fully explore each school's moral and ethical frameworks, future research could benefit from examining how these dimensions influence responses to wellbeing programmes, in line with Patton's (2002) focus on qualitative inquiry. Despite pandemic-related constraints, the study attempted to capture contextual factors shaping the success of the new wellbeing initiative. Information in Table 3 was gathered from email exchanges, MS Teams discussions, and Estyn reports (UK Government 2015).

Table 3 Contextual information for each participating school.

Metrics/Attributes	North School	East School	South School	West School	Central School
Age range	3-18	3-16	11-18	3-19	11-18
Language	Welsh	Welsh	Bilingual	Bilingual	Bilingual
Approx. Number of Students	950	839 [^]	500	700	600
Free School Meals (FSM) %	Below avg.	Below avg.	Average	Average	Average
Estyn assessment	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good
Wellbeing rating	Excellent	Excellent	Needs improvement	Good	Excellent
Partner company products in feeder schools or primary department of school	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
School wellbeing representative	Health & wellbeing coordinator ^{^*}	Deputy head (KS3) ^{^**}	Assistant head ^{^***}	Assistant head ^{^****}	Health & wellbeing coordinator
Local Authority	Authority A	Authority A	Authority B	Authority C	Authority C

[^] Secondary student count increases annually with a new year group addition.

^{^*} Role underwent personnel changes between pilot and Main studies.

^{^**} Deputy head handles pastoral care, wellbeing, and progress for all KS3/progression step 4 students.

^{^***} Assistant head manages pastoral care, child protection, and pupil wellbeing.

^{^****} Assistant head oversees wellbeing.

Welsh and bilingual schools required both Saib a Sylwi (Welsh) and PauseUP (English) versions to meet linguistic needs, which may have created implementation challenges, especially in larger institutions. East School with its growing student cohort provided a unique context. Schools with higher percentages of FSM students likely needed more tailored approaches, while those with established wellbeing frameworks, such as North, East, and Central, may have integrated PauseUP with less resistance. Familiarity with wellbeing strategies in feeder schools or primary departments could have facilitated acceptance in schools like North, East, West, and Central with effectiveness of wellbeing representatives and the impact of personnel changes also being possible influential factors on implementation.

This multi-case study approach, using multiple data sources and varying school characteristics, provided a deeper understanding of the interaction dynamics between CMO's (Pawson and Manzano-Santaella 2012). Multi-case studies are often employed in realist evaluation to assess complex programmes (Yin 2009). Some of the contextual factors outlined above were explored further in the main study findings to understand their influence on the mechanisms and outcomes of implementing PauseUP.

Despite differences in school settings, the participating schools shared some common characteristics, primarily their voluntary decision to pilot PauseUP. This demonstrated a commitment to exploring new student wellbeing strategies. As schools in Wales, they were also influenced by the Curriculum for Wales guidance (Hwb 2022), aiming to cultivate healthy, capable, and resilient learners, shaping their curriculums' structure and objectives.

All schools were also affected by the pandemic and consequent school closures. The pandemic's impact, overlapping with the research period, added complexity to the evaluation. This highlighted the need for adaptive, real-world evaluations that consider such unforeseen challenges, as noted by Pawson and Tilley (1997),

“Local programmes are chronically vulnerable to the intrusion of or invasion by more immediate external contextual conditions overwhelming the programme and the conditions for its success” (Pawson and Tilley 1997 p.150)

An important factor in this evaluation was each school's autonomy in deciding to implement PauseUP. Schools independently chose to adopt the programme and motivated staff and students to participate, reflecting the programme's perceived value and relevance within each school's context.

Staff Involvement

Staff at participating schools were key stakeholders in the study. Their engagement, observations, and feedback provided insights into the programme’s effectiveness. The recruitment strategy was based on the first hypothesised statement:

“If there are pre-delivery discussions with a school staff member who has a role in health and wellbeing within their school, then the introduction of the programme is more likely to be successful.”

Discussions were held with staff members identified as wellbeing leads or representatives at their schools. These individuals had already shown interest and involvement in wellbeing initiatives and had participated in previous meetings related to the programme. They were key stakeholders providing feedback throughout the evaluation process. Each of the five schools had one representative who supported the introduction of the programme. Table 3 above details the roles these stakeholders held.

The identified Wellbeing Representatives (WR) facilitated the engagement of Heads of Year (HoY) in the specific year groups chosen to pilot the programme, except for Central School, which joined the evaluation later during the main study. This approach recognised the second hypothesised statement emphasising the importance of securing active support from senior school figures to integrate PauseUP into the school routine. Some HoYs had shared responsibilities, overseeing more than one participating year group.

Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the participating schools and year groups involved in piloting PauseUP across the two studies.

Table 4 Participating schools, year group and age range of pupils participating in the pilot study.

School	<i>North School</i>	<i>East School</i>	<i>South School</i>	<i>West School</i>
Year groups and age range	<i>Half the year 7 cohort 11-12 years</i>	<i>7, 8 and 9 11-14 years</i>	<i>8 and 10 12-13, 14-15 years</i>	<i>8, 9, 10, N* 11-15 years</i>

**a nurture group made up of a mixture of year 7, 8 and 9 pupils, aged 11-14.*

Each school contributed key staff members during the pilot study. Specifically, North School provided one Head of Year (HoY) (n=1). East School contributed separate HoYs for years 8 and 9 (n=2), with the HoY 7, who also served as the Deputy Head and Wellbeing Coordinator, acting as the school representative. South School contributed HoYs for years 8 and 10 (n=2). West School had a combined role encompassing the HoYs for years 8, 9, and a separate HoY 10 (n=2). In total, seven HoY groups participated in the pilot study, alongside the WR from each setting.

In the context of West School, the term "Nurture group" described a cohort of students with neurodiverse characteristics requiring a tailored schooling approach, separate from the mainstream environment. This term anonymised and provided an inclusive identity for these students within the study, while internally, the group was known by another name. This safeguarded the privacy and dignity of the students involved and highlighted the nurturing ethos underpinning their educational provision. A dedicated Nurture group teacher from West School, particularly during the main study, was supportive in providing data to understand alternative approaches for using PauseUP. This teacher's role, differing from traditional instructional duties, provided support tailored to the neurodiverse needs of the group. The main study chapter will detail the teacher's involvement.

This diverse group of staff offered perspectives on the implementation and influence of the programme across different year groups and school settings. Additionally, efforts were made to engage with LA representatives responsible for wellbeing. Given their strategic roles, they were chosen to provide their views on the influence of PauseUP. They were contacted via email, with one (LA for Authority C) out of three responding. Following the initial response, individual meetings were scheduled to discuss the programme and evaluation process in greater depth. The LA representative (n=1) expressed verbal agreement to participate in future interviews and meetings as the research progressed.

Table 5 Participating schools, year group and age range of pupils participating in the main study.

School	<i>North School</i>	<i>East School</i>	<i>Central School</i>	<i>West School</i>
Year groups and age range	7 11-12 years	7, 8 and 9 11-14 years	7, 8 and 9 11-14 years	7, 8 and 9, N* 11-14 years

**a Nurture group made up of a mixture of year 7, 8 and 9 pupils, aged 11-14.*

Additional staff members within the schools, like class and form teachers also volunteered to provide feedback on the programme and their involvement in the evaluation will be described further within the main study chapter of the thesis.

Student Involvement

Student involvement was a critical component of the evaluation. After WRs selected specific year groups and HoYs were identified, a strategy to engage students was initiated. Including students in educational programme evaluations aligns with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) emphasis on equal access and opportunity in education (OECD 2019). This evaluation upheld these principles, reflecting the Welsh

Government's current focus on equity and inclusion in education (Gov.Wales 2017; Children's commissioner for Wales 2021).

All students using PauseUP in their schools were invited to participate. The process for obtaining student consent, designed in discussions with the identified school staff representative, adhered to ethical standards and are detailed in section 4.5.2. During the main study, focused student groups provided feedback and participated in interviews, offering feedback on the programme's influence on their wellbeing. This aspect of the evaluation, including methods and outcomes of student engagement, will be elaborated upon in the related chapter.

Personal Involvement

My dual roles in both the development and evaluation of PauseUP added another layer of complexity to the evaluation. During the initial ideation phase, I participated in collaborative sessions with schools, shaping the programme's framework and aims. This effort was based on academic theory and evidence-based practices in wellbeing promotion, partnering with schools and a company to anchor PauseUP in theoretical foundations while adapting to the dynamic landscape of secondary schools.

As the project advanced into the development phase, my role involved connecting conceptual underpinnings with practical application, translating psychological and pedagogical principles into digital content for secondary school settings. Ensuring the content's relevance and appropriateness, mirroring the bilingualism and cultural diversity of Welsh society, was necessary. Collaboration with the wellbeing company partner was pivotal, bridging theoretical and practical challenges to introduce the programme.

In the evaluative phase, under the guidance of Cardiff University's School of Social Science, I conducted a realist evaluation to assess PauseUP's influence on student wellbeing in various school environments. This involved synthesising data sources to evaluate the programme's influence, areas for improvement, and adaptability across different contexts. The evaluative process was reflective, identifying and learning from challenges.

Evaluating a programme I helped develop required conscientious reflexivity, acknowledging potential biases, and committing to critical scrutiny. This associates with research practices emphasising reflexivity (Finlay 2002; Etherington 2004). Engaging reflexively ensured a balanced analysis, recognising PauseUP's strengths and limitations as well as the possibility of both positive and negative outcomes on wellbeing. This reflective stance ensured that the findings contribute meaningfully to future research and practical applications in promoting student wellbeing.

4.5.2 Ethical Considerations and The Consent Process

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) provides ethical guidelines for evaluation, focusing on respecting participants' rights, privacy, dignity, and maintaining research integrity and transparency. This includes clear explanations about research goals, methods, risks, and benefits to ensure voluntary participation based on full understanding (Gallagher et al. 2010). BERA's guidelines emphasise safeguarding participants' privacy, especially when collecting sensitive data (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). Researchers must ensure that the research does not harm participants' physical or mental wellbeing (Race and Vidal-Hall 2019).

Prior to the research, ethical challenges were anticipated, and ethical approval was obtained from the Cardiff School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee (approval number SREC/3812, granted on 02/07/20). The pandemic necessitated remote data collection during the early stages (pilot study) to ensure safety. As restrictions eased, on-site visits became possible during the main study. The research scope expanded from a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme, necessitating a revised ethics application, approved on 20/07/2021 (SREC/3812). Please see Appendix E for a copy of the approval letter.

Given the involvement of young participants, obtaining informed consent was required. Consent obtained was strictly for research data collection, not participation in the PauseUP programme within schools, respecting participants' rights, and autonomy. Participant confidentiality was maintained by anonymising data and avoiding the use of identifiable information. Data were stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (2018) (UK Government 2018) and Cardiff University Research Code of Practice, ensuring ethical treatment of participant data.

To secure informed consent from staff, parents, and students, emails containing study information and consent forms were sent to the WRs at each school. WRs then facilitated the consent process for HoY's and other staff members, who returned consent forms via email.

Information sheets, leaflets (in Welsh and English), and an informative video introducing PauseUP were sent to parents and guardians via the school administration. Parental consent forms and participant assent forms were distributed, ensuring clear understanding of the study. The response was largely positive, with many signed consent and assent forms returned, especially during the pilot study.

A breakdown of the number of students from each school and year group who provided consent during both studies is presented in Table 6. All consent, assent, and related information, can be found in Appendix E.

Table 6 Participating schools and year group parental consent and pupil assent between pilot and main study.

Pilot study			Main study		
School	Year Group (participants)	Total	School	Year Group (participants)	Total
North	7 (60)	60	North	7 (107)	107
East	7 (56), 8 (57), 9 (47)	160	East	7 (61), 8 (38), 9 (53)	152
South	8 (44), 10 (50)	94	South	0	0
West	8 (91), 9 (76), 10 (80), N*(14)	261	West	7 (43), 8 (13), N*(14)	70
Central	N/A		Central	7 (33), 8(8), 9 (6)	47
Total		575	Total		376

*A nurture group made up of pupils in year 7, 8 and 9.

The main study was marked by a decrease in the number of student participants providing consent. One school, North, decided to incorporate the entirety of its Year 7 group in the main study, contrasting the general downward trend in consent numbers seen by other schools.

4.5.3 Generating Data

A mixed-methods strategy was employed for data generation. This approach is consistent with Pawson and Tilley's (1997) recommendation to integrate multiple data sources in realist evaluations. Quantitative data were generated through surveys and wellbeing self-assessment measures aimed at tracking changes in student wellbeing across the studies. These data were further supplemented with student engagement surveys. Qualitative data were generated from a variety of sources: interviews, discussions, and focus groups involving students, teachers, and other school staff members; responses to open-ended survey questions; and direct observations made during on-site visits conducted as part of the main study of the programme. All information and documentation were provided to participating schools in both English and Welsh. Responses submitted in Welsh were translated by a translator affiliated with the partner company, as part of this project. Observations on the implementation of the programme across different schools provided additional context-specific data.

Qualitative Data Generation

Triangulation, a method used to cross-validate data, enhances the robustness of research findings (Flick 2004). Generating qualitative data from a range of stakeholders within the school environment enabled comparisons between different experiences and perceptions. This comparison was instrumental in identifying common themes and variances in experiences, offering insights into how different groups interacted with and were influenced by PauseUP. Feedback from pupils, who were the primary users of the programme, was particularly necessary. Their thoughts regarding the programme's effectiveness, level of engagement, and areas for improvement were needed to ensure the programme met their needs and interests. Student perspectives were obtained through a combination of surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

The WR from each school, typically responsible for managing and supervising wellbeing initiatives, offered institutional feedback about the programme. This feedback focused on the programme's perceived influence on the school and student wellbeing. Their views were primarily gathered through interviews, discussions, informal conversations during site visits, email correspondence, and MS Teams meetings throughout the evaluation process. HoY groups and form teachers, given their close interactions with students and staff within the chosen year groups using PauseUP, also provided feedback about the programme and the logistics of using it as part of the school timetable. They offered impressions of how the programme integrated with daily school routines. Informal interviews, discussions, and observational notes were the primary tools used to gather this feedback. The diverse roles of some staff, ranging from heads of various subject departments to coordinators of language or nurture programmes, added varied perspectives to the data.

Several staff members held dual roles within the schools; for instance, the head of Physical Education (PE) at East School also served as the HoY 8, and the Welsh language coordinator at South School was also the HoY 8 and 9. Many of the WRs of the participating schools were also members of the school leadership team. The dual roles and shared responsibilities of these stakeholders added unique viewpoints.

Student Surveys

Two student surveys played a role in capturing an understanding of student engagement with the programme across the two studies. The methodological approach to these surveys was informed by the literature on survey design and administration in research (Fowler Jr 2013; Dillman et al. 2014). The first survey, disseminated during the pilot study, targeted students'

preliminary interactions with PauseUP. This survey, distributed via email to the participating schools, aligned with the 4- or 5-week mark of the programme's use to capture initial impressions and engagement levels. Designed with three questions and taking approximately 15 minutes to complete, this survey was printed and administered by the schools during morning registration groups to maximise convenience and response rates (n=358). The qualitative component of this survey aimed at understanding students' preferred aspects of PauseUP and their initial reactions to the programme, given the importance of participant perspectives (Creswell and Creswell 2017).

The second survey, conducted during the main study, explored students' ongoing engagement with PauseUP, their application of the programme's activities outside the school setting, and their definitions of wellbeing. This survey, also administered via email, printed, and completed during registration time (n=321), included both qualitative and quantitative questions designed to provide a view of the programme's impact on students' daily lives in school and their understanding of wellbeing. The inclusion of questions related to the application of PauseUP activities outside of school was informed by the literature on the importance of out-of-school learning experiences in reinforcing in-school initiatives (Gootman and Eccles 2002).

The design of these surveys reflects a consideration of the strengths and limitations inherent in survey research. The strength is their ability to reach many participants efficiently, providing an overview of student engagement and perceptions. However, the reliance on self-reported data, a common limitation in survey research, may introduce biases and inaccuracies in the responses (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Additionally, the distribution and completion process, while designed for convenience, might have been influenced by the context in which students completed the surveys, potentially affecting their responses in some settings.

The decision to use both qualitative and quantitative questions within the surveys aligns with mixed-methods research, offering a richer data set that combines statistical breadth with depth of narrative insight (Plano Clark 2017). This facilitated the initial understanding of student experiences with PauseUP. Copies of all the surveys used can be found in Appendix F.

Interviews

Interviews facilitated a more in-depth exploration of the programme's integration within different school settings. This method, conducted with the WR from each participating school (n=5), HoY groups (n=7), and a Nurture group teacher (n=1) through MS Teams, leveraged a semi-structured format that balanced structured inquiry with the flexibility to probe deeper into participants' experiences and perspectives (Kallio et al. 2016). This was particularly effective

in eliciting feedback that supported the practical implementation and ongoing development of PauseUP.

Initial interviews aimed to establish an understanding of the participants' roles, the prevailing wellbeing environment in their schools, student needs, and expectations for the programme's outcomes. This stage was required for gathering further contextual information necessary for implementation in classroom environments, using feedback to refine the programme's initial hypotheses (Maxwell 2012). Subsequent discussions with WRs focused on analysing preliminary student wellbeing data.

Following Pawson and Tilley's (1997) framework, the second wave of interviews used a realist approach to refine and test programme theories by exploring the mechanisms behind why and how the intervention was being used in specific school contexts (Mukumbang et al. 2020). Unlike non-realist interviews that focus on participants' perspectives without necessarily having a theoretical lens, these realist interviews presented "if...then" theoretical scenarios to engage participants in refining the programme's assumptions based on their specific school environments. This "Teacher-Learner" exchange (Pawson 1996; Manzano 2016) encouraged critical reflection and co-construction of programme theory, supporting the evaluation's validity (Mukumbang et al. 2020). The 30–40-minute MS Teams interviews were scheduled flexibly and supported by preparatory webinars and materials to maximise knowledge exchange, demonstrating the adaptability and value of digital platforms during disruptive times (Irani 2019).

Additionally, informal semi-structured interviews conducted on-site during the main study with students (n=6) and staff members (n=12) offered a complementary layer of qualitative data. Selected for their direct engagement with PauseUP, these participants provided feedback on the programme's relevance and impact, contributing to the iterative refinement of the programme's theories and practices (Clarke and Braun 2013). All interview schedules can be found in Appendix G.

The methodological design of these interviews, using recommendations from the qualitative research literature (Kallio et al. 2016), reflects a strategic blend of structure and flexibility, facilitating the understanding of PauseUP's implementation. However, this approach carries inherent limitations, such as potential biases in participant responses and the challenges of ensuring complete transcription accuracy. These considerations, integral to maintaining methodological rigor and reflexivity (Maxwell 2012), highlight the ongoing need for critical engagement with the strengths and challenges of qualitative interview methods.

Focus Groups

Within the framework of realist evaluation, focus groups are used to capitalise on the collective reasoning or 'group intelligence' of participants, a method essential for elucidating the causal mechanisms underpinning programme outcomes (Manzano 2022). This approach emphasises causality analysis through retroductive reasoning to explore the factors leading to observed outcomes (Westhorp 2018).

In the preliminary stages (phase one) of this evaluation, a focus group comprising WRs from some of the pilot study schools (West, South, and East), members of the partner company, and regional education consortium representatives, played a role. Their collaborative discussion was useful in transitioning the PausePoints resource into the more contextually adapted PauseUP for secondary school integration. This focus group dialogue contributed to shaping the initial hypotheses and "if...then" scenarios needed for the programme's design and anticipated outcomes.

During the main study, the strategy included the formation of student focus groups from the participating schools (n=4), embracing a diverse cohort reflective of the varying school years and backgrounds—ranging from the Nurture group at West school (n=14) to Year 7 pupils at North school (n=16), Central school progression Step 4 pupils (n=18), and year 8 and 9 group of pupils from East school (n=10), detailed in the main study chapter. These focus groups were structured to encourage discussion, facilitating a platform for students to express their perceptions of wellbeing, experiences with the programme, and suggestions for its improvement. This participatory approach underscores the imperative of engaging programme users in the evaluation process to align the programme more closely with user needs and contexts (Pawson 2006).

Subsequent sessions employed interactive techniques, including visual aids and programme-specific video activities. This methodology was grounded in the pedagogical utility of visual stimuli to foster engagement and reflective dialogue (Hennink 2013). The discussions leveraged programme components to trigger discussion on wellbeing themes and the practicality of integrating such activities into the school routine. The choice of using visual and participatory strategies for data collection is supported with research advocating for the integration of user feedback in programme evaluation (Ryan et al. 2014). Utilising visual aids in focus group discussions has been reported as particularly effective in facilitating expression among adolescents and in school settings, helping to navigate potential communicative barriers and eliciting richer feedback into their experiences and perceptions (Mannay 2015;

Mannay et al. 2017b; Borraccino et al. 2019). Further details and examples of how these were used in the main study can be found in Appendix H.

Nonetheless, while focus groups offer useful feedback through a collective viewpoint, they also present methodological limitations, including potential dominance by vocal participants and the influence of group dynamics on individual responses (Morgan 1996). The researcher's role in managing these dynamics and ensuring equitable participation is required for the integrity of the data collected. Moreover, the interpretive nature of analysing focus group data requires a reflexive approach to discern the layers of discussion, a task demanding a critical lens towards the evaluative process (Krueger and Casey 2015).

Site Visits and Observations

Site visits were integral to the qualitative research phase of the main study, offering a view into the programme's implementation across participating school environments. While other methods provided valuable empirical data on student wellbeing and engagement with PauseUP, the critical realist approach required observations of the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors which may have been shaping the operational dynamics (Pawson and Tilley 1997). During site visits, direct interactions with staff and observations of PauseUP in action offered field notes. These notes captured programme integration into school routines and offered a view on the subtler influences of its reception among students along with its feasibility as articulated by teachers. The selection of classes for observation was made by the schools themselves.

Field notes functioned dually as descriptive accounts of observed phenomena and as interpretive frameworks through which inferences, and preliminary analyses were formulated (Emerson et al. 2011). These notes were created for a narrative around PauseUP's operational efficacy, and the challenges encountered. The duality of field notes as both record-keeping and analytical tools underpins their value in qualitative research, providing an opportunity for integrating observational data into evaluative and theoretical constructs (Becker et al. 2012). More details and examples of these field notes can be found in Appendix I.

However, the observer's presence in site visits and subsequent field notes might influence the natural flow of classroom interactions, a phenomenon known as the "observer effect" (Monahan and Fisher 2010). Additionally, the interpretation of field notes requires a careful balance between subjectivity and analytical objectivity, with the potential for researcher bias influencing the construction of narrative and analysis (Musante and DeWalt 2010).

Quantitative Data

The evaluation employed validated scales to assess pupil wellbeing. These tools included the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) developed by Liddle and Carter (2015) which is designed to measure wellbeing in children and young people; the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) (Tennant et al. 2007), well known for its validated effectiveness in assessing mental wellbeing in the general population; and its abbreviated form, the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) (Stewart-Brown et al. 2009; Ng Fat et al. 2017), used during the main study for its brevity and validated effectiveness. Additionally, the Cantril Self-anchoring Striving Scale (Kilpatrick and Cantril 1960) was employed to offer a quick measure of personal life satisfaction among the students taking part. The choice of these scales was underpinned by their established reliability and validity in measuring aspects of wellbeing and happiness.

Certain elements of the student surveys were also designed to yield some quantifiable data. Within the first survey, one question prompted students to identify their preferred component of PauseUP—Physical, Emotional, or Spiritual—thereby allowing an analysis of programme elements most favoured by the participants. The second survey included binary (yes/no) questions aimed at exploring students' engagement with PauseUP activities outside of school and the programme's feasibility for integration into the regular school day. These direct questions facilitated an assessment of PauseUP's practical application and resonance with student experiences outside the classroom setting.

The selection and application of these scales necessitate a consideration of their cultural and contextual appropriateness, as well as the potential for response bias in self-reported measures (Clarke et al. 2011). Binary choices in survey questions, though useful for simplicity and clarity, may not capture the complexity of students' experiences and perspectives regarding the programme's components and its application in their daily routines (Bowling 2014).

Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS)

The SCWBS, developed by Liddle and Carter (2015), has proven to be a tool in understanding emotional and psychological wellbeing among children aged 8-15 years. This scale consists of 12 items, each phrased in a positive manner to focus on positive wellbeing, rather than ill-being (Keyes 2002). The scale asks how respondents have been feeling and acting over the last couple of weeks and response statements are based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (never), 2 (not much of the time), 3 (some of the time), 4 (quite a lot of the time), and 5 (all of the time).

The scale's design acknowledges that wellbeing is more than the absence of mental health issues, aligning with the flourishing perspective of wellbeing that encourages a focus on positive psychology, growth, and development (Keyes 2007).

One of the key features of the SCWBS is its ability to provide specific sub-components of wellbeing such as a positive outlook, positive emotional state, and social desirability. The positive outlook and emotional state sub-components explore psychological and mental states, capturing positivity and the presence of positive emotions. The social desirability sub-component, on the other hand, serves as a control measure that highlights potential bias in responses. It helps to identify if there is a tendency among participants to provide socially desirable answers, which might skew the true reflection of their state. The SCWBS was used with permission obtained from the Stirling education psychology group and translated into Welsh to cater to the local language needs. This evaluation assessed changes in self-reported scores over the course of the two studies on the emotional state and positive outlook of students' wellbeing.

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and Shorter (SWEMWBS)

The WEMWBS scale consists of 14 items and respondents are required to tick the box that best describes their experience of each statement over the past two weeks using a 5-point Likert scale (none of the time, rarely, some of the time, often, all of the time). The Likert scale represents a score for each item from 1 to 5 respectively. The WEMWBS is scored by summing the scores for each of the 14 items and scores range from 14 to 70 with higher scores indicating greater positive mental wellbeing. The WEMWBS has been validated for a population of 13-16 years olds (Clarke et al. 2011), university students and the general population (Tennant et al. 2007).

During the main study the SWEMWBS was used, which is a condensed seven item version of the original 14 item measure containing statements about thoughts and feelings, which relate to functioning and offer a slightly different view of mental wellbeing while minimising the time and effort required from respondents (Stewart-Brown et al. 2009). The SWEMWBS is scored by first summing the scores for each of the seven items, which are scored from 1 to 5. As the SWEMWBS is Rasch compatible with the WEMWBS it means the seven items have superior scaling properties to the 14 items, and to compare results with other studies using the 7-item scale, the total raw scores need to be transformed into metric scores using the SWEMWBS conversion table. Scores range from 7 to 35 and higher scores indicate higher positive mental wellbeing. The SWEMWBS has been validated for populations of young people aged 15 -21 (McKay and Andretta 2017; Ringdal et al. 2018) and the general population (Ng Fat et al.

2017). It has also been used specifically as a measure of mental wellbeing in adolescents (Clarke et al. 2011; McKay and Andretta 2017; Ringdal et al. 2018). This makes it a particularly valuable tool for use in this evaluation.

Both the WEMWBS and SWEMWBS are freely available and designed as self-report measures. To use the WEMWBS and SWEMWBS for non-commercial purposes in this study, a Licence was secured from Warwick Medical School through the completion of a registration form. Recognising the linguistic factor of the study's context in Wales, schools were provided with both English and Welsh translations of these scales. Both the WEMWBS and its shorter version, SWEMWBS, are established tools frequently employed in national research examining student wellbeing in Wales (Melendez-Torres et al. 2019; Page et al. 2023). This application establishes their suitability and relevance to the context of this evaluation.

The Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale

This scale was included as it is used to appraise life satisfaction among students. The scale offers a subjective measure of an individual's perception of their life quality (Mazur et al. 2018). It provides a quick way of assessing individual's personal experience of wellbeing by allowing them to rate their current life on a scale ranging from 0, indicating the "worst possible life," to 10, the "best possible life." The simplicity of the scale provides an easy-to-understand approach for young respondents, facilitating the data collection process. The scale has been applied in numerous research studies involving adolescents and has been validated, proving its efficacy in understanding the mental wellbeing landscape in school health research (Levin and Currie 2014; Due et al. 2019; Foa et al. 2020). The scale enables an exploration of subjective wellbeing that complements the data obtained from the other scales used within this evaluation. The scale was also translated into Welsh. Similarly to the SWEMWBS, this scale has been used for research on student wellbeing in Wales (Page et al. 2023).

The Wellbeing Pack

The scales were sent to the participating schools via email in the form of a 'Wellbeing Pack'. These packs were subsequently printed by the school administration and disseminated among the student form groups who were participants in the study. Each pack was designed to be completed within approximately 20-30 minutes, a time duration that was flexible and chosen to ensure responses without imposing undue burden on the pupils. Additionally, form tutors were briefed and made available to assist the students throughout the process. They were instructed to read out each statement from the pack, allowing students time to process the

statement and respond accordingly. Further details on this and a copy of all the scales within the wellbeing pack used can be found in Appendix J.

A coded system was used in an approach to withhold the ethical imperatives of confidentiality and anonymity. The use of a 4-digit Alphanumeric code, crafted to denote the school, year group, form group, and an individual participant identifier, served the purpose of safeguarding participant identity while facilitating an analysis of the programme's influence over time. This system helped to ensure that the personal identities of student participants remained shielded throughout the research process. This approach supports the identification of trends and shifts within subgroups, supporting the specificity of the findings and allowing for targeted analysis across various demographic and contextual variables across the two studies (Salganik 2019).

A potential limitation of this strategy arises from the reliance on students to remember and safely keep their unique codes throughout the study period. This aspect is critical as the integrity of gaining more longitudinal findings depends on accurately matching participants' responses across different data collection points. The potential for codes to be forgotten, misplaced, or incorrectly recalled introduces a risk of data misalignment or loss, which could compromise the analysis' accuracy and reliability. This issue is particularly relevant in school settings, where varying levels of organisational skill and memory capacity among students may impact the consistent application of the coding system (Borgers et al. 2004). Furthermore, the necessity for students to keep their codes safe while ensuring they remain undisclosed to peers or uninvolved parties adds an additional layer of complexity to maintaining integrity.

Addressing this limitation required strategies to minimise the risk of code mismanagement. Preventative measures included the provision of storage options for codes within the class register and under the supervision of the class teacher. This helped the development of mechanisms for code retrieval without compromising anonymity. Educating the participants about the importance of their code for the research process and ensuring they understand how to manage it responsibly were also components of this strategy and written within the information sheets provided to participants (Dillman et al. 2014).

Students without codes and not participating in the study were engaged in alternate pastoral activities arranged by the schools during this time. These wellbeing packs and their contained scales played a role in the systematic collection of measurable data on the students' wellbeing. Babbie (2020) highlights the significance of systematic collection of data, asserting that it helps reduce bias and improves the reliability of findings. These wellbeing measures were therefore first completed by students before beginning use of PauseUP during the pilot study, creating a baseline, which was used as a reference point for analysing changes over the course of the study. Further completion of the measures was conducted before beginning the main study

and after completing 12 weeks use of PauseUP. Having these scales completed at various points over the course of the studies made the data collection process less prone to false interpretations. This approach resonates with Babbie (2020) in that replicable and structured data collection strategies lead to more reliable and accurate research outcomes.

The data collection using these scales also allowed for a clear and meaningful presentation of student wellbeing throughout the study. Data were organised into graphs and charts, providing a visual depiction for each participating school to reflect upon. Representing data in this way aligns with the advocacy for clear and accessible presentation of research findings, facilitating understanding and application of the results (Babbie 2020). The fluctuations in scores were a potential indicator of changes in student wellbeing, which may have been partly influenced because of the implementation of PauseUP. The value of having this evidence in strengthening research conclusions is well recognised in research methodology (Christensen et al. 2011).

It was important to acknowledge the possibility that the implementation of PauseUP could have also produced unintended negative effects. While some of the fluctuations in wellbeing scores might indicate positive changes, they could also suggest potential harm or distress caused by the programme (Kuyken et al. 2022). Considering this, the evaluation remained open to the possibility that PauseUP may not have uniformly positive outcomes. The study monitored for signs of negative impact and used qualitative data from student and staff feedback to understand the range of experiences with the programme. This openness to detecting outcomes is consistent with ethical research practices and helps to provide a balanced understanding of the programme's effects.

The quantitative data collected through the scales were scored following established protocols and guidelines, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the measurements. The processed data were then systematically inputted into Microsoft Excel, serving as the foundational dataset for subsequent analysis. As a preliminary step in the data exploration process, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted (Cooksey and Cooksey 2020). This focused on generating basic numerical summaries and in summarising the extensive quantitative data collected throughout the evaluation, facilitating an exploration of the dataset's characteristics and distributions.

After the analysis, data were represented visually using tables, graphs, and charts. The use of these graphical representations was based on the principle that visuals can often convey complex data in a simplified manner (Few 2009). These graphics initially highlighted key areas of wellbeing that might require attention and were then used to show differences between schools and year groups pre- and post-implementation of the programme. These visuals were shared with each of the participating schools, LA and local health board strategy groups.

Thematic Analysis

There is an often-encountered gap in detailed analytical guidance in realist evaluations (Marchal et al. 2012; Salter and Kothari 2014) and this led to the guidance of the RAMESES project for clarity in realist analytic processes (Wong et al. 2016). The approach incorporates retroductive reasoning which is described in section 4.3.1. This method combines inductive and deductive thinking, supplemented by insights gathered from the data collected. Within the current evaluation this was collected across the various school settings implementing PauseUP. The data were diverse, encompassing survey responses, interview transcripts, notes from site visits, focus groups, and observations, all required in understanding the causal factors at play in the programme's outcomes.

A process used to support this was thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2012,2014). This process involves stages:

1. **Familiarisation with Data:** An initial investigation into the data to understand its breadth and depth.
2. **Generating Initial Codes:** Systematic coding of the data to identify and capture essential concepts and patterns.
3. **Collating and Examining Themes:** Aggregating the initial codes to form potential themes and evaluating their relevance to the data.
4. **Reviewing and Refining Themes:** Iterative refining of these themes to ensure accurate representation of the data set and coherent narrative construction.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Finalising and naming the themes in a manner that encapsulates their essence.
6. **Reporting:** Presenting a clear, coherent, and logically structured account of these themes, supported by data extracts.

Thematic analysis proved to be a useful tool in the evaluation, adept at capturing both the commonality and diversity within the data (Braun and Clarke 2012). This allowed participant experiences, attitudes, and perceptions concerning PauseUP to be documented. These themes were coded with CMOC's within the data (Jackson and Kolla 2012; Gilmore et al. 2019). The integration of thematic analysis with retroductive reasoning, applied to a range of qualitative data sources, supported the identification of context, mechanism, and outcomes, supporting the generation of initial programme theories. Although complex and time

consuming, this approach was needed in assessing the efficacy of PauseUP in promoting wellbeing, ensuring the evaluation was aligned with the core tenets of realist evaluation.

4.6 Phase 3

The third phase, running from August 2022 to March 2023, was used to establish and discuss the CMOCs associated with PauseUP. These configurations offered explanations on why the programme was effective in certain contexts and not in others, underscoring the essence of situational circumstances in dictating outcomes as explained by Pawson (2013).

The ultimate objective was to advance beyond the binary question of whether PauseUP worked, towards an understanding of how, why, when, and for whom it did (or didn't) work. This process involved a discussion of the initial programme theories, a step needed to comprehend the interaction of factors influencing the programme in school settings. This helped reveal the necessary conditions for triggering PauseUP as a mechanism for wellbeing change in schools. The evaluation offered findings into the complexities of implementing wellbeing initiatives in school environments, in line with the principles delineated by Pawson and Tilley (1997).

Concluding the research involved a key step: disseminating the findings to all relevant stakeholders. The schools participating, LA wellbeing representatives, and the wellbeing company partner who were all players in the evaluation process and made aware of the research outcomes. This act of feedback was fundamental to upholding principles of realist evaluation (Wong et al. 2016) transparency and accountability, fostering trust, promoting learning, and facilitating collaboration as per the ethical guidelines for conducting educational research and evaluation (Race and Vidal-Hall 2019). The dissemination of findings also opened pathways for knowledge transfer. Stakeholders within education and the schools using the programme could learn from the study and use the findings to inform future PauseUP iterations and strategies for implementation for other school year groups, classrooms and in various other educational contexts. The findings were presented to local health board strategic planning groups and delivered at organised conferences for research and schools.

4.7 Overcoming Challenges and Limitations

Recognising potential constraints and proactively strategizing to manage them is a decisive part of the research process in social science (Israel and Hay 2006). This effort is needed to improve both the credibility and validity of the results generated from a study. This process demonstrates an understanding of the complex nature of research and improves the transparency and integrity of the study, thereby increasing the confidence in the research outcomes (Israel 2014). The evaluation of PauseUP may have encountered several potential limitations.

One limitation relates to the approach taken in analysing variations in mechanisms and outcomes across different schools. Traditional realist evaluation is generally deductive, beginning with a theorisation of how different contexts might influence the mechanisms activated by an intervention (Pawson and Tilley 1997). This method typically involves defining sociologically meaningful sub-groups before the analysis, which guides the investigation of how specific contexts impact the effectiveness of an intervention. In contrast, this study adopted a more exploratory, post-hoc approach by treating each school as a distinct sub-group and then retrospectively analysing why outcomes differed. This approach, while allowing for flexibility in responding to the diverse and unforeseen challenges presented by the pandemic and the unique circumstances of each school, departs from the deductive tradition typically associated with realist evaluation. As noted by Marchal et al. (2012), while such flexibility can be beneficial in complex and unpredictable environments, it also introduces the risk that observed variations may not be theoretically grounded and could represent just random differences.

Without a prior theoretical definition of sub-groups, there is a concern that some of the variations observed in the findings may lack sociological significance, leading to challenges in discerning meaningful patterns from the data. Acknowledging this limitation is necessary, as it underscores the importance of cautious interpretation of the outcomes and the potential for these variations to reflect context-specific factors rather than broader, generalisable trends. This research would have benefited from employing a more refined theoretical framework that guided the identification of sub-groups and contexts early on in a structured, deductive manner. This could have improved the robustness of the evaluation and ensured that the variations observed across different schools were both theoretically meaningful and empirically valid (Fletcher et al. 2016). However, the exploratory approach adopted in this study still provided valuable observations into the real-world complexities of implementing a wellbeing programme in extraordinary times.

The conduct of these trials during the pandemic related lockdowns and the subsequent period of upheaval presents a significant consideration regarding the generalisability of the findings. The unique context, combined with the specific circumstances of the schools involved, the sample size, and the participant group, may limit the applicability of the results to other periods, settings, or populations. The pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges, altering school environments, teaching methods, and student wellbeing, which likely influenced both the implementation of the programme and the experiences of participants (Donohue and Miller 2020; Viner et al. 2020). This context of crisis and disruption is therefore a critical factor, making it challenging to generalise the findings beyond this exceptional period.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that research typically prioritises transferability over generalisability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied in other, similar contexts, rather than being universally generalisable (Burchett et al. 2013). To support transferability, this study provides detailed descriptions of the participants' roles, the context of the schools during the pandemic, the procedures followed, and the outcomes observed. These accounts aim to enable readers to make informed judgments about the relevance and applicability of the findings to other contexts, particularly those experiencing similar disruptions or challenges. Nonetheless, the unprecedented nature of the pandemic must be acknowledged as a potential limitation in extending the findings to more stable, typical educational environments. While the lessons learned from this period offer insights into how schools can adapt to crises, their applicability to different times and contexts should be considered with caution (Harris 2020; Reimers 2022).

Another potential constraint in this research is the risk of researcher bias, particularly given my dual role as both the sole investigator and one of the developers of PauseUP. My personal preconceptions, beliefs, and expectations could have influenced the interpretation and presentation of the research findings, which potentially effected the results, leading to a less objective understanding of the programme's influence and effectiveness. Several steps were taken to minimise the impact of researcher bias. First, I used triangulation, which involves the use of multiple data sources and methods to cross-verify findings (Jick 1979; Moon 2019) which helped ensure that the conclusions drawn were not unduly influenced by any single perspective. Second, I engaged in regular discussions with university supervisors, who provided external perspectives and critical feedback, helping to mitigate the potential for biased interpretations (Patton 2002). I also maintained a clear and transparent audit trail, as required by regular progress reports at Cardiff university, documenting steps of the research process and the decisions made, which supports the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Implementing a realist evaluation using a mixed-methods approach presented additional challenges, particularly in terms of time and resources. As a lone researcher, navigating this complex research approach, especially during the global pandemic, was undeniably challenging. The dual role of developer and researcher/evaluator introduced complexities in balancing the objectives of both roles. This situation is not uncommon in practice-based research, where the researcher's intimate knowledge of the subject can both inform and potentially bias the evaluation process (Drake and Heath 2010). Moreover, the fact that this was my first time conducting a realist evaluation added another challenge.

However, these challenges, while substantial, were addressed through thorough planning, guidance from supervisors, and efficient organisation. The research was structured according to a timeline, and collaboration with participating schools and the wellbeing company was essential in maintaining the research's integrity. My familiarity with PauseUP, while it could be seen as a potential source of bias, also provided knowledge into the programme's objectives, adaptations, and components, which was beneficial for a deeper understanding of the evaluation process (Maxwell 2012). The aim was to turn these potential limitations into opportunities for learning.

To ensure the reliability of self-reported data in the quantitative analysis, particularly in student wellbeing measures, steps were taken to mitigate social desirability bias—where participants respond in ways they perceive as socially favourable rather than truthful (Liddle and Carter 2015). To address this, clear communication with participants highlighted the confidentiality and anonymity of responses, encouraging honest answers. Additionally, the SCWBS used in the study includes a mechanism to detect and control for social desirability bias, allowing for the exclusion of affected data before analysis. The administration of wellbeing measures was carefully managed, with detailed guidance provided to schools to ensure students had adequate time and focus to complete the surveys, reducing the likelihood of rushed or socially biased responses. Furthermore, all materials were provided in both English and Welsh, ensuring linguistic inclusivity, which helped improve the reliability of the data by allowing students to engage in their preferred language.

The next chapter of this thesis will now introduce the first of the two studies of PauseUP, exploring the pilot study. It will begin by reintroducing the schools who participated, providing a backdrop of the contexts. The chapter will revisit the hypothesised statements for implementing PauseUP, to contextualise and refine them based on feedback and findings from the pilot study. The chapter will outline the methods used and present a description of the findings.

Chapter 5: The Pilot study.

The pilot was initiated amidst the challenges of the pandemic and lockdowns that began in March 2020 (see table 7), coinciding with the closure of all schools across Wales except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This period demanded alternate communication strategies to facilitate the introduction of PauseUP. Digital approaches were required to maintain a continuous dialogue with the WR from each school. A dedicated Microsoft Teams channel was established specifically for this project, providing a platform for communication and information sharing among these stakeholders including, the university, and the wellbeing partner company.

Table 7 Timeline of key events during the pilot study

Dates	Key Research Events	Contextual Effects on All Schools
March 2020	Beginning of study	All schools across Wales closed, except for provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.
April 2020	West, East, and South schools contacted about updated start date (September) for the trial.	
May 2020	Discussions and development on the rollout of the programme with wellbeing company.	
June 2020	Development of programme and training videos for participating schools.	Schools opened to pupils from all year groups for limited periods during the week, with only a third of pupils in school at any one time.
July 2020	MS Teams meeting with West, East, and South schools, and company partner. Email contact with WR.	Schools close for the summer holidays.
August 2020	MS Teams discussion with the WR of South school.	
September 2020	First contact with North school's wellbeing coordinator. Training and informational materials sent to all participating schools.	Schools re-open for the new academic year 20/21.
October 2020	Digital presentation of the programme to staff in North school. Various engagements with schools regarding	Autumn half-term.

	consent forms and programme discussions.	
November 2020	Training webinar for South school staff. Digital presentations to schools. North school begins the trial.	Pupils in Year 9 and above were not expected to be present in school in the week commencing 2 November 2020, due to Covid-19 firebreak.
December 2020	Restart and initiation of the pilot study in schools. Collection of consent and completion of wellbeing packs pre PauseUP initiation.	All secondary schools in Wales moved to online remote learning for the last week of term before Christmas.
January 2021	Presentation of the programme to West school staff. Collection of wellbeing packs.	All schools across Wales closed and moved to online remote learning, except for provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.
February 2021		School spring half-term.
March 2021	Presentation to the school governing body at West school.	
April 2021	Restart of the pilot study in North and South schools. Strategic focus group meeting for LA.	All pupils were able to return to learning on-site. Voluntary asymptomatic testing offers extended to all secondary school-age learners. School Easter break.
May 2021	Begin pilot study in East and West schools. Initial feedback from West school.	Summer half-term end of May.
June 2021	South school discontinues the programme for year 8 pupils to focus on 'catching up'. Survey 1 sent to schools.	
July 2021	Collection of Survey 1. Interviews and feedback sessions with school staff.	Report on pupil wellbeing data sent to all participating schools. Schools close for summer holidays.

This timeline encapsulates the chronological progression of key research events alongside the contextual challenges posed by the pandemic, illustrating how the pilot study needed to adapt to evolving circumstances while maintaining a focus on introducing and evaluating PauseUP across participating schools.

From September 2020 the trial commenced with email communication and online meetings with each school WR, providing a briefing on the research objectives, methodologies, data collection and evaluation protocols, as well as the expected roles and responsibilities of the schools taking part, with an anticipated timeline for the data collection points. A USB containing PauseUP was sent by post to each of the schools along with instructions for uploading the programme onto computers and the school server for teachers to use as needed within their classrooms.

In response to pandemic challenges, the pilot study leveraged training videos to communicate the programme's objectives, functionalities, and anticipated benefits to staff and students. These videos included an introductory virtual tour of the digital interface and its activities, along with content focusing on the programme's components (Physical, Emotional, Spiritual) and the integration of the six wellbeing themes within its spiritual component, grounded in PPI's and SEL as detailed in section 3.4.1 of the literature review.

The multimedia approach ensured information remained accessible to participants, facilitating a transition to remote learning environments and catering to the digital literacy and scheduling flexibility required by schools. This strategy highlighted the imperative of digital literacy in educational systems and the challenges schools may have faced in equitable access at this difficult time (Selwyn 2012; 2014), necessitating flexible, adaptive approaches to implementing technological tools.

Despite disruptions, the adaptive realist methodology enabled the continuation of research activities. Digital platforms and email communication served as tools for collaboration and engagement, keeping schools and staff connected and informed. The training videos helped translate the theoretical underpinnings of the wellbeing themes into practical applications through PauseUP, facilitating the programme's integration into the timetables of participating schools.

The first hypotheses for implementing PauseUP focussed on the inputs required for introducing the programme into schools, namely the importance of pre-delivery discussions, which guided these initial stages. The statement posited that effective adoption of PauseUP necessitates readiness and willingness on the part of schools, underpinned by pre-delivery consultations with staff who play roles in health and wellbeing. The second hypothesis revolved around active engagement and support from school leadership. It suggested that successful pre-delivery discussions and a willingness to adopt PauseUP in schools should be complemented by active engagement from school leadership. Lack of support from senior figures, adaptability issues, and absence of a dedicated representative were hypothesised as potential barriers to introduction. These hypotheses were key in guiding this pilot study of the

evaluation, focusing on the variables that may have influenced the introduction of PauseUP, particularly in the unique and challenging context of secondary schools during a global health crisis.

Participants included staff (n=11) and students (n=575) across four schools, year groups 7 to 10, progressions steps 4 and merging with 5, comprising ages 11 to 15. This diverse and large sample provided data on the influence of PauseUP on students at different stages of progression and development. This chapter delineates the trial's objectives, beginning with an outline of the aims and proceeding to discuss the formulation of initial research hypotheses. These hypotheses were developed through interviews with WR and HoY groups involved, providing a context for the study's investigative framework. Subsequent sections detail a preliminary and baseline assessment of student wellbeing, using initial data collection and further dialogues with WR to explore the wellbeing environment of schools. Following this, the chapter describes the practical implementation of PauseUP within the participating schools, capturing some of the dynamics of implementing the programme. This is presented in a synthesis of findings, incorporating feedback from student surveys and realist interviews with WR. These data sources contribute to the development of initial programme theories, offering data on PauseUP's practical application.

5.1 Objectives of the Pilot study

The pilot study represented the first opportunity to introduce PauseUP to schools, functioning as the initial programme user phase. The purpose was to inform and shape the subsequent main study. This phase was required to develop and refine hypothesised statements and in determining if some of the data collection methods were suitable for the evaluation. Table 8 outlines the aims, research approaches, and methods used.

Table 8 Aims, approaches and methods used for the Pilot study.

Aims and Purposes	Research Approach	Methods Used
Refine hypothesised 'if...then' statements into initial programme theories	Mixed methods	Interviews with HoY groups and WR. Student surveys responses Analysis of wellbeing scales
Identify wellbeing needs and areas and groups for more targeted support	Mixed methods	Analysis of wellbeing scales

		Feedback from interviews with WR and HoY groups.
Explore the early engagement, components, design, and strategy of using PauseUP in schools.	Mixed methods	Feedback from WR and HoY groups at interview. Student responses to survey.

One of the objectives was to refine the "if...then" hypotheses into more contextually relevant and coherent themes, to help with constructing initial CMO configurations for PauseUP. This involved introducing the programme to the participating schools, observing its implementation and reception, and establishing hypotheses about how and for whom it may be most effective. The study also aimed to identify aspects of wellbeing that PauseUP could more meaningfully support and to determine the groups of students who might benefit most from the programme. The trial served as an evaluative phase for the programme's components, assessing their relevance. This involved reviewing the three sections, gauging initial student engagement through survey, and gathering feedback on the receptiveness of the activities from the WR. The realist interviews conducted towards the end of the trial provided data on the programme's reception in the school and based on this, areas on the programme requiring modifications were identified. This informed the revisions to the strategy, activities, and user interface before its deployment in the main study.

5.2 Developing the if...then statements for Implementing PauseUP.

Based on the literature and early stakeholder discussions detailed in section 4.4, hypotheses for introducing PauseUP were developed as 'if...then' statements. These are exhibited in Table 9, categorised into hypothesised CMO configurations.

Table 9 Hypothesised CMO configurations for the if...then statements for introducing PauseUP.

Hypothesised Statements	Context	Mechanism	Outcome

Pre-delivery discussions	Schools' readiness and pre-delivery consultations with person responsible for health and wellbeing.	Introduction of PauseUP to the school based on effective transfer of information.	Successful programme introduction or resistance due to inadequate transfer of information.
Active engagement and school leadership support	Willingness of school leadership to use PauseUP following successful pre-delivery discussions with WR.	Introduction of PauseUP to the school with active support from senior school figures.	Successful introduction into the school/year groups or limited integration due to lack of clear support from leadership.
Coordinated within existing school timetables and engagement of users	Active support from school leadership and teaching staff for integrating PauseUP within school timetable and routine.	Routine use and integration of PauseUP activities aligned with school strategies and timetable.	Improved implementation in school through routine practice.
Fidelity and Adaptation	A school routinely using the programme, integrating it with an existing wellbeing ethos and climate.	Implementation of PauseUP with fidelity and opportunity for feedback and open discussion.	Consistent delivery and improved wellbeing for students or inconsistent delivery and reduced engagement from end users.

The initial stages of the pilot study considered changes since the late 2019 stakeholder discussions and the onset of the pandemic and lockdowns. The hypotheses, categorised in Table 9 into the three key areas used in realist evaluation to develop programme theories, are Context (the circumstances or environment in which PauseUP is introduced), Mechanism (the ways in which PauseUP interacts with the school), and Outcome (the expected results of these actions for implementing PauseUP).

Given the transformed school landscape, marked by new challenges and opportunities for wellbeing, it was essential to reassess these statements before beginning the trial. This reassessment considered the programme's potential role in the context of a challenging 2020-21 academic school year, which included school closures and a changing learning

environment, necessitating adaptability as a key factor in response to the evolving school routines.

The process of refining the hypotheses involved semi-structured interviews with WR and HoY groups, guided by the importance of pre-delivery discussions and leadership support for introducing the programme. Representatives from West, East, and South schools, who participated in the initial focus group meeting, provided particularly valuable feedback on their perceptions and relevance of PauseUP in the altered school environment. Their views clarified the transformations that had occurred in schools since their previous thoughts, emphasising the need for adaptability in both the evaluation process and for PauseUP amidst these changes. As expressed by one WR,

"The school day and timetable has altered a lot since we last spoke, it's important to understand that some of these changes may affect us trying to introduce PauseUP".

The views of the WR from North school added a new perspective on the programme and this was valuable in contributing to the theories of how PauseUP may function and be of use in schools,

"Using a wellbeing programme like PauseUP aligns well with our existing efforts towards mental health promotion. However, it will require buy-in from all staff members, something that will require planning and support."

The HoY groups, who interacted closely with the students and staff, were involved in school operations, and offered practical perspectives on how PauseUP could be integrated logistically within the school context. Their input, at the early stages of introducing the programme was supportive. Their views helped in shaping the practical application of PauseUP, transferring information and training materials to peers within their year groups who would be using PauseUP during the trial. One HoY spoke of existing wellbeing approaches used by the school and the importance for teaching staff to understand the reason they are delivering a new programme, they were interested to see how PauseUP aligns with existing approaches,

"Our school already practices wellbeing activities during pastoral periods. It'll be interesting to see how PauseUP fits with these...It's important to make sure the teachers that are using it have enough information on how to use it and why wellbeing is an area of importance for learning."

While the overarching sentiment from stakeholders supported PauseUP's potential in addressing wellbeing concerns during a challenging year, the process of introducing the programme across year groups and involving a range of staff members was recognised as being the biggest challenge. Stakeholders concurred that integration efforts needed to be

adaptive to the demands and realities of the teachers and students who would be using it. The hypotheses made on pre-delivery discussions and school leadership support were required for introducing the programme, but refinements were applied through the initial interviews on the nature of this support and how to actively engage other school staff. A supportive wellbeing environment in the school was also hypothesised to be an important contextual factor for introducing PauseUP and these learnings led to the formation of related themes and hypotheses as described below.

Supportive Wellbeing Environment

*If there is an integration of PauseUP activities into the daily school routine within a supportive school environment (context), and these are reinforced by school leadership and staff (mechanism), **then** the programme is more likely be implemented and used as planned (outcome).*

In the process of speaking with the school staff at interview, the importance of staff support emerged as a factor for the successful introduction and sustained use of the programme. Despite the need for the school environment to be oriented towards wellbeing, introducing PauseUP centres on the commitment and involvement of the teachers that are required in using it daily in their classrooms. The programme was designed to fit into the daily routines, offering a variety of tools designed to improve student wellbeing. However, its successful integration requires more than just a well-designed programme; it necessitates active engagement and support from teachers.

This necessity for teacher involvement ensures continuity of use and maximises the possible wellbeing influences caused by the programme's delivery. Interviewees mentioned several times the role of school leadership in facilitating this, guiding, and motivating the teachers on the use of PauseUP within their wellbeing plans. A reflection from a WR from one of the schools encapsulated this sentiment,

"It's so important that our teachers understand the why and how of using PauseUP. After all, we need to embed it within our wellbeing strategies to see its benefits."

This statement underlines the role of school leadership in ensuring that teachers understand the reason they are using PauseUP alongside school plans and strategy for wellbeing. Teachers should be equipped to use it alongside their teaching practices. A HoY indicated that pastoral staff tend to provide a more supportive environment for the integration of wellbeing initiatives,

“It is our form teachers with pastoral experience who usually deal with wellbeing issues and lessons, and they may be better suited to introducing PauseUP to pupils in our year group.”

Further interviews were held at the end of the pilot study to understand the support given to introduce PauseUP. These were then used to assess the school environment as a context and to discuss the experiences and challenges in integrating the programme into the daily routines. The characteristics of each school context outlined in the previous chapter, especially the wellbeing ratings given by the inspectorate Estyn, may also give some exploratory insights into the context of this hypothesised statement.

Addressing Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Challenges

*If there is a necessity for PauseUP due to increased student stress and mental health issues (context) and the programme delivers a variety of practical activities (mechanism), **then** students should show improved wellbeing in the form of emotional regulation and stress management skills (outcome).*

There were heightened concerns for the wellbeing of students, especially in the context of the pandemic. Interviewees reflected on the need for PauseUP to adapt to these emerging challenges and highlighted the role of the school and school leadership to prioritise and address the mental health and wellbeing of learners, with one WR saying,

“The timing couldn’t be better, in terms of wellbeing and emotional support. I’ve looked and there are some great activities that I can see will fit in well. Obviously, the logistics of it are the main hurdles now but that’s the same for the whole school system, we’ll need to make sure we approach and prioritise wellbeing collectively.”

Staff observed rising stress levels and mental and emotional health challenges among students, driven by a variety of factors, such as academic pressures, societal expectations, peer relations, and digital overload. They also reported that schools are becoming increasingly important as settings for implementing mental health interventions, as evidenced by a HoY,

“We are being asked to do a lot for wellbeing now and rightly so, we do interact with pupils every day... Sometimes it’s difficult to understand exactly what support to give as pupils stress is related to all sorts of other factors like how they feel about lessons and exams, who their friends are, and the amount of time they have spent learning online recently. They are using social media so much now and that must be impacting their wellbeing. We know we need to help; we just are sometimes unsure how to help.”

Although these staff members acknowledged the value of supporting wellbeing, they also signposted potential challenges in introducing a new programme. This hypothesis reflects the need for mental health and emotional support and how the activities on PauseUP may be of use for increased concerns and higher student stress levels, but if the pupils are not engaged then the programme will not address this. As one WR notes,

“I can see that the programme contains a lot of good quality exercises, and I hope that the pupils see that, however there may be resistance there, especially as they get older or if the teachers aren’t motivated to use it”.

Notably, there was increased awareness of the need for digital platforms in the wake of the pandemic and this was reflected by a WR with the sentiment,

“We have been using lots of digital tools over the last few months to support learning and with the pressures pupils face now, any avenue which may support their mental health is welcomed, as a digital platform it may be in sync with some other approaches we’re using for lessons”.

Regarding outcomes, teachers expected to see improvements in emotional regulation and stress management skills among students. They emphasised the importance of clear, well-structured activities in teaching these skills, stating that they are integral to the successful dissemination of these techniques amongst students.

To examine the hypothesis, it was important to assess the context (necessity for PauseUP due to increased stress and mental health issues). The wellbeing scales which included standardised measures for wellbeing supported the identification of baseline levels amongst the participants. Repeated discussions with WR would then help to understand their perspectives on the data and how the programme’s activities may be of support. Towards the end of the pilot study these staff members were asked at interview if they had observed any changes in wellbeing, which may be indicative of the mechanism of some of the interventions included in PauseUP leading to improved emotional regulation and stress management. A reflection on this feedback helped to identify the components of PauseUP which students engaged with, and which needed adjustment. The student survey responses helped to identify components of PauseUP students enjoyed the most based on their initial use.

School Wellbeing Approach and Commitment to PauseUP

*If PauseUP is used in a supportive school environment that prioritises wellbeing (context), and there is a whole-school or year group approach (mechanism), **then** there will be an improvement in the overall strategy to using PauseUP (outcome).*

Interviewees expressed the need for coordinated efforts in introducing PauseUP, along with the requirements of a commitment to shared approaches. They expressed the need for strategies to be data-driven to make the integration of PauseUP more effective and tailored to student needs. A WR highlighted the importance of gaining a clear understanding of students' wellbeing needs, commenting,

“This research will help us identify areas which we can better support, and pupils that may need this support. Some younger pupils have different concerns than older ones and as a school it’s important to communicate across year groups to create a shared strategy.”

The ability to use data to tailor some of the interventions on PauseUP to meet differing needs was discussed by many of the staff at interview and they expressed a desire to use this data to support some of their own approaches to wellbeing. This view stresses the importance of making wellbeing approaches relevant to students. If PauseUP is used in a school but the activities do not work well for students or there is a lack of adaptability of the programme according to the context, then there may be a limited impact.

Many stakeholders stressed the salience of acquiring more of an understanding of wellbeing to support students, especially in recognition of the new curriculum. This was deemed an important contextual link for the successful introduction of PauseUP but also for its relevance in Wales. As a WR noted,

“Without a grasp of our students' wellbeing needs, our support remains blind. Data would be useful for our approaches as a school and in shaping the activities we do. The curriculum is now putting more focus on wellbeing, and we need to be prepared for delivering this within the school timetable soon.”

A HoY also mentioned that some teachers could benefit from learning more about wellbeing, understanding practical strategies to use themselves and plan for lessons. They spoke of staff professional development being a key resource for promoting academic outcomes and future curriculum plans and how the school is attempting to create a shared strategy,

“I think some of our staff could do with learning more about the different aspects of wellbeing and what they can do to support it. They are very stressed, and I think it will be a challenge to get them all on board but if they do then I’m sure it’ll be a success. Making them aware of the wellbeing situation of pupils and showing that the activities are making a difference will certainly help...We are trying to contemplate how the new curriculum can be approached in our school so hopefully some of the activities may give us ideas”.

To examine the hypothesis, it was important to monitor the introduction across different year groups and schools and assess how PauseUP was implemented using the varying

approaches used by schools. It was necessary to evaluate the extent to which PauseUP was introduced as a whole school versus specific year group or targeted classroom programme and examine the opportunities and challenges of both. Feedback from further interviews with WR provided more contextually relevant data about their experiences with PauseUP and how it affected their school strategy. Recommendations based on the findings from the pilot study helped support the programme in refining.

Navigating Resistance and Heightened Stress

*If there are issues with introducing the programme and it is met by resistance from teachers or students, **then** it is less likely to be implemented in the school or classroom setting.*

There are potential barriers which were commented on during interviews, particularly in the context of staff and student stress and possible scepticism towards a new programme. HoY groups acknowledged the potential of PauseUP to fit into existing school routines, suggesting a perceived alignment between the design and the school timetable. However, their optimism was tempered by practical concerns, particularly regarding student and teacher engagement and 'digital fatigue'. As one Hoy articulated,

“I can see how the idea of making it plug in and play with activities throughout the week is a good fit, but there may be issues with getting it started. It will need to be used digitally, and teachers may struggle to use the platform, any delays would cause a distraction and disengagement. They have been using digital resources a lot recently and I hope that PauseUP doesn't add to the stresses of screentime”.

These concerns emphasise the need for PauseUP to be easy to use and adaptable to fit into varied classroom environments. HoY groups, having interacted with PauseUP, resonated with the initial enthusiasm of the programme given by the WR. However, concerns arose about potential scepticism from students and teachers. There were also apprehensions about the platform's efficacy and the fact it was to be used digitally on the whiteboard in classrooms. A big challenge was identified as integrating PauseUP amidst packed teacher timetables, further strained by curriculum backlog due to pandemic-induced disruptions. As stated by a HoY,

“I think you've got a really well functioning programme there, easy to use, I'm just not sure some of the activities will work for all, they may do and that's great but it's difficult to engage everyone, especially in wellbeing. It's tricky and some teachers have so much work already.”

Another HoY echoed this and reported that teachers had a lot more work to catch up on, effecting their own wellbeing and stress levels which would potentially influence the introduction of PauseUP. They reported that,

“It will be a challenge getting some staff on board as they’ve had a really difficult time juggling workload and moving to online platforms, I hope that this doesn’t affect the way they use PauseUP or even their own stress levels.”

There are identified practical challenges of fitting the programme into busy schedules in which many lessons had to be ‘caught up with’. It highlights the need to align PauseUP with the workload of teachers to ensure its routine implementation. A recurring theme was the difficulty of introducing new initiatives into the already heavy academic schedule, which was exacerbated by the pandemic. Opinions from the interviewees highlighted these concerns, citing the urgency of academic curriculum demands juxtaposed against the appeal of PauseUP’s offerings for supporting wellbeing. As reported by a WR,

“It’s been difficult in the past getting staff on board with new initiatives, this may be even more challenging now as they are being asked to catch up with missed lessons. We will need to make sure everyone understands the reasons why wellbeing is important and why we’ve chosen to use PauseUP and then help teachers with making them aware it isn’t that difficult to use and won’t add much on to their lessons or planning.”

The concern about balancing the roles of wellbeing support with academic recovery indicates that any new programme needs to be mindful of the pressures of schools and should seek to complement rather than complicate the existing schedules.

To examine the hypothesis, questions were asked at follow up interviews about general perceptions of the programme, willingness of teachers to participate, and any concerns the schools had with implementation. Attention was given to the signs of resistance or disengagement, such as lack of participation or reluctance to use the programme as well as finding out what some of the barriers were. This feedback was useful to identify common themes or issues with the programme related to resistance. This included the finding that specific activities were less well-received by some groups of students and some teachers were more resistant. Modifications and further examination would then help to explore if these factors were to do with general attitudes towards wellbeing or with the programme, permitting more accurate recommendations for overcoming resistance in future introductions of PauseUP.

Based on the refined hypothesised statements described above, table 10 places them into hypothesised CMO configurations for the pilot study.

Table 10 Refined hypothesised CMO configurations for implementing PauseUP.

Hypothesised Statement	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Integration in School Routine and Supportive Environment	Supportive school leadership and school environment, prioritising wellbeing strategies.	Integration of PauseUP into daily school routine reinforced by school staff.	Successful introduction of PauseUP in classrooms.
Addressing Student Stress and Mental Health	Increased need to support student stress and mental health concerns.	Delivery of various practical activities to address some of these areas.	Improved emotional regulation and stress management skills among students.
School Wellbeing Approaches	Supportive school strategy of using PauseUP in a whole-school or year group approach.	Promotion of wellbeing aligned with supportive data and communication with WR.	More engagement with PauseUP as a supportive approach to promoting wellbeing in schools and opportunities for adaptation to the programme.
Resistance to Programme Introduction	Challenges or resistance in introducing PauseUP in school or classroom settings.	Lack of support or resistance from teachers or students towards the programme.	Limited or ineffective implementation of PauseUP in the school or classroom.

These hypotheses were explored further towards the end of the pilot study at follow up realist interviews with WR. The following section of this chapter will report on the preliminary assessment of student wellbeing within the contexts of the participating schools.

5.3 Preliminary Assessment of Student Wellbeing

The wellbeing packs, which included the WEMWBS, SCWBS, and Cantril ladder, were administered to 575 students from four schools. These were completed by students before using PauseUP, to give baseline data. The findings stimulated further discussions with WR and played a guiding role throughout the evaluation. Table 11 shows the distribution of the completed packs between the year groups of all participating schools.

Table 11 Completed wellbeing pack distribution across year groups.

Year Group	Number of Participants
7	116
8	192
9	123
10	130
West school Nurture Group (7, 8, and 9)	14
Total	575

Within the SCWBS there is a Social Desirability subscale which assesses whether participants show a bias for socially desirable answers. This score is not included in the total score. A mean score of 3 or 14/15 on this sub-scale indicates that the participant's wellbeing scores should be treated with caution as participants are likely to be answering the questions with a response set or giving socially desirable (or undesirable) answers. For context, within the development study of the SCWBS by Liddle and Carter (2015) the scale was administered to 1162 participants during phase one of the research of whom 11 were shown to have socially desirable answers. The scale was then administered to 701 young people in phase two of whom 13 were excluded. This creates an average of approximately 1.3% of participants removed due to social desirability bias. Within the data collected from the wellbeing packs in this pilot study, four pupils; one from year 8, one from year 9 and two from year 10; scored either 3 or 14/15 and were therefore removed from the data set which accounted for about 0.7% of total participants. This resulted in the data of 571 respondents being analysed.

Cantril ladder – Life Satisfaction

Pupils were asked to indicate how satisfied they were at the time, with their lives. The best possible life quality for the top of the ladder (10), and the worst possible life quality for the zero point on the ladder. The findings, shown in table 12 revealed a declining trend of life satisfaction correlating with increased age, a pattern also observed in the SHRN study in Wales the same academic year 20/21 (Page et al. 2021). In this Wales wide survey, the most common response given by young people was 8 (22%), with 80% scoring 6 or higher. In the current study, when pupils were asked how satisfied with their life they were, the most common response given was 7 (23%), with 70% scoring 6 or higher.

Table 12 Cantril ladder findings across year groups during pilot study.

Year Group	Number of Participants	Range	Mean	Mode	Percentage ≥ 6
7	116	2-10	6.98	7	84%
8	191	0-10	6.61	7	72%
9	122	1-10	6.70	7	69%
10	128	0-10	5.70	7	65%
West school Nurture Group (7, 8, and 9)	14	0-10	5.79	5	57%
Total	571	0-10	6.48	7	70%

For pupils in year 7 (11/12 years old), 84% rated their satisfaction as 6 or above, falling to 65% by year 10 (14/15 years old). The range of answers for all year groups fall to 0-2, meaning some pupils felt very dissatisfied at the time.

SCWBS – Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

Instructions on the SCWBS asked participants about how they might have been feeling or thinking about things over the past couple of weeks. The minimum total score for the SCWBS is 12 and the maximum 60. Table 13 shows that scores again decline with increased age. For comparison, the mean score for young people as reported in the research by Liddle and Carter (2015) was 44.

Table 13 SCWBS findings across year groups

Year Group	Number of Participants	Range	Mean	Mode
7	116	25-58	42	45
8	191	12-56	40	43
9	122	12-56	39	43
10	128	12-56	39	43

West school Nurture Group (7, 8, and 9)	14	12-52	33	36
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Total	571	12-58	40	43
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The total mean score of 40 and mode of 43 is slightly lower than the reported mean of 44 by Liddle and Carter (2015). The total range of scores as low as 12, especially in years 8, 9, and 10, and the Nurture group points to a subset of students experiencing substantially lower wellbeing compared to others. A decreasing trend in mean scores is observed from year 7 to 10, with the lowest mean score (33) and mode (36) in the Nurture group. The mode scores decrease across year groups. This trend highlights a decline in perceived psychological and emotional wellbeing as students age, which aligns with the decline in life satisfaction.

The SCWBS sub-scales show a decrease in both Positive Outlook (PO) and Positive Emotional State (PES) statement score between year 7 to 10 as shown in table 14. The Nurture group recorded the lowest mean scores for statements in both sub-scales. The mean PO statement scores were observed to be slightly higher for most students than the mean PES statement scores.

Table 14 Findings from PO and PES sub scales

Year Group	Number of Participants	PO Mean score per statement	PES Mean score per statement
7	116	3.54	3.46
8	191	3.54	3.33
9	122	3.45	3.30
10	128	3.30	3.08
West school Nurture Group (7, 8, and 9)	14	2.86	2.61
Total	571	3.34	3.16

The distinction between these two sub-scales helps to differentiate between students' general outlook and their immediate emotional experiences. The PO sub-scale includes statements related to self-esteem, optimism, social support, choice, and engagement in activities. The PES sub-scale focuses on current emotional states, mood, social interactions, and daily enjoyment. The difference in mean scores per statement across the two sub-scales shows a

diminishing positive perspective and emotional state among students as they progress through school. While students may generally have a more positive outlook (e.g., feeling good about themselves or optimistic about the future), they might have been experiencing more challenges with their immediate emotional states (e.g., feeling calm, relaxed, or cheerful).

Data from the SCWBS highlight areas where support might be particularly beneficial, especially for older students and those in the Nurture group. Data suggests that there may be a greater need for addressing immediate emotional states and daily mood for pupils.

WEMWBS – Mental Wellbeing

WEMWBS provides a view on students' mental wellbeing (Tennant et al. 2007). Participants were required to tick the box that best describes their experience of each statement over the past two weeks, like the SCWBS. The minimum score of the WEMWBS is 14 and maximum score 70. Table 15 shows that scores decline with age.

For comparison, a study conducted in Wales during the 11–16-week lockdown period in 2020 compared wellbeing levels of young people aged 16–24 to pre-pandemic data collected in 2019 (Gray et al. 2020). The study showed a substantial decrease in the mean mental wellbeing scores compared to the pre-pandemic period. Specifically, the mean score decreased from 50.3 in 2019 to 41.2 during the lockdown in 2020.

Table 15 Findings from WEMWBS across year groups

Year Group	Number of Participants	Range	Mean	Mode
7	116	25-70	48.1	48
8	191	20-68	47.4	48
9	122	14-68	46.5	47
10	128	14-60	43.1	44
West school Nurture Group (7, 8, and 9)	14	14-58	40.6	42
Total	571	14-70	45.1	47

The lower scores from the students in the current study, especially year 10 (43.1) and the Nurture group at West school (40.6) closely align with the reported mean scores in the study

by Gray et al. (2020). Data from mean and mode scores highlights a decline as pupils get older which is also observed in national school survey data in Wales using the shorter version of this scale, the SWEMWBS (Page et al. 2021). The Nurture group once again show the lowest mean and mode scores.

Collectively the preliminary quantitative findings reveal declining wellbeing and life satisfaction among these secondary school students, with a notable dip in Year 10 and the West school Nurture group. This decline, evident across all the scales and observed in other research in Wales (Page et al. 2021), calls for an understanding of the factors at play. A particularly wide range of scores within the year groups also highlights the complex nature of wellbeing promotion, showing the challenges in addressing strategies for all students as some may require more targeted support than others. This data served as a baseline for the evaluation and aided the schools participating with support strategies. The previous interview findings revealed school staff had concerns about student wellbeing and further discussions with WR offered a qualitative perspective into these preliminary quantitative findings which are reported on below.

Qualitative Feedback on Preliminary Wellbeing Data

Discussions with school staff supplemented the preceding quantitative data. These discussions revealed a shared concern from WR about wellbeing, particularly among older students. Staff noted a rise in wellbeing issues, especially in Year 9 and 10, where there were signs of increased stress and anxiety. A WR observed,

"There's a noticeable increase in issues with our Year 9 and Year 10 groups. They have really been struggling and we're seeing a lot of signs pointing towards higher stress and anxiety...some pupils from all year groups are needing to be referred to CAMHS."

Year 9 and 10 (14/15 years old) are years often marked by preparation for examinations and decisions about the future which may induce stress and anxiety. The reported increase in wellbeing issues signifies that these stressors may be exceeding what can be considered typical or manageable for some. The need for pupils to be referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is an indicator of the severity of these issues. CAMHS referrals imply that the challenges go beyond what can be addressed through general school support and what PauseUP offers. When combined with external factors such as the disruptions caused by the pandemic, the cumulative impact on the mental health of these students may be substantial.

The context of the pandemic is a critical factor to this research and in the observations of wellbeing made by WR. The abrupt change in learning methods, the cancellation of exams, and the upheaval in school life placed pressure on the school community. Staff members pointed out that this period had affected students' emotions, leading to a heightened state of anxiety and emotional stress across year groups. One WR captured this challenge, noting,

"The pandemic has had a big effect, we are seeing an increase in the level of anxiety across all year groups. Some pupils who were showing concerns before the pandemic have either returned to school with additional worries or not returned at all, choosing to stay at home. It has become a real challenge trying to get them back into the routine".

The pandemic disrupted the traditional educational routine, and these observations show its effects on the emotional wellbeing of students across all age groups. The increase in anxiety and stress levels among students may be a direct reflection of the uncertainties and changes many people and institutions faced. Those who were already showing signs of wellbeing concerns before the pandemic were observed by staff to now have additional challenges. The prolonged isolation and lack of direct social interaction with peers and teachers may have intensified existing anxieties. For some students, the prospect of returning to school could be accompanied with additional worries, complicating their reintegration into the school environment. Staff observations show that there are subsets of students who, overwhelmed by these challenges, opted not to return to the school site, preferring to stay at home. This decision presents a new set of challenges for schools to re-engage students and reintegrate them into the school.

The impact of lockdowns on students' social skills and physical activity was another point of concern raised at interview. The WR noted that even the most sociable students were facing challenges in self-esteem and reintegration into social dynamics post-lockdown, reflecting the wider implications of the pandemic on students' daily lives. As noted by one WR,

"Some of our most sociable pupils are struggling with reintegrating into their friendship groups after lockdown. We needed to cancel clubs and for pupils these were times to exercise and socialise with friends outside the classroom. I think that the time spent on social media at home may have affected some pupils, especially with their self-image".

The sudden change to remote learning and the prolonged absence of face-to-face interactions may have disrupted important socialisation processes which you can get at schools. The observation that upon returning to school, many students, including those previously known for their sociability, are encountering difficulties in re-establishing their social connections is worrying. Staff highlighted the challenges young people have faced around friendships and relearning how to interact. This struggle is indicative of the impact of lockdowns. The reduced

physical activity further complicates the wellbeing situation. Regular physical activity can play a role in overall wellbeing and the limitations on school clubs may have affected students' physical health and deprived them of the psychological benefits that come with being active.

Reintegrating students requires a focus on rebuilding their social skills and boosting their self-esteem. As expressed by WR, this might involve structured SEL activities, and opportunities for safe social interaction in school. Additionally, PE and encouraging participation in movement activities was highlighted as a necessity to support students coming back to school. Staff commented that these activities could be beneficial in aiding students' physical and emotional recovery.

The quantitative data showed a range of scores among different year groups, suggesting that while some students might be managing their wellbeing reasonably well, others might not. Economically disadvantaged students were particularly affected by the pandemic. This was evident in the concerns raised about students on FSM by staff members, highlighting the need for socio-economic considerations. A WR commented,

"Pupils on free school meals are at a disadvantage. Some of them haven't had the kind of support at home that other pupils have received, whether that is access to a laptop for schoolwork or sharing spaces with others at home. It's interesting to see that some of our pupils were actually glad to be coming back to school which is great for us but may be a sign of their struggles at home during lockdown".

The pandemic exacerbated existing socio-economic disparities, particularly affecting pupils on FSM. These students often face challenges that can impede their academic progress and overall wellbeing. One of the issues is the digital divide. Access to technology, which became an aspect of learning during the pandemic, is not equally available to all students. Those with more limited access were at a disadvantage when it came to remote learning. This gap in digital access highlights inequalities in resources and support available to some students.

The reported eagerness of some pupils to return to school may reflect their challenging circumstances at home. School for many may not just be a place of learning but also a place that provides structure and support that they might not receive at home. This highlights the role schools play in providing stability and consistency for students acting as a microsystem.

The schools involved in this study were situated in different counties in Wales, each with its unique socio-economic characteristics as highlighted by the different percentage of pupils on FSM. These varying contexts may influence the experiences and challenges faced by their students during the pandemic. For instance, schools in more affluent areas with lower-than-average FSM percentages might have had a higher proportion of students with access to

digital devices and a conducive home learning environment. This variation underscores the need for varied approaches to wellbeing in addressing the challenges brought about by the pandemic. In the context of evaluating PauseUP, considering the socio-economic factors between schools as a context that influences the outcomes could be of relevance to the findings.

A focus of the discussion with the WR from West school was directed toward the Nurture Group, identified in the quantitative data as lower in wellbeing scores compared to the other year groups. The WR of this school reported an increase in emotional stress and anxiety for these students, suggesting that there was a need for more targeted support, especially in introducing the students back to the school day and routine,

"The nurture group is a particularly vulnerable space... pupils in this class have had previous issues and wellbeing here really needs to be prioritised. We've been noticing an increase in instances of emotional stress and disruption in the group."

The reported vulnerability and low wellbeing scores of the Nurture group is an indicator of the exacerbated challenges they face. These students, identified by the school as susceptible to emotional and mental health issues, may have found themselves further impacted by the pressures brought about by the pandemic and returning to school. The discussions with the WR of the school suggested a closer examination on this group who were selected to use PauseUP and to see how implementation within this targeted setting may lead to unique outcomes.

The administered wellbeing scales provided preliminary data on students participating in the pilot study and proved useful for discussion, however the wellbeing of teaching staff also emerged as a concern. Teachers were noted to have been compounded by increased workload pressures and these challenges were seen as potential barriers to introducing PauseUP. A WR observed,

"Wellbeing is probably at its worst amongst staff. The strain on teachers to catch up, with increased assessment and marking workloads, will probably affect the pupils too so we need to make sure we are looking after everyone."

The statement reflects a concern and highlights the challenge of deteriorating wellbeing among teachers. The wellbeing of teachers and students is deeply interconnected and the increased stress on teachers, reported as primarily due to the pressures of catching up, is a notable worry. Overburdened teachers may find it challenging to provide the supportive environments that students need. If teachers are visibly struggling, this may create an atmosphere of stress and anxiety that can permeate the classroom, influencing students'

emotional wellbeing. The pressure to catch up academically may inadvertently lead to an increased focus on academic outcomes and performance, potentially exacerbating stress levels among students. These factors may make it more difficult for schools to introduce PauseUP or on the other hand may give it more urgency for supporting the increasing stress levels developing in schools.

The preliminary data and observations gathered from WR indicate a notable decline in wellbeing across various year groups, with particular emphasis on older students and specific groups such as the Nurture group. This trend underscores a need for wellbeing support that is thoughtfully tailored to meet the diverse requirements of different student demographics. The pressure on schools, especially considering the stress and anxiety reported by teachers during the pandemic, and the imperative to not exacerbate their current workloads puts emphasis on the strategy of aligning PauseUP with existing school timetables and providing just brief 'pauses,' or interventions throughout the day and week.

Reflecting on the contexts for the hypothesised statements and considering these preliminary findings, it becomes clear that PauseUP needs to be introduced in a way that garners support rather than resistance from staff. Furthermore, data suggests that PauseUP might be particularly timely in addressing the increasing stress and mental health concerns among students through the delivery of practical, targeted activities. The programme's success is likely to be closely linked to its capacity to work within the various school contexts to address the many wellbeing challenges that were intensified by the pandemic and lockdowns. The following section will describe this and show how PauseUP was used by the four schools, reporting on the findings gained from the schools during the pilot study.

5.4 The implementation of PauseUP During the Pilot study

The four schools participating in the pilot study initiated the programme at different stages as highlighted in table 16 below, with some starting during periods of lockdowns that disrupted the originally planned 12-week schedule. These interruptions occurred throughout the academic year 20/21 and particularly between December 2020, January and March 2021, disrupting the beginning of the trial. The initial strategy was for each school to use PauseUP three times daily and three times a week. However, owing to scheduling difficulties, this proposed frequency was not realised by any school. The approach of use varied across schools. Some divided the sessions into two, one in the morning and another in the afternoon,

while others chose to use all three sections – Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual - during morning registration period.

Some schools did not finish the full 12-weeks of interventions included in PauseUP, often disrupted by further school closures and lockdowns causing them to start later in the academic school year and then interrupted by school holidays and the summer break. Nonetheless, each school was able to provide feedback. Table 16 provides an overview of the way each of the schools used PauseUP, including the initiation period, the selected year groups, the language version (English: PauseUP or Welsh: Saib a Sylwi), and their usage of the three sections, Physical (P), Emotional (E) and Spiritual (S) in the morning registration period (am) or afternoon (pm).

Table 16 Pilot study usage details for participating schools

School	Initiation Period	Year Group	Version Used	Usage Schedule
North School	Started Dec 2020 for 2 weeks, resumed in Apr 2021 (completed 12-week schedule)	Half of Year 7 cohort	Welsh	P, E (am), S (pm)
East School	Initiated April 2021 (completed 12-week schedule)	Year 7, 8 and 9	Welsh	P, E, and S (am)
South School	Started Jan 2021 for 2 weeks, resumed May 2021 (incomplete 12-week schedule)	Year 8 and 10 (Year 8 discontinued in June 2021 due to 'catching up' on extra numeracy and literacy lessons in morning registration time)	Welsh and English	P, E, and S (am)
West School	Started May 2021 (incomplete 12-week schedule)	Years 8, 9 and 10, Nurture Group (mixture of year 7, 8 and 9 pupils)	Welsh and English	P, E (am), S (pm)

5.4.1 Student Surveys

Surveys were sent to schools via email after 4-5 weeks of continuous usage of PauseUP. The student participants were instructed to express their preferences for the three distinct sections of the programme and why. They were asked to identify some of the activities they enjoyed and to describe PauseUP in less than 20 words. The survey did not explicitly ask for students to write their year groups therefore the findings are based on preferences shown in responses between the schools and associations can be made on age related preferences based on the year groups participating in each of the schools.

Question one on the survey sought to understand preferences for the three sections as shown in table 17. Variation in preference was evident across the different schools.

Table 17 Student responses to survey question one

School	Cohort	Total Students Consented	Surveys Returned	Response Rate (%)	Preference for Physical Component (%)	Preference for Emotional Component (%)	Preference for Spiritual Component (%)
North School	Half of Year 7 (11-12 years old)	60	40	67	65	20	15
East School	Whole School, Year 7-9 (11-14 years old)	160	139	87	60	10	30
South School	Year 8 (12-13 years old) & Year 10 (14-15 years old)	94	54	57 (unusable responses 24)	33	17	50

West School	Year 8-10 (12-15 years old) & Nurture Group (11-14 years old)	261	125	48 (unusable responses 15)	17	37	45
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North School chose to introduce PauseUP to half of their year 7 cohort, comprising students aged 11-12. Out of 60 students who consented to participate, 67% (40 students) returned completed surveys, primarily in Welsh. A majority 65% (26 students) expressed a preference for the physical component of the programme. The popularity of this section was attributed by students to its energising effect, with comments such as,

“The physical activity in the morning wakes me up and gets me ready for the day,”

“It helps us move and gets me standing,”

The emotional component, while chosen by a smaller proportion of 20% (8 students), was noted by some students for its calming impact,

“It calms me down and is useful for me and my mental health,”

“I like it in the morning and before we start a busy day, it helps the class find a bit of peace.”

The spiritual section, though selected by only 15% (6 students), was valued for its discussions, as well as offering an opportunity for students to engage with other people’s experiences of wellbeing, as one year 7 pupil mentioned,

“it’s interesting to hear other people’s stories and understand different themes of wellbeing.”

East School introduced PauseUP across the entire school, including year 7, 8, and 9 cohorts (students aged 11 to 14 years). Of the 160 students who consented to participate, 87% (139 students) returned completed surveys, predominantly in Welsh. The Physical section was the most favoured, with 60% (83 students) indicating a preference for it, mirroring the trend observed at North School. Students cited reasons such as,

“it prepares you for the day ahead”

“it helps to release tension and stress,”

The Spiritual aspect, preferred by 30% (42 students), was more popular at East School compared to North School. The reasons given by students for this preference included a desire for learning and engagement, as students expressed,

“I like to learn new things and PauseUP teaches us things about wellbeing,”

“The discussion activities in the spiritual section allows me to give an opinion in class.”

The Emotional section, chosen by 10% (14 students), was less popular compared to North School. However, the reasons for its appeal were similar, primarily for its calming effect and applicability outside of school. Students noted,

“it helps with things I can use outside of school when I feel stressed,”

“I remember to do some of the breathing exercises when I get worried.”

South School introduced PauseUP to year 8 (ages 12 - 13) and 10 (ages 14 - 15) cohorts. Out of 94 students who consented to participate, 57% (54 students) returned surveys, primarily in English. An issue encountered was the quality of the survey responses, with many being classified as 'spoilt' due to being incomplete, improperly filled, or otherwise unusable for analysis. This challenge reduced the amount of usable data and complicated the interpretation of the findings. Notably, 46% of the students, 24 in total did not engage with the survey or did not express a preference for any specific section of the programme.

Among the usable responses, the preference pattern at South School was distinct from that observed in North and East Schools. The Spiritual section of the programme emerged as the most favoured, chosen by 50% (15 students) of the usable responses. Students appreciated the community stories on different wellbeing themes, with some finding it an, *“Interesting experience”* and others noting it as *“the only part I could tolerate.”*

The Physical component was the second most popular, with 33% (10 students), but the reasons given suggest a potential limitation in the programme's implementation. Some students mentioned, *“it was the only section we did,”* indicating that some classes might not have been fully exposed to the other sections.

The Emotional section was chosen by only 17% (5 students). The proportion of students who preferred this section liked aspects such as listening to music for meditation and considered it to involve *“the least amount of effort.”*

The survey responses from South School reveal possible issues in the delivery and experience of the programme as well as more of a negative response to it from students. The varied reasons for preferences and the high rate of spoilt responses indicate there may be a

need for an exploration of some of these factors at interview with the WR of this school to understand if all components of the programme were delivered and experienced by the students and if not, what were the barriers.

West School introduced PauseUP to a wide range of student cohorts from year 8 to 10 (ages 12-15) as well as a Nurture group consisting of a mix of year 7, 8, and 9 students. This approach led to West School having the highest number of student participants with 261 students providing consent. However, only 125 students returned surveys, resulting in a response rate of 48%. The surveys were filled out in both Welsh and English.

Like South School, West School faced challenges with the quality of some survey responses; 15 surveys (12%) were either improperly filled out or hard to interpret, and therefore students did not express a preference for any specific section. Despite this, clear preferences were identified among the usable responses. The Spiritual section was the most popular, chosen by 45% (50 students) of the usable respondents, aligning with the trend seen in South School. This section was particularly appreciated for providing time for reflection and understanding, as one student noted,

“It gave us time to think and discuss what wellbeing is” and helped another student with *“understanding the brain a bit more and how it links with wellbeing and happiness”*.

The Emotional section followed in preference, selected by 37% (41 students). It was described as:

“a nice and relaxing way to start the day” and was favoured by some students for activities that could be performed while seated, *“I liked it because we didn’t have to move about much and could stay in our seats”*.

The Physical section, chosen by 17% (19 students), was the least preferred section. Despite its lower popularity, it was recognised by some for making mornings a bit more enjoyable and helping to alleviate anxiety and stress, like some of the reasons given by students in North and East schools.

“It’s a good way to begin the day and helps me shake off stressful mornings at home.”

However, some practical challenges were noted in the survey responses by students in this school, such as insufficient space in classrooms for the physical exercises,

“It’s sometimes difficult to do in the class, there’s not enough space to move around in.”

An observation from both West and South Schools, which also had older student cohorts taking part in the study and responding to the survey, was a degree of disengagement. Some

students expressed indifference or scepticism towards the programme, with no preference for any section followed by comments like,

“didn’t see any point to it” and “people didn’t really take it seriously”.

Question two instructed students to name some of the activities which they enjoyed on the programme and some of these responses can be seen in table 18. These generally included the yoga-based stretching and movement activities, mindfulness, music, and breathing exercises within the two more practical components of the Physical and Emotional sections. In the Spiritual section, activities such as the wellbeing stories, classroom discussions and some of the wellbeing themes introduced were identified by some as enjoyable. Interestingly, students who enjoyed activities in the Spiritual section named activities based on the SEL and PPI themes adopted. Students at West School also responded and referred to a particular video activity within this section that introduced kindness, narrated, and explored by an older woman in the local community.

Table 18 Student responses to survey question two

School	Named Physical Activity	Named Emotional Activity	Named Spiritual Activity
North School	Yoga and Stretching (n responses 26)	Mindfulness (n responses 11)	Class discussions (SEL) (n responses 5)
East School	Yoga, movement activities (n responses 61)	Breathing Exercises (n responses 15)	Storytelling (PPI's) (n responses 8)
South School	Stretching (n responses 3)	Mindfulness, Breathing exercises (n responses 10)	Wellbeing Stories (PPI's), Class discussion (SEL) (n responses 13)
West School	Movement and Yoga (n responses 14)	Mindfulness, Music (n responses 18)	Kindness Video (PPIs), Class Discussions (SEL) (n responses 29)

Students across schools showed interest in a variety of activities, and some identified activities that were not necessarily within their most preferred section. This indicates that students may be open to the range of wellbeing intervention activities, highlighting the importance of providing variety and options in PauseUP. In North and East Schools, activities like yoga and stretching were particularly enjoyed, aligning with their preferred physical section. This preference indicates an enjoyment of active, engaging physical activities in these schools,

who had introduced PauseUP to their younger year groups of 7 and 8 (aged 11-13). Some of the Emotional and Spiritual activities, were also named by students in these schools.

In South and West Schools, which contained older year 9 and 10 (aged 14-15 years) students, more activities were named within the Spiritual section. These types of activities may be more enjoyable for students in later progression stages of schooling and may align more with their interests. While the physical activities were widely enjoyed and named more in North and East schools who had younger students, some students in East and West schools also enjoyed these interventions which provides an opportunity to improve engagement and understanding in these areas across the schools participating to find out more about what works best for whom. This could involve gaining more information on the context and making these activities more practical for the classroom setting or relatable to students' experiences. An adaptable wellbeing programme, offering a variety of activities, may cater more appropriately to the diverse needs and preferences of a wide student population.

The third question, which prompted students to describe PauseUP in less than 20 words, yielded varied impressions across schools. These responses are categorised thematically below to capture students' initial reactions and descriptions of the programme.

Relaxing and Useful: One view was that PauseUP serves as a calming and beneficial initiative, with approximately 105 students (29%) from all schools using words aligned with this theme. In North School, many students shared positive feedback, with one describing it as *“Peaceful, relaxing, lovely, great, excellent, uplifting,”* and another noting its therapeutic effect: *“almost therapeutic for me.”*

East School students saw the programme in a generally positive light, with descriptions like *“Peaceful and it gives you a chance to lift your energy up,”* illustrating its energising and relaxing benefits. South School's feedback was somewhat mixed, with one student saying, *“It is something that is helpful for some children,”* yet another expressing, *“I didn't think it was very educational, but it helped me to find a bit of peace.”* In West School, some students described PauseUP with enthusiasm, using phrases such as *“fun for everyone”* and *“Something to lift your heart,”* underscoring its emotional appeal.

Scope to Improve: Feedback across schools identified areas for improvement, with approximately 87 students (24%) across all schools using words to describe PauseUP associated with this theme. Some North School students recognised its potential yet saw room for growth, as indicated by comments like *“could be improved a lot still.”* In East School, critiques focused on aspects like engagement and timing, with a student remarking, *“The programme doesn't look very exciting and could be improved a bit.”* South School students pointed out the programme's content issues and delivery, with words such as *“I found it*

extremely childish,” and *“I found it a bit confusing, and we didn’t really do much of it.”* West School’s feedback suggested that the programme was still in need of development, with a student observing, *“a good idea that needs more time to improve”*.

As Part of the School Day: Students’ experiences with integrating PauseUP into their school routine varied and approximately 68 students (19%) across all schools described the programme in relation to this theme. In North School, students viewed it as a positive part of their day, appreciating its practical utility, as one mentioned, *“It is a little active video to wake up and get ready for the school day and lessons.”* East School students appreciated its contribution to their routine, as expressed in comments like, *“Something that helps us to feel safe in school.”* In South School, the feedback indicated implementation challenges, with a student noting, *“It was an interesting experience, but the teachers weren’t using it much.”* West School students acknowledged its calming impact, but inconsistency in its application by teachers was a concern, as one student shared, *“It was nice to do sometimes but some of the teachers kept forgetting.”*

The remaining 28% of responses to this question (approximately 100 students) across the schools, either did not give a response, leaving the space blank or just simply writing ‘No’ or gave a response that was not connected to any of the above themes. Some gave answers specific to some of the activities they enjoyed most or simply described PauseUP as having three sections. The collected feedback however, punctuated with direct student responses, highlights areas for ongoing development and adaptation to improve the relevance of the interventions within the programme. While some found PauseUP beneficial and could see it as a useful part of the school day others did not.

The responses among students were diverse, with a marked inclination towards the physical component in North and East Schools, and a preference for the spiritual aspect in South and West Schools. The identification of specific enjoyable activities, particularly in the physical section, indicates that maintaining and further developing these aspects could improve the programme’s appeal. When pooling results by year group, a trend emerges showing schools with younger students (Years 7 and 8) with a stronger preference for the physical and practical activities, while schools with older students (Years 9 and 10) demonstrate a shift in preference towards the spiritual component, wellbeing stories and class discussions. This age-related trend in preferences signifies a possible need in tailoring PauseUP to meet the varied interests of different year groups and progression steps. This variation underscores the need to incorporate a variety of elements for differing student interests and needs if used as a whole school or multiple year group approach.

Across all schools, there was a consistently lower preference for the emotional component of the programme, indicating a potential area for refinement with student interests. The possibility of inconsistent use of the programme by teachers as highlighted by some of the responses given indicates an area of further exploration. A notable disparity in response rates, with East School having a high rate of 86.9% and West School a lower rate of 47.9%, points to the possible influence of school-specific approaches, student engagement levels, and the effectiveness of survey communication on student interaction with the programme. The presence of spoilt responses, particularly in South School, highlights the need for clear and effective survey design and administration to engage with young people and support the evaluation process.

The initial survey findings illustrate the complexity of introducing PauseUP in schools and advocates for an approach that considers the unique contexts and developmental needs of various student cohorts. The evaluation should continue to factor in these age-related differences to ensure the relevance of the programme across student age groups. The next section of the findings will explore some of these factors in more detail by portraying the findings of the realist interviews that were conducted with WR towards the end of the pilot study.

5.4.2 Realist Interviews

In July 2021, realist interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the academic school year 20/21 and use of PauseUP. These interviews explored some of the ways PauseUP may be improved to better align with context. The interviews investigated the programme's introduction and implementation, successes, and challenges in relation to the hypothesised statements and helped to identify what worked best, for whom and in what circumstances.

What worked, for whom and in what circumstances?

The interviews revealed varied perceptions of PauseUP among pupils and staff. Positive feedback highlighted the programme's role in fostering open discussions and providing mental health support strategies. As the WR of North school noted,

"The spiritual section created opportunities for conversations about wellbeing in the classroom, which some of the pupils and teachers really enjoyed. The practical activities

helped others to feel more awake in the mornings and the form teachers noted the benefits to pupil's attention after doing them."

North and East school, who completed the 12 weeks of the programme reported more positive outcomes, particularly valuing all three sections. As the WR from East school commented,

"The majority of pupils engaged with it and were eager to start the day with the movement exercises, we found that some of the mindfulness activities and stories helped to get the class talking about wellbeing with each other and with the teacher."

Mixed student responses in the surveys indicated the programme's varied influence across schools and year groups and South and West schools faced more challenges. According to the WR from these schools there was less engagement from staff and students, especially in older cohorts and resistance was reported in taking part in the physical exercises. The WR from South school commented,

"The younger pupils were fine to give it a go but when the older ones were encouraged to participate in the practical movement activities a lot of them refused. It was difficult in maintaining momentum and keeping teachers on track with the schedule."

According to staff from these two schools, the programme's engagement varied a lot with age. North and East schools who had younger students showed higher responsiveness at survey, whereas West and South school with older year groups taking part demonstrated mixed reactions, particularly towards the practical section. This alignment of feedback with survey responses adds further evidence towards a need for age-appropriate adaptations within the programme. As one WR suggested,

"It needs to work with different year groups, it's great that there are different sections because it gave some of the older classes a choice, they would often ask to do the spiritual activities over the other sections. This wasn't such an issue with the younger pupils."

Success in introducing PauseUP may be closely linked to how the programme was delivered. Integrating it within pastoral time with form teachers, saw higher engagement levels according to WR. Contrarily, delivery by non-form teachers within normal curriculum classes sometimes led to disengagement. As the WR from East school noted,

"We tried to arrange it so that the sections were split between the morning and afternoon, but we struggled to get the regular class teachers to use it so had to fit it all in within the morning registration which became another challenge due to time constraints"

The strategic selection of half the year 7 classes and staff at North school may have contributed to the programme's more successful introduction. The WR spoke of this being,

“A decision to make sure we had chosen the best classes and staff who we knew would use it. We are aware of some teachers who would be more sceptical about doing wellbeing, so we tried to select teachers with pastoral experience. This helped us split the programme more effectively to different times of the day.”

The other school representatives collectively reported that they struggled with staff buy-in and programme delivery due to involving a wider range of year groups. West school reported increased challenges with a heavy workload for teachers. The WR spoke of the need to support staff continuously across the school, throughout the study,

“I needed to make sure the staff were OK using it, some of them would often face difficulties with fitting it in, others seemed to enjoy it when they had the time. It became a bit of a challenge for me personally as I had lots of other work to contend with. I do think PauseUP is important, it’s just the challenge of getting it off the ground and into the school routine for teachers.”

Notably, West school's Nurture group were observed to have found particular benefit, indicating the potential for the programme's relevance in this setting for students with additional wellbeing needs, as highlighted by the WR,

“It was less of a challenge in getting it going in the Nurture group, the teacher in that class told me about the benefits she found in using it and for providing topical ideas for lessons. I suppose they have a bit more flexibility and time to use PauseUP as they stay in the same classroom most of the day and the teacher can decide on when to use it, rather than having to fit it all in along with other classes in different rooms.”

The pandemic presented additional challenges, impacting consistent programme introduction across all schools. However, despite these challenges, the need for the programme from all WR was strongly felt during this period, reinforcing its relevance. As the WR from South school commented,

“It’s been a tough time to introduce something new in the school. We’ve had to close the school several times this year and staff and students have been off sick...we all know how important it is to support wellbeing which probably helped get PauseUP going. It’s been a constant battle though in making sure all staff are aware of it.”

This comment aligns with the biggest challenge for most schools which seemed to be the logistics and fitting a new programme into the complex school setting during a disruptive academic school year. The circumstances were not ideal for introducing PauseUP, however the attention given to the research efforts in trying to make it work by all schools involved, highlights the level of care and support each WR had over their students and staff at this time.

Developing the Initial Programme Hypotheses for PauseUP

The realist interviews were used to discuss hypothesised if...then statements. All interviewees were shown the hypotheses and asked to make comments on how their experiences of using PauseUP during the study may inform their refinement. These will be grouped below into the four developing themes.

Integration in School Routine and Supportive Environment

The pilot study underscored the significance of designating WR as central points of contact. These staff members played a role in liaising between the company partner, the research process, and introducing PauseUP in their schools, ensuring that the needs and contexts of each setting were adequately addressed.

In East, West, and South schools WR were also members of the school leadership teams. These schools had larger student and staff participation across different year groups and this dual role may have helped facilitate the introduction of the programme within the school in the initial stages. Their position in the leadership team enabled them to advocate for the programme, align it with the school's timetable and mobilise necessary resources to teaching staff. For instance, the assistant head and WR of West school commented on this being a key contextual factor,

"Being part of the leadership team gave me an opportunity to explain to the headteacher what PauseUP was all about and how it may be of assistance with school plans, it helped me encourage teachers to start using it."

North School had appointed a dedicated wellbeing coordinator for the year group with whom communication for the research was held throughout the pilot study. This strategy provided a concentrated and tailored introduction to PauseUP and allowed instructions to be passed on and feedback gathered efficiently. Within this school the leadership team were supportive in the initial stages, as expressed by the co-ordinator,

"I must say the school already had an environment that supports wellbeing, the leadership team and head teacher are always making sure that the wellbeing of pupils is a priority, and this helped with getting PauseUP started."

The HoY groups from schools were supportive in the early stages of the study, providing feedback, and supporting with the transfer of information to teachers in their year groups. As the WR from East school reported, this was a contextual factor conducive to introducing a new programme,

“We were involving all three-year groups, 7, 8 and 9 and it was important to have the support from the other heads of year. Their encouragement gave me and other teachers a bit more incentive to carry on using it, they helped with feedback on how it was all going, I probably wouldn’t have been able to introduce PauseUP on my own.”

At East School, the deputy head, who was also the head of year 7 and WR for this school spoke of the necessity of providing training and support to the teachers who were using PauseUP as a mechanism towards its successful introduction,

“I think it was a really great idea to provide that initial training to our teachers. The training videos helped create a supportive environment to get it going. We held virtual training session webinars at the beginning to inform everyone about the programme, why we were using it and how it was going to be used.”

This acknowledgment of encouraging and informing teachers was mirrored at West School, where the WR needed to adopt a proactive approach in encouraging and reminding teachers to use PauseUP. They commented on the benefits of providing training to staff that were required to use the programme, but mentioned that more regular opportunities to provide this training would have created a continued supportive environment,

“At the beginning we were able to create momentum through the training videos, but then as the school term continued it would have been helpful to have had more information to pass on, maybe a webinar or something to incentivise them and not just me knocking on their doors to check up on them.”

The WR at South school, who was also an assistant head and member of the school leadership team reported that introducing PauseUP into existing pastoral periods, like morning registration, was required as a mechanism for making the programme a functional part of the school day. The WR spoke of the difficulties in finding other suitable opportunities as it would require more staff involvement and therefore more provision of training,

“We tried to introduce it across the school day in the morning and afternoon classes, but it was tricky, and teachers were refusing or forgetting to use it, it worked well then in the morning registrations for the first few weeks. We could have probably benefited from more opportunities to provide training to support them.”

Across schools, a pattern emerged linking the introduction of PauseUP to the level of support and commitment from staff and leadership. North and East schools, who each had different strategies, may have shared the benefit of a more conducive environment and support from staff. North school had limited number of classes and staff required to implement the programme. East school had consistent support from the HoY groups and provided training

sessions and webinars for staff whilst having a larger cohort of three-year groups. In contrast, variability in engagement was reported in South and West Schools, where commitment levels and staff enthusiasm fluctuated. Effective communication, teacher buy-in, training and alignment with appropriate classes in the school's timetable are all factors that emerged from the interviews for introducing PauseUP and creating a supportive environment for its implementation.

Addressing Student Stress and Mental Health

Across schools, a consistent theme reported by WR was the recognition of the diverse stress and mental health challenges faced by students during the study. This diversity of stressors necessitated adaptable approaches, especially considering the heightened challenges brought about by the pandemic. The WR from South School shared,

"In our school over the last few months, we've seen everything from academic pressures to social dynamics affecting our pupils and staff mental health, it's been a really hard time for all of us."

WR reported observing initial outcomes from the use of PauseUP as a decrease in stress levels and improvements in wellbeing among students who engaged with the programme, as commented on by the WR of East school,

"The pandemic highlighted the urgency of addressing wellbeing and I think some of the activities in PauseUP were timely and helped to provide support,"

The initial success in addressing these concerns was attributed by the wellbeing co-ordinator of North school to the mechanism of having a variety of activities offered by the programme,

"I think it's unique in that it includes a range of activities like movements and mindfulness and the wellbeing discussions and stories. Many pupils enjoyed the physical section and we saw an increase in pupil engagement after doing some of those movements, the wellbeing topics introduced did help us create an open atmosphere to talk more about what wellbeing is and things we can do to help ourselves".

South and West Schools both had older students participating and the WR emphasised the variety of engagement across the different year groups. They commented on how it has been a consistent challenge in knowing how to support everyone and recognised that older students were showing more signs of stress and concerns. In the context of wellbeing support being needed, the WR of West school acknowledged that PauseUP, as a mechanism was timely and opportune to help with this,

"The timing couldn't have been better, and we have seen that our pupils, especially the older ones need more support. This is often difficult to do in school and we have struggled previously. The range of activities enabled us to address different needs. We found out early on that the movement activities wouldn't work for the older groups and that made us more aware of the other sections, especially the topics in the spiritual section which got some of them talking about things like kindness and gratitude."

The influence of some of these activities was reported by the WR of South school as a mechanism for creating a narrative around wellbeing. They spoke of how some of the older students reported finding them useful as they could relate things like kindness and empathy to practical ways to support themselves.

In linking the practical activities as mechanisms to addressing the context of heightened stress, the WR from East school commented on students using them outside of school,

"Some pupils have told me they remembered to try the exercises to help them relax outside school. We had one particular pupil who was struggling in class and then when they came to see me, we had a go at one of the breathing exercises together and it certainly helped the conversation that followed."

This was observed at North School, with the wellbeing coordinator noticing how the context of heightened stress and using the interventions on PauseUP as a mechanism for support led to the outcome of students using these techniques for supporting themselves,

"Some of our pupils seem to be more adept at handling stressful periods, and they've told us of them using some of the techniques at home."

However, as noted in the student surveys, not all the sections were enjoyed by all students and there was an observed trend in preference between younger and older students. While there were reported benefits of PauseUP containing some useful activities to help address the heightened concerns of students, WR acknowledged that it might not only be the influence of the programme and that it all very much depended on who the teacher was in the classroom, as the WR from South School comments,

"The younger year 8 classes enjoyed it initially and we could see some benefits, but then other classes in the same year group weren't using it. Maybe just the fact that the teacher was trying to support wellbeing was enough and PauseUP just reinforced that care,"

These experiences across schools highlight a collective need for wellbeing support for students in schools. PauseUP, with its range of activities, could have been helpful in providing that support and in meeting these varied needs, providing students with practical skills to

manage certain stressful situations. The positive outcomes reported affirm the importance of regular use of PauseUP and the variety of engagement and uses within schools calls for further exploration into what works best and for whom to address student mental health concerns.

School Wellbeing Approaches

The implementation showcased a variety of approaches used by each school, each tailored to their context and needs of the respective settings. This diversity offered insights into the flexibility and adaptability of the programme.

North School opted for a targeted approach, introducing PauseUP with half of their Year 7 cohort. This strategy was reported as being a concentrated and manageable introduction, facilitating closer monitoring and evaluation. The WR from North School reported positive outcomes, noting increased engagement and wellbeing benefits within the specific cohort. This focused strategy proved effective in ensuring a more controlled assessment of the programme's influence. The wellbeing coordinator reported that their chosen focus on a smaller group supported them to closely monitor its integration within the chosen classes, sharing,

"Our approach with Year 7's and the selection of the best classes and teachers for the programme's rollout allowed us to keep an eye on things early on and learn about how it was being used."

In contrast, East School introduced PauseUP across all year groups, adopting more of a WSA. This strategy was reported as aiming to create a unified approach within the school. The WR from East School highlighted the benefits of this, including a school-wide awareness of wellbeing practices.

"We needed to introduce PauseUP as our wellbeing strategy to focus on getting the teachers on board and giving it more purpose. I think this really helped get it up and running, it was useful to use it alongside other wellbeing initiatives and include it within our wellbeing planning and training,"

West and South Schools chose to involve both younger and older cohorts in PauseUP, presenting a mixed approach. WR at these schools reported to have experienced variations in engagement and faced challenges in gaining support from a larger number of staff members. The involvement of different age groups highlighted the need for age-appropriate adaptations and the importance of staff training to support engagement. As articulated by the WR from West school,

“It was quite hard to introduce PauseUP early on as we had chosen lots of year groups to use it. I must admit I thought it was going to be easier than it was, but I learnt that it would probably be better if we started with the younger ones and slowly built it up to other year groups.”

This staff member continued to indicate that the targeted approach used to support their Nurture Group was a more effective strategy,

“The focused approach for introducing PauseUP helped ensure that the more vulnerable students received optimal support. The teacher in the group was able to pick and choose appropriate activities and time it for when it was needed.”

Collective feedback suggested benefits of introducing PauseUP to younger students, they reported that they might be more receptive to new concepts. Many of the staff recommended that this should be the strategy used for PauseUP. Integrating it within the progression step 4, years 7 – 9 (ages 11-14) and using it to support the corresponding Health and Wellbeing AoLE, as mentioned by the WR of East school,

“I’m glad we used it within the three-year groups in what will now be named progression step 4, I think moving forward it would be good to link PauseUP more with the curriculum which would probably get it understood more within our school and gain more support from staff.”

Equally, the WR from West school commented on this use of PauseUP with younger pupils and aligning it with the curriculum as a similar theme,

“We will probably change our approach and just focus on using PauseUP with younger pupils. If we can work together to create a plan to align it with the curriculum it should encourage more teachers to use it.”

At South School, the WR reported that the decision by the head teacher to change approach in the middle of the pilot study and stop the use of PauseUP within the year 8 registration classes impacted the way teachers viewed the programme,

“It was going well in those younger year 8 classes but then it was decided to use that time to do more work on catching up. That decision put PauseUP on the shelf and made it almost impossible to reintroduce. The older year 10’s were not that engaged and so I think it would be better if we tried again, a fresh start next year with our younger year groups.”

This decision to change approach also aligns with the hypotheses about the need for the leadership team to support PauseUP, in providing a space for it in the school day and for gaining teacher buy-in.

The approach in using the Welsh language version, Saib a Sylwi, in North and East Schools appeared to also improve engagement, and it was reported on as having an influence on the way teachers viewed the programme, as noted by the wellbeing co-ordinator at North school,

"I think one of the most important factors for us was that it was available in Welsh, we simply wouldn't have used it if it was yet another English programme."

The importance of PauseUP considering the cultural and linguistic contexts of schools in Wales was highlighted by the WR at East school who spoke of how introducing the programme to their setting was greatly influenced by the programme offering Welsh language wellbeing support,

"Using Saib a Sylwi in Welsh helped in connecting it with our pupils and teacher's needs. They really appreciated some of the topics being covered in Welsh as unfortunately this is rare to find in schools, especially with wellbeing tools".

The varied approaches used underscore the need for communication channels, and an understanding of context in programme delivery. The importance of considering school size, year group dynamics, language, and staff capacity are all important factors to consider in the approaches used to introduce PauseUP. The feedback has helped to refine a more targeted approach of year 7-9, progression step 4 as being possibly more appropriate end users. It has also given attention to the Welsh language being an important factor for the context of schools in Wales.

Resistance to the Programme

The introduction of PauseUP faced varying degrees of resistance which were more pronounced in West and South school. A lack of awareness about the programme's objectives and the reasons for use was a resistance factor reported by the WR of South school,

"Many teachers resisted simply because they didn't understand what PauseUP was designed to achieve, I think if we offered more training or information sessions it would have helped but of course it was very difficult to fit that in this year with all the disruptions."

West School faced challenges due to disruptions in school routines and apprehensions from teachers about 'yet another' new initiative. The WR spoke about the challenge in getting it started, they did find the time to provide training but had to postpone use of PauseUP as schools closed again,

"We were ready to go and then we got hit by another lockdown, and then school holidays and teachers off sick, it was a difficult time to introduce something to the school and perhaps a more typical school year would have helped get things going a bit smoother."

The level of support from teachers was identified as a key influential factor. Within North and East school, they had clear approaches to targeting specific groups or maintaining a WSA which may have facilitated better communication channels. In speaking with the WR from South School, they reported on the experiences of communication gaps within the school causing more resistance,

"Our struggle with resistance from teachers was partly due to unclear communication about the relevance of using PauseUP, leading to more disengagement. This created a knock-on effect and stopped pupils from seeing the point in using it in class."

West School faced similar challenges in conveying the purpose and benefits across the entire school, partly due to the disruptions of the school year, the involvement of a range of different year groups and staff and the splitting of the programme into morning and afternoon sessions. The WR spoke of staff in the younger year 8 groups showing less resistance as they could see the students being more engaged. Staff in older year groups were reported to have found it difficult to maintain momentum, especially with trying to get students to engage with the practical activities on the programme that they did not want to do.

During the pilot study, technical difficulties emerged as barriers to implementation. The need for technical support was evident, with all WR stressing the need for assistance in getting PauseUP started. Although the programme was designed for ease of use and provided to the schools on a USB with instructions and a training video, there were reported difficulties in practically transferring this knowledge to others. Challenges occurred in placing the programme onto the school server which teachers would then have to access to use on their own laptop computers and whiteboards in classrooms. This was felt as a particular resistance factor in South school, with the WR saying,

"There was a delay in getting PauseUP onto the school server for the teachers to use. We had given out the information and gathered consent and were ready to go but had to wait for assistance in getting it practically in use. We needed more support in this process."

WRs from all schools suggested improving the user interface and introducing more varied activities and progression to maintain interest over time. They believed this would help alleviate resistance from students. WR reported that any delays in class between getting students ready and beginning the activities creates distraction. They spoke of the need for

preparation time for the class to use the programme and a possible way of adapting PauseUP to navigate this was reported by the WR at East school,

"If you try to make it even more simple to use that would help the process in the classroom and create more engagement, I think. It would be helpful if the activities could be accessed with fewer clicks and keep everything on a single screen. Some of the activities begin immediately after clicking a button; a short pause or a 5-second gap could allow teachers to better prepare the class."

The wellbeing co-ordinator from North school suggested a way of improving engagement from students,

"You should try to make the practical sections a bit longer, adding a bit of progression or merging some clips together, this would help establish a more structured routine."

As previously highlighted, the pilot study revealed less engagement from older student groups, especially around the practical movement activities, prompting a need for more age-appropriate activities. The West school WR went on to speak of these practical sections being merged with other sections and this being a possible resistance factor to engagement for students, especially for the Emotional section,

"Due to time constraints, the physical and emotional sections were used together, and there was some confusion about the difference. The connection between the two sometimes led older students, who weren't fond of the physical activities, to overlook the emotional ones."

This indicates a need for clarity and separation between the sections, either in design or in strategy, to try to alleviate the resistance to engage. Although the initial strategy was to separate the sections three times a day across the school week, none of the schools managed this and would often use all three sections within the morning registration classes. Further revision and examination on school and programme strategy and how this influences the outcomes would help clarify these design and strategy factors.

Adaptable strategies to include the requirement of less staff members in the early stages of introducing the programme or using staff with existing pastoral or wellbeing experience was suggested by all WR as ways of alleviating initial resistance. The West school WR went on to say that avoiding resistance in schools is a very difficult task but recommended possible approaches,

"It would need more targeted strategies, and training to increase staff engagement, it may be useful to begin using it with staff members with pastoral experience."

WRs collectively recognised the benefits of focusing on younger groups for the initial engagement to improve buy-in from the school, which, as the wellbeing co-ordinator from North school noted could,

“Create more support from other year groups who would be interested to see what’s going on and then teachers may be more curious for approaches they can use for wellbeing in supporting learning more generally.”

In West and South school, where more resistance was reported, the initial impacts of PauseUP was notably affected. In North and East School, where there were reports of more positive initial outcomes for pupils, there was less resistance and more acceptance indicating a trend between resistance factors and programme outcomes.

The experiences of resistance from the schools during the pilot study emphasise the importance of adaptability in its design and using feedback to understand and address the reported factors. Key strategies for overcoming resistance were reported to include improved communication within the schools to disseminate information to all who are required to use the programme and addressing any technical concerns early on. There was a reported need for diversified activities and inclusive programme design, especially if there are a larger cohort of varying ages using the programme. As suggested by some of the WR, extending or separating sections more distinctly, integrating progression, and amalgamating some of the activities could create a more functional digital platform and routine that fits in with the school and maintains student interest. Teacher training and support emerged as another area to focus on for navigating resistance, with the need for more resources to offer to staff involved. Strengthening these provisions may foster more consistent implementation of PauseUP across classrooms.

These realist interviews were supportive in refining hypotheses about PauseUP and the iterative nature of realist evaluation was evident in this process, as these were set to be further tested and validated during the main study. Stakeholder recommendations played a role in adapting the programme, ensuring its alignment with the realities of the school and classroom contexts. The interviews explored various aspects of PauseUP's implementation, including its resistance within the framework of the original hypothesised statements. This exploration helped to identify some of the most effective activities, identifying the groups who benefitted most, and understanding the contexts in which PauseUP was more successfully introduced.

5.5 Concluding the Pilot study.

The pilot study aimed to refine hypothesised theories and evaluate the practical application of PauseUP within school settings. The evaluation was grounded in realist evaluation principles, focusing on understanding the complex landscape of schools and the state of student wellbeing that PauseUP sought to promote.

The study began with "if...then" statements, positing that if certain conditions were met within the school, then PauseUP would be more effectively introduced, leading to improved student wellbeing. As the trial progressed, the hypotheses were explored using data gathered from students through wellbeing scales and surveys and from staff members through interviews. This process responded to the lived realities of students and teachers engaging with the programme. The findings revealed the complexity of school systems, the differences and similarities between settings, and the varying levels of wellbeing among students. This underscored the necessity of PauseUP needing to adapt to diverse school environments and student populations to effectively promote wellbeing.

The trial identified specific wellbeing needs and groups requiring extra support, particularly older students, and the Nurture group in West school. However, older students showed more resistance to the programme's practical activities within the Physical section. Higher engagement levels were observed from younger students in progression step 4 as part of the new curriculum in Wales, suggesting potential target groups for the programme.

The study demonstrated that PauseUP's adaptability and flexibility were tested against the backdrop of the pandemic, which reshaped how all participating schools were functioning. The programme's ability to remain relevant in some schools was related to its wellbeing principles and the responsiveness of its design to align with school timetables and provide just brief intervention opportunities.

Continuous training and staff engagement emerged as mechanisms to support PauseUP. Varied responses and resistance from teachers, along with increased workloads, highlighted the need for an inclusive approach for staff, especially those without a background in pastoral care or wellbeing. Many schools introduced PauseUP during pastoral periods, showing an awareness of barriers and resistance from staff. Support from WR and leadership emerged as factors for successful implementation, signalling the importance of focussed personnel and top-down commitment to student wellbeing in schools. The ability of PauseUP to fit within the school's context, particularly through a flexible and adaptable approach, was vital. This

included strategies like phased introductions or focusing on specific groups, such as younger students, to align the programme with school wellbeing approaches and curricular needs.

Reflecting on the pilot study's findings led to refinements to the initial hypotheses, transforming them into testable initial programme theories for the main study:

Integration in School Routine and Supportive Environment:

Original Hypothesis: Programme integration depended primarily on leadership and staff support.

Refined Theory: A holistic approach, integrating continuous teacher training, and transparent communication about PauseUP's objectives, alongside supportive leadership. This perspective ensures that integration focuses on empowering teachers with training and clear objectives, leading to a more effective introduction.

Targeted Approach to Student Stress and Mental Health:

Original Hypothesis: Centred on delivering various activities to tackle student stress and mental health needs.

Refined Theory: Expands to include the adaptability of PauseUP to diverse stress factors impacting different student groups, with a particular focus on emotional challenges amplified by the pandemic. This refinement signals a change from generalised activity delivery to an approach that adapts using data on the needs of students, ensuring the programme's effectiveness in influencing emotional regulation and stress management.

Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies:

Original Hypothesis: Envisioned using PauseUP across entire schools or specific year groups.

Refined Theory: Stresses the importance of flexibility in application to fit each school's context. This involves potential strategies like phased introductions or focusing on specific groups, such as younger students. The theory moves from a broad approach to one that is customisable, aligning PauseUP with specific school wellbeing goals and needs, improving engagement across various classroom environments.

Overcoming Resistance to Programme Introduction:

Original Hypothesis: Identified resistance factors and challenges in introducing PauseUP.

Refined Theory: More technical support and diversifying strategies for wider acceptance. This approach offers more practical solutions like training, support, and activities to ensure a higher rate of acceptance among teachers and students.

The pilot study's findings and the subsequent refinements to the initial theories provide a framework for understanding how PauseUP can be more effectively introduced and implemented in schools. These theories guided the main study, ensuring PauseUP's optimal fit within the complex school system and improving its potential to promote student wellbeing. The lessons learned from the pilot study and the refinements made aimed to shape a responsive programme for students and schools in Wales, supporting the broader goals of improving wellbeing outcomes and fostering a supportive school environment.

Chapter 6: The Main study

This chapter explores the main study of PauseUP, conducted during the academic year 2021/22. Following the findings from the pilot study, the main study was designed to test and refine the initial programme theories and gather data to explore the research objectives. Like the pilot study, all schools were dealing with the ongoing disruption brought about by the pandemic, including staff and pupil absences, and changing school timetables which are summarised in table 19.

Table 19 Key events during the main study

Dates	Key Research Events	External Contextual Effects on Schools
September 2021	First contact with North school's newly appointed health and wellbeing co-ordinator. West school MS Teams discussion. Central school headteacher expresses interest in becoming involved in main study.	Schools re-open for new academic year 21/22.
October 2021	Information, consent, and assent forms sent and collected from schools. MS Teams discussions with deputy head of East school and assistant head South school.	Autumn half-term.
November 2021	West school library assistant aids in logistical support.	Pupils return after half-term.
December 2021	Discussions on main study implementation. Wellbeing packs completed. East school email on reported delay in beginning trial.	Winter break
January 2022	West and North schools' begin using PauseUP. South school reports delay in launch of programme.	School return after winter break.
February 2022	Interviews with West and Central schools. North school begins main study after staff presentation.	Spring half-term. Central school Estyn Inspection

March 2022	East school discussion on main study. South school notes difficulty initiating programme.	West school site visit delayed due to Covid 19 outbreaks.
April 2022	Site visits to West school. Survey 2 completed by Schools.	School spring holidays.
May 2022	Site visits to West, East and Central schools for discussions and activities related to PauseUP. South school discusses challenges.	Summer half-term end of May.
June 2022	Site visit to North and Central school with discussions and focus group meetings. South school report technological difficulties in launching programme.	Delay to site visit to East school due to school trips.
July 2022	Site visit to East school. Central, North, East and West schools' complete wellbeing packs post programme.	Schools close for summer break.

The key events shown in the timeline include first contact and pre-delivery discussions with schools, the collection of consent and assent forms as well as the data collection points. Some of the schools faced external contextual challenges, such as an Estyn inspection, internal exams, staff and pupil absences, and continued covid-related disruptions, which resulted in delays in beginning use of PauseUP. Despite these challenges the 12 weeks of content was completed by four schools, with South school unable to re-introduce PauseUP.

Using mixed methods, this chapter will begin to assess the initial programme theories and their relevance to the schools using PauseUP. Table 20 presents a reminder of the CMO configurations for the initial programme theories, based on the learnings from the pilot study.

Table 20 Initial CMO configurations for PauseUP

Theme	Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome (O)
Integration	Supportive school leadership and environment, awareness of internal school dynamics and external factors like the pandemic.	Continuous teacher training, clear communication about PauseUP's objectives, integration into school routines.	Effective introduction and integration of PauseUP in classrooms, leading to successful programme adoption and improved wellbeing practices.

Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support	Increased student stress and mental health concerns, amplified by pandemic-related challenges.	Adaptability of PauseUP to offer various practical activities catering to diverse student stress factors.	Improvement in emotional regulation and stress management skills among students, leading to overall student wellbeing improvements.
Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies	Unique school contexts requiring flexible wellbeing approaches, including varying student demographics and school practices.	Customisation of PauseUP implementation, including phased introductions or focus on specific student groups, alignment with school wellbeing goals.	Increased engagement with PauseUP, resulting in a more effective wellbeing strategy.
Overcoming Resistance	Challenges or resistance to new programme introductions, technical complexities.	Strategies to address resistance including tailored technical support, diversified activities, targeted support for specific groups.	Higher acceptance and effective implementation of PauseUP among teachers and students, leading to better programme outcomes and reduced resistance.

The four themes encapsulate the focus areas identified during the pilot study, providing a framework for understanding the implementation of PauseUP. Each theme is linked to the specific context, mechanism, and expected outcome, offering a structured approach to evaluate the programme. enables the evaluation to continue to incorporate the principles of realist research, seeking to understand more on what interventions work best on PauseUP and for whom whilst also exploring how and why outcomes are achieved in the specific contexts.

6.1 Participation During the Main study

The main study involved the participation of students from Key Stage 3/Progression Step 4 (ages 11-14), with a focus on their understanding of wellbeing and their personal experiences of the programme across the different year groups and schools. This study saw the introduction of Central School, offering new experiences to explore. The consented year groups and schools are shown in table 21 along with a brief description of each school's unique involvement and contribution to the main study. As per the initial hypothesis pre-delivery

discussions were held with each school WR (n=5) before commencing to outline the research objectives, timeline, and data collection points.

Table 21 Participating school, year groups and number of pupils consenting to take part in the main study along with a short description of their involvement.

School	Year Group	Consented Pupils	Description
Central School	Total	47	Central School introduced the programme to the whole school and offered a new perspective for the evaluation. Students from Year 7, 8 and 9 consented to participate and the school had a dedicated wellbeing co-ordinator who was briefed during pre-trial discussions and responsible for introducing the programme to the school.
	Year 7	33	
	Year 8	8	
	Year 9	6	
West School	Total	56 (excluding Nurture Group)	West School provided another opportunity to examine the implementation of PauseUP, introducing the programme to younger cohorts this time (year 7 and 8). There was also more of a focus on the 'Nurture Group'. Interviews with the class teacher and observations were held within this setting as a focus group during the main study.
	Year 7	43	
	Year 8	13	
	Nurture Group (Mixture of year 7, 8 and 9)	14	
East School	Total	152	The highest consented student participation in the main study, East school provided a mix of students across the three-year groups
	Year 7	61	
	Year 8	38	

Year 9 53

using the programme. The inclusion of participants from year 8 and 9 who were also involved in the pilot study, offered a more longitudinal examination of PauseUP's implementation.

North School	Total	107	North school chose to involve the entirety of the Year 7 classes in the main study as opposed to only half in the pilot. The Wellbeing co-ordinator for the school also changed personnel between the studies and needed to be re-briefed about the programme during pre-delivery discussions.
	Year 7	107	
South School	Total	0	South School was unable to initiate the programme during the main study due to administrative and technological challenges, highlighting the practical challenges of implementing PauseUP in complex school settings.
All schools	Total	376	

South school faced increased challenges during the study and were unable to begin use of the programme. North school had a delay in implementing the programme due to a change in personnel who would become the wellbeing co-ordinator and representative, they needed to be briefed during pre-delivery discussions and then present it to senior staff members, but eventually began the rollout with the whole of year 7. West school had a delayed start due to staff absences, but eventually began using PauseUP. Central school who were new

participants to the research were the first to begin using PauseUP. These differences affected the timing and completion across the different schools.

Additional staff members volunteered to provide feedback during site visits, where focus groups, interviews, and discussions across the schools took place. Table 22 details who was involved.

Table 22 Pupil focus group and stakeholder engagement during main study

School	Pupil Focus Groups	Stakeholders Involved in interviews and discussions
West School	Nurture group (n=14)	Nurture group teacher, Assistant head (WR), Learning Support Assistant (LSA) for Nurture group, Progression Step 4 pupils (n=6)
North School	Year 7 pupils (n=16)	HoY 7, Wellbeing coordinator (WR), Form teachers (n=2)
Central School	Progression Step 4 pupils (n=18)	Wellbeing coordinator (WR)
East School	Year 8 and 9 pupils (n=10)	Deputy head of school (WR), Welsh languages, Expressive Arts, and Physical Education (PE) co-ordinators (n=3).

In West School the involvement of the Nurture group and its associated staff provided understandings into how the programme was implemented in this context. Students from year 7 and 8 in West school were also selected for interview two at a time to gain their views on PauseUP. Similarly, in North School, the focus on Year 7 pupils, supported by feedback from the Wellbeing coordinator and form teachers, offered a view of the programme in the first year of secondary school. Central School's focus on Progression Step 4 pupils from years 7, 8 and 9 and East School's continued inclusion of Year 8 and 9 pupils, complemented by staff feedback, provided a range of feedback on the programme and implementation efforts.

6.1.1 Refinements Made to PauseUP Pre-Main study.

In response to feedback from the pilot study, refinements were made to PauseUP before introducing it to schools in the main study to minimise anticipated resistance and in an attempt to improve user-friendliness. One of the key areas of refinement was the development of more targeted training for teachers. This training was designed to incorporate the themes of PPI's and SEL present in PauseUP, providing teachers with practical ideas for integrating these themes with wellbeing components in the curriculum. This approach aimed to create relevance to support the integration process of PauseUP into school routines. Strategies such as

webinars and information sessions were organised to engage staff. These sessions were intended to provide support and generate feedback from schools.

Adaptations were made to simplify the technological requirements of introducing PauseUP, with additional instructions and start-up training videos attempting to make the programme more compatible with the IT systems in schools. Changes were made to the content with a new range of activities included to avoid repetition for those students who were going to be using the programme for a second time. The programme was restructured into two main sections - the practical activities (Physical and Emotional) and the modular (Spiritual) section - as opposed to the previous three-section format. This aimed at creating a focused and progressive user experience that aligned better with the school timetable.

Additionally, PauseUP was consolidated onto a single screen interface, reducing the number of clicks needed to start using the programme. This change along with the other refinements, were responses to user feedback and intended to improve the programme's ease of use and accessibility. Figure 11 illustrates the 'Practical Pauses' (Pause 1-12) and the modular elements (1A-12C) incorporated onto a single screen. The programme was planned to be used three times a week for 12 weeks, approximately one school term.

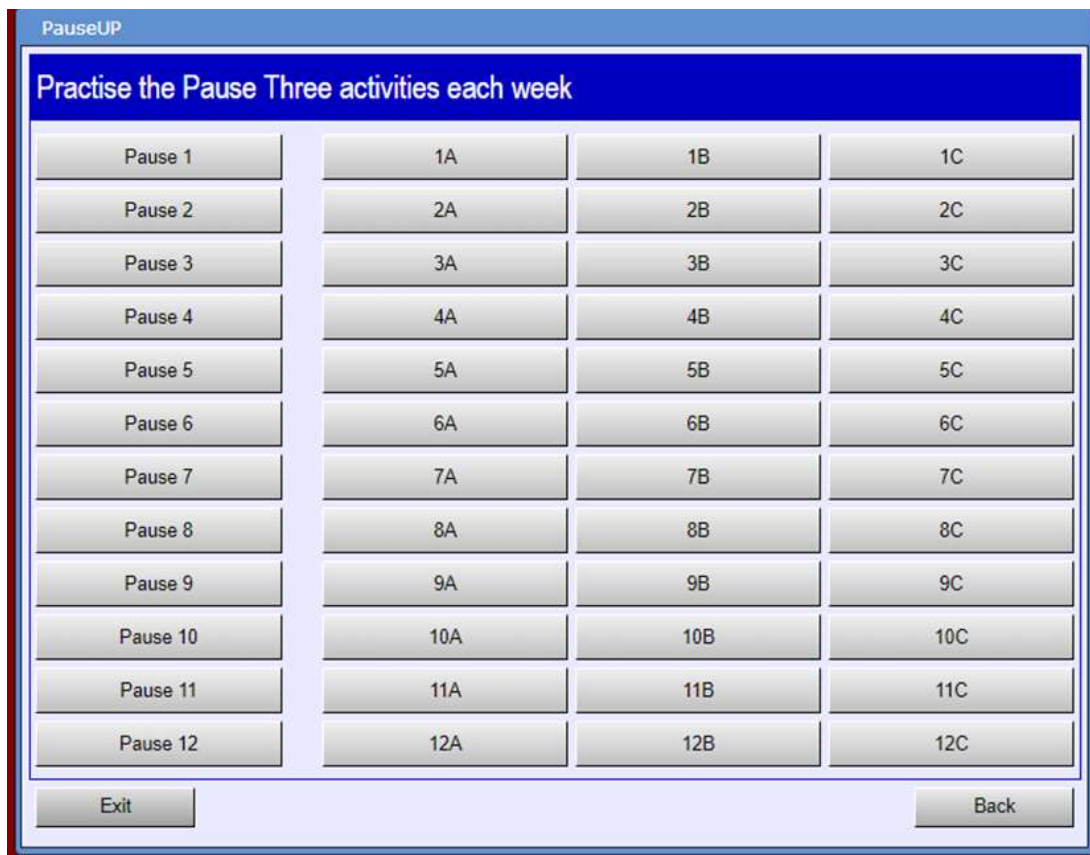


Figure 11 Snapshot of refined activity digital interface for PauseUP created for main study.

6.2 Objectives of the Main study

The primary objectives were to address the research objectives, as detailed in Table 23. The study was structured to explore the implementation across the different school contexts using mixed methods.

Table 23 Research sub-questions and data collection method used for main study.

Research objectives	Realist Evaluation Principle	Data Collection Method
How do participants perceive wellbeing within the scope of this study?	Context and Outcome understanding	Open-ended survey questions, student focus group discussions
What intervention activities on the programme work best and for whom?	Mechanism understanding	Student focus groups and discussions with staff
In what ways does the incorporation of PauseUP into the school context influence student wellbeing?	Outcome exploration	Pre- and post-programme wellbeing assessments, student survey questions. Staff and focus group discussions.
Which mechanisms and contextual factors influence the outcomes of the programme?	CMO configuration	Student and Staff interviews, and discussions, observations during site visits

The study focused on understanding students' perceptions of wellbeing. This was pursued by collecting qualitative data through an open-ended survey question followed by student focus group discussions. These methods were chosen to capture the student user perspectives, recognising the subjective, varied, and complex nature of wellbeing among different demographics of participants.

The study sought to gain an understanding of the intervention activities to see what works best and for whom using student focus groups, interviews, and discussions with staff. The influence of integrating PauseUP into the school setting on student wellbeing was an area of focus and to achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was employed using quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-programme wellbeing assessments, and responses obtained from student surveys, as well as qualitative feedback from discussions with student focus groups and informal interviews with school staff. This approach was designed to provide a view of how

PauseUP may influence student wellbeing, capturing changes in wellbeing data and the subjective experiences of the users and staff close to them in school.

The study aimed to identify key mechanisms and contextual factors that effected the outcomes. This was addressed at the conclusion of the main study and academic year 21/22 through interviews with students and staff, discussions, and observational field notes made during site visits. The goal was to explore the interaction between the interventions and mechanisms within the contexts of each setting. This aspect explored the understanding of how specific programme components and school factors interacted to produce observed outcomes on student wellbeing.

The main study focused on trying to quantify the outcomes of PauseUP whilst also qualitatively understanding the reasons behind these outcomes. This dual approach was required in exploring the research objectives and in refining the initial programme theories.

6.3 Main study Findings

6.3.1 How do participants perceive wellbeing within the scope of this study?

This first research objective is directed towards gaining an understanding of the concept of wellbeing as perceived by the pupils at the progression step 4 level (ages 11-14). This was initially done using an open-ended survey question instructing students to describe what wellbeing means in less than 20 words. Subsequent focus group discussions were then held to explore some of these themes. As shown in table 24, surveys were distributed across schools among 321 pupils, primarily from Year 7, which accounted for 226 responses. The remaining responses were received from Year 8 (51 participants) and Year 9 (44 participants).

Table 24 Survey responses and response rates by Year Group to the question “Could you describe what wellbeing means in less than 20 words.”

Year Group	Consenting Pupils	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)
Year 7	244	226	93%

Year 8	59	51	86%
Year 9	59	44	75%
Total	362 (Excluding Nurture group)	321	89%

The question invited students to express their understanding in a concise format. The high response rate across year groups, especially the year 7's indicates engagement with the question. Variations in response rates and the percentage of total responses across year groups may reflect differing levels of comfort with articulating concepts of wellbeing, logistical challenges in survey administration, or varying degrees of interest in the topic across schools. Table 25 shows the themes taken from these responses.

Table 25 Wellbeing Themes and Response Rates by Year Group

Year Group	Key Themes	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)	Representative Quotes
Year 7	Health and Mental Health	68	30%	<i>"To be healthy, safe and live a life well-lived."</i>
	Physical Health	72	32%	<i>"Exercising and keeping fit makes me feel better and is good for my wellbeing."</i>
	Happiness and Peace	54	24%	<i>"Wellbeing is knowing what to do to make you happy and what to do to relax."</i>
Year 8	Positive Emotions and Feelings	16	31%	<i>"Having a fresh mind, being positive, and sharing feelings keeps me positive and feeling balanced."</i>
	Taking Care of Self and Others	19	37%	<i>"Being kind to others is just as important to wellbeing as being kind to myself."</i>
	Mental and Physical Health	15	29%	<i>"I've learned that our brains need just as much care as our bodies."</i>
Year 9	Interconnection of Mind and Body	16	36%	<i>"Connecting the body and mind to support a healthy life is important for wellbeing."</i>
	Exploring Personal Interests	12	27%	<i>"Trying new things helps me understand myself better and boosts</i>

				<i>my mood, it distracts me from feeling stressed."</i>
	Mutual Care for Others	14	32%	<i>"When I take time to help others, it makes them feel better and improves their wellbeing, it does it to me as well."</i>

For younger students (year 7), the descriptions provided indicate an association of wellbeing more predominantly with physical health, as evidenced by the highest response rates for themes like 'Health and Mental Health' and 'Physical Health'. In contrast, Year 8 students begin to show a perception of 'Positive Emotions and Feelings', 'Taking Care of Self and Others', and 'Mental and Physical Health'. This shift indicates that as students make their way through secondary school, their perception of wellbeing may start to include more of a connection with mental health and relationships.

A holistic view of wellbeing can be seen in the older, Year 9 student responses. They provide examples of wellbeing as an interconnection of mind and body as well as 'Exploring Personal Interests' and 'Mutual Care for Others'. This demonstrates an understanding of wellbeing involving an engagement in fulfilling activities and caring for others. The representative quotes in the table illustrate how some participating students conceptualise wellbeing in their own words.

The student focus groups which consisted of participating year groups from three of the schools as shown in table 26 offered further views into these responses.

Table 26 Focus group participation by school and year group

School	Year Group	Number of Participants
North School	Year 7	16
Central School	Progression Step 4 (Years 7-9)	18
East School	Years 8 and 9	10

Physical Health and Enjoyment of Activities in Younger Pupils

At North School, Year 7 pupils associated wellbeing with physical health and activities. Their conversations revealed a clear enthusiasm for sports and exercise, viewed not only as key to health and wellbeing but also as sources of fun and enjoyment. A Year 7 pupil captured this sentiment,

"Playing football and running around with my friends at lunchtime makes me feel really good."

Another pupil added to this, stating,

"I think it's important to take care of your body by exercising and eating healthy because it makes you feel better about yourself."

These statements underscore a perception of wellbeing that begins to connect physical fitness with emotional wellbeing and social engagement.

Holistic Wellbeing in Older Pupils

Older pupils from Central and East schools demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing. A Year 9 pupil from East School described wellbeing as a balance of physical fitness and emotional health,

"It's not just about being fit; it's about feeling good inside and having people to share life with."

This comment reflects a developing perspective of wellbeing as an interaction of various factors. Similarly, a Year 8 pupil highlighted the importance of social connections,

"Having friends and family is important because those people can help you through tough times."

This illustrates a growing recognition among pupils of the significance of emotional support and social networks.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Across Ages

Mental health and emotional wellbeing were prevalent themes across focus groups. Pupils spoke on the importance of addressing emotional states. For example, a Year 7 pupil from North School noted,

"It's okay to not be okay sometimes, but it's important to talk to someone you trust and get help if you need it."

This response reveals an emerging understanding of the importance of mental health and seeking support. Furthermore, a Year 8 pupil from Central School shared,

"I think it's really important to have people you can rely on when you're feeling down."

This statement exemplifies the growing awareness among students of the value of having a supportive community.

Self-Awareness and Personal Growth

Older pupils, especially those in Year 9, spoke about self-awareness and growth. A Year 9 pupil from East School expressed,

"Learning about yourself and what makes you happy is important because it helps you figure out what you want to do in life."

This perspective indicates an understanding that includes personal development as components of wellbeing. Another pupil from the same group added,

"Setting goals and working towards them gives you a sense of purpose and achievement."

These comments reflect an appreciation of self-understanding and direction as aspects of overall wellbeing.

Focus group discussions across schools highlighted a dynamic understanding of wellbeing among pupils. Younger students tended to connect physical health and enjoyment, while older students developed a more integrated view that included mental health, emotional balance, social connections, self-awareness, and personal growth. This progression reflects the complexity of wellbeing as perceived by students at different developmental or 'progression' stages. When considered alongside survey responses, these findings underscore the importance of designing wellbeing interventions in schools that are adaptable and responsive to diverse perspectives. Additional examples of student definitions can be found in Appendix K.

While these views offer insight into how young people conceptualise wellbeing in this evaluation, it is important to consider the programme's potential influence on their perceptions. 'Idea inflation theory' suggests that students might internalise specific definitions of wellbeing, leading to unintended consequences like pressure to conform to perceived standards (Foulkes et al. 2024). Although PauseUP was not designed to impose strict definitions of wellbeing, its content and language may have shaped students' understanding, as reflected in some students' use of programme terminology during focus groups. This highlights a risk of promoting overly prescriptive or unrealistic concepts of wellbeing and underscores the need for a critical approach to programme development, ensuring it supports authentic understandings among students.

6.3.2 What intervention activities on the programme work best and for whom?

This section explores the mechanisms of PauseUP. Mechanisms are the transformative processes or drivers of change that lead to specific outcomes. These may include changes in students' attitudes towards wellbeing or the development of strategies for managing stress, as proposed in the initial programme theory on providing targeted stress and mental health support. To understand these mechanisms, a combination of student focus groups and discussions with staff was used. These methods aimed to identify which aspects PauseUP students enjoyed most and to clarify these themes through staff feedback. Table 27 outlines the participants involved in these discussions and summarises the main themes of feedback. Visual aids from the programme were used to discuss perspectives.

Table 27 Summary of feedback from Focus groups

School	Participant Group	Key Feedback	Themes	Representative Quotes	Resistance factors
West School	Nurture Group, Teacher, LSA	Positive feedback on PauseUP integration. Suitable for Nurture group.	Emotional Connection, Anxiety Management	<i>"PauseUP helps me feel like I'm not alone." "Mindfulness activities and meditations really help when I'm feeling anxious about school and being around others."</i>	<i>"Sometimes PauseUP activities make me feel a little bored."</i>
North School	Year 7 Pupils, Form Teachers (n=2)	Enjoyment of yoga and mindfulness. Preference for practical activities.	Social Connection, Stress Management	<i>"I like the team activities, they're fun and we get to talk a lot." "PauseUP taught me it's important to relax and how to do it when you want."</i>	<i>"Some of the information and activities on wellbeing are hard to follow in Welsh."</i>

Central School	Progression Step 4 (ages 11-14), Wellbeing Coordinator	Older students prefer spiritual section. Stress-relief techniques for exam periods.	Emotional Expression, Mental Health Awareness	<i>"I've become more open about how I feel after learning about the importance of talking with others." "The speakers who share their life stories are nice and friendly."</i>	<i>"When some people don't take PauseUP seriously, it ruins the experience for the rest of us."</i>
East School	Year 8 and 9 Pupils, Coordinators for Welsh, PE and Expressive arts	Positive feedback on practical activities. Mixed responses to routine integration in classrooms/registration time.	Social connection, Relaxation	<i>"PauseUP helps me connect with others." "The yoga in PauseUP is calming and loosens me up."</i>	<i>"Some of the PauseUP activities are too long. I get bored and start to lose focus."</i>

Nurture Group at West School

Strongest Theme: Emotional Connection and Anxiety Management

Pupils in the Nurture Group resonated strongly with themes of emotional connection and managing anxiety. This group's specific needs may require creating emotional bonds and addressing anxiety, which the nurturing environment supports. Students had one teacher and a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) and remained in the same class for most lessons, leading to consistent use of PauseUP. This setting showcased a strong alignment with themes of emotional wellbeing.

Pupils appreciated the inclusion of PauseUP activities in their daily routine, which created a supportive space for open dialogue and emotional expression. One pupil reflected,

"I like PauseUP because it gives us a chance to talk about how we're feeling and learn new ways to deal with things. Our teacher has time in the afternoon to go through the activities and it's nice to have something to look forward to."

Another pupil added, *"I like how we get to do it most days. It helps me stay focused and I feel like I'm learning something."*

The Nurture Group Teacher observed improvements in students' wellbeing, particularly in those dealing with anxiety and low self-esteem. She noted,

"We've seen improvements in their confidence and resilience. It's great to see how some of the activities have supported me and their approach to school, especially after the lockdowns."

The LSA also highlighted the practical benefits, particularly the breathing exercises used to help students transition between classes and during breaks. Staff appreciated the variety of coping strategies introduced by the programme, finding them beneficial for students. The consistent and flexible implementation helped reinforce these strategies as a regular part of the day. Students enjoyed learning about the themes of wellbeing and connecting with people in the community, facilitating their understanding of wellbeing.

The teacher and LSA's feedback echoed these sentiments, observing improvements in pupil engagement and wellbeing. The teacher reported using the PPI themes for class projects and discussions, indicating the programme's utility in supporting the health and wellbeing AoLE.

Collective feedback from the Nurture Group found PauseUP to be a useful addition to their routine, providing a mechanism for communication, emotional expression, and practical coping strategies. The programme worked well in this context due to its integration into the classroom by the teacher and LSA, demonstrating its effectiveness in meeting the emotional needs of this group.

Year 7 Pupils at North School

Strongest Theme: Social Connection and Stress Management

Year 7 pupils at North School found that PauseUP helped them connect and manage stress. This may align with their transitional phase from primary to secondary school, where building new social connections and managing the stress of a new environment are important. The preference for practical, classroom-friendly activities was evident, with pupils appreciating yoga and meditation activities that helped set a positive tone for the day.

One pupil highlighted the regular use of PauseUP, stating,

"Our form teachers use PauseUP quite often. We do yoga and meditation in the morning to start the day off right, and in the afternoon, the discussion and story exercises make us focus and talk about wellbeing."

Another pupil added, *"I think it's good that we do it most days. It reminds us to take care of ourselves. We get into a routine of standing up and moving about in class and it helps with the day's lessons."*

Form Teachers noted the programme's positive influence on social skills and collaboration. They highlighted PauseUP's role in facilitating open and meaningful group communication, creating a cohesive and supportive classroom environment.

Pupils suggested improvements, such as making the physical activities more classroom-friendly to accommodate space constraints. Form teachers acknowledged challenges in fitting the activities into the classroom setting and school schedule, indicating a need for better integration with other curriculum-based lessons.

Pupils at Central School

Strongest Theme: Emotional Expression and Mental Health Awareness

At Central School, Year 7, 8, and 9 students expressed themes related to emotional expression and mental health awareness. Older pupils suggested using interventions for stress-relief techniques during exams, reflecting their maturity and school challenges. They articulated a preference for activities that promote individual practices, especially during high-stress periods. One pupil suggested,

"I think breathing exercises and music meditations might work best around exam time and could be used more frequently than during classes or even to prepare us for exams."

Another pupil added, *"Some of my classmates felt a bit self-conscious doing the activities that involved moving around. I prefer doing things on my own or with friends outside school."*

The wellbeing coordinator observed varied responses from different year groups, noting an increase in emotional stability among some pupils. They acknowledged initial apprehension about introducing another initiative but appreciated the programme's benefits over time for students. The coordinator expressed interest in continuing PauseUP, recognising its potential for longer-term integration into the school's strategy.

Pupils at East School

Strongest Theme: Social Connection and Relaxation

At East School, pupils had used the programme longer, leading to consistent engagement. Students appreciated both practical activities and spiritual discussion activities, finding them beneficial for relaxation and focus. They voiced preferences for learning about empathy, kindness, and the benefits of music and mindfulness activities. One student noted,

"It's interesting to hear about other people and them telling us more about wellbeing. It made me realise that it is actually a useful thing to teach."

Another added, *"It was nice to have music playing in the morning sometimes and just giving us a space to talk while it played in the background."*

Feedback from East School suggested a need for flexible scheduling to fit PauseUP into the students' daily routines without disrupting other lessons. Students expressed a desire for more interactive and participatory elements, with a Year 9 pupil suggesting,

"I think PauseUP could be improved by having more group discussions and activities that allow us to share our ideas."

The need for balance between structured activities and flexible, interactive sessions that promote student engagement and discussion was expressed by co-ordinators. Integrating PauseUP into different curriculum areas in a way that resonates with both students and teachers was a suggestion to enhance the programme's appeal.

Feedback from schools revealed varied impacts of PauseUP's interventions, highlighting the need for context-specific and age-appropriate approaches. The programme's diverse activities show promise, particularly for more vulnerable students, such as those in the Nurture Group. However, feedback highlighted resistance factors worth investigating. For instance, while Nurture Group students appreciated emotional support and anxiety management provided by interventions, some found the activities boring, suggesting a need for more engaging content even in settings where the programme was deemed beneficial. Year 7 pupils at North School enjoyed mindfulness and yoga but had difficulty with some content in Welsh, underscoring the need for better language adaptation in schools where Welsh language was a key factor in adopting the programme. At Central School, PauseUP's influence was sometimes diminished by peers who did not take it seriously, affecting the experience. East School students, though finding activities calming, noted that some sessions were too lengthy, resulting in a loss of focus. Exploring these resistance factors further could reveal how they reflect broader school contexts, student needs, and potential mismatches between a programme's design and

students' experiences. Understanding these issues can inform how interventions might better align with a range of student perspectives.

Overall, the feedback aligns with the varied perceptions of wellbeing, consistently highlighting mental health and emotional wellbeing as central themes supported by PauseUP. This approach underscores the importance of making wellbeing programmes in schools adaptable, responsive, and reflective of their impacts, including potential negative outcomes. Additional feedback on PauseUP interventions and examples of extracurricular work from students can be found in Appendix L.

6.3.3 In what way does the incorporation of PauseUP into the school context influence student wellbeing?

Student Survey

The survey which was previously described in this chapter in relation to its third question on eliciting descriptions from students on wellbeing contained two other questions. These sought to uncover quantitative insights into two main areas: students' engagement with activities from PauseUP outside of school, and the potential for incorporating PauseUP into the regular school day.

Question 1: Have you used any of the activities from the resource outside of school? If you have, which ones did you use?

Students were given the option of yes or no and needed to tick their response. If yes was selected, they were asked to indicate which of the activities they had used. Table 28 summarises year group responses to this question.

Table 28 Student responses to survey 2 question 1 across year groups

Year Group	Consenting Pupils	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)	Percentage Using Activities Outside School (%)	Breathing Exercises (%)	Yoga and movement Activities (%)	Other Activities (%)

Year 7	244	226	93	73	41	59	4
Year 8	59	51	86	65	51	44	5
Year 9	59	44	75	64	59	31	10

The Year 7 group's higher numbers and engagement (73%) coupled with a high response rate (93%) indicates that younger students may be more receptive to PauseUP, reporting active incorporation of some of its activities into their personal lives. A preference for yoga activities (59%) like stretching and movement may reflect their age-appropriateness as a mechanism where physical activity is described as both enjoyable and socially engaging for this group, leading to higher reported usage outside school.

For Year 8 groups there is a slight decrease in both the response rate (86%) and engagement with activities outside school (65%) which could indicate the onset of varying interest with PauseUP. The preference for breathing exercises (51%) over movement and physical yoga activities (44%) aligns with previous descriptions of wellbeing given by students as they get older who may be beginning to explore and value different types of wellbeing practices for emotional support.

Year 9 showed the lowest response rate (75%) and reported engagement level with programme activities outside school (64%) which might be due to increasing academic pressures or a change in how activities align with their evolving preferences and descriptions of wellbeing. A strong preference for use of breathing exercises (59%) could indicate a need for more of these types of activities that offer stress relief and require less time and physical commitment to do.

The consistent reported engagement with breathing exercises outside school across all year groups (41%, 51%, 59%) may indicate that these activities are perceived as accessible, possibly due to their simplicity and the immediate relaxation effect they can provide. The descending trend in preference for yoga movement activities from Year 7 to 9 (59%, 44%, 31%) reflects how they were perceived by students in classrooms with older students' finding them less appealing than younger students. The variety of 'Other' activities (4%, 5%, 10%) written by students and the increasing use with age demonstrates that a small segment of students were using a range of practices, which may be more personally meaningful or fit

better into older student's lifestyles. Examples of responses written for these 'other' activities include "Photography Task for savouring the moment", "Gratitude Journal" and "Being Kind to Others".

Understanding trends and the reasons behind them is important for adapting PauseUP and wellbeing approaches to meet changing needs and interests of students as they progress through school. The pattern of responses indicates that some of activities may be easier to embed in students' daily lives outside of school, perhaps requiring less work and implying a potential positive influence. This trend suggests a divergence in applicability across age groups within progression step 4, years 7-9 (ages 11-14). Tailoring activities to age-specific preferences and providing a variety of options could potentially improve the programme's impact.

Question 2: Can you see this resource becoming an important part of the school day?

The second question in the survey explored students' perceptions of whether PauseUP could become a part of their daily school routine. Table 29 summarises responses.

Table 29 Student responses to survey 2 question 2 across year groups

Year Group	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Year 7	89 (n=201)	11 (n=25)
Year 8	82 (n=42)	18 (n=9)
Year 9	72 (n=32)	28 (n=12)

There is a high level of agreement across year groups, with 83% of respondents indicating that they see PauseUP becoming an important part of the school day. However, each year group shows a slight decline in agreement.

The youngest group, Year 7, displays the highest agreement at 89% and lowest disagreement at 11%. Their higher response rate and agreement percentage indicates that younger students may be more receptive to PauseUP in their daily school routine. In year 8, agreement drops slightly to 82%. Year 9 participants show the lowest level of agreement at 72% and highest level of disagreement at 28%. This shift could reflect their varying perceptions of wellbeing and their autonomy in decisions, or possibly the increased academic workload makes the integration of PauseUP less appealing. Older students throughout the evaluation showed less

engagement with PauseUP and this relates to their lower levels of agreement to it becoming a part of the school day.

While survey findings suggest a potential positive influence, it is important to recognise the voices of those students who disagreed. Their perspectives highlight the challenge of implementing a one-size-fits-all programme and underscore the complexity of integrating such interventions within the diverse microsystem of school. These varying responses point to the changing preferences of students as they progress through their school years and emphasise again adaptability in the design and delivery of wellbeing programmes.

Quantitative Evaluation of Outcomes on Student Wellbeing

The quantitative analysis of student wellbeing aimed to assess PauseUP's potential influence using three scales: Cantril Ladder for overall life satisfaction, SCWBS for emotional and psychological wellbeing, and SWEMWBS for mental wellbeing. These scales provided a comparative view of student wellbeing before and after the programme during the main study.

Patterns were examined across subgroups, including Year 7 students from all schools by school and gender, Year 8 and 9 students at East School by gender, and individual and gender-specific responses in the Nurture Group. While these scales offered insights, it is important to interpret data cautiously, considering context and the complex nature of wellbeing as described in the literature review (Section 3.1). Not all wellbeing changes were positive; many scores declined, suggesting that PauseUP may not have been beneficial and could potentially have caused harm in certain contexts. This underscores the importance of critically evaluating both positive and negative outcomes, acknowledging the absence of a control group and the influence of external factors like the pandemic. Recognising these complexities ensures a balanced assessment of quantitative outcomes at a unique time of social disruption.

Year 7 cohort comparisons

All participating schools provided higher level of consent from Year 7 cohorts. As a result, the Year 7's were used for comparison across schools as shown in table 30. This was to observe potential differences in school context and changes to wellbeing which may in part be attributed to implementing PauseUP. In acknowledging diverse ways students may identify, scales provided options beyond binary male/female categorisation, allowing participants to select the gender identity that best reflected their self-identification. All student participants in

this year 7 sample identified as either male or female. There were no students indicating a social desirability bias on SCWBS and therefore none removed from the dataset.

Table 30 Number of Year 7 pupils during main study, their schools and gender

School	Gender	No. of Pupils
Central School	Total	34 (13%)
	<i>Female</i>	16
	<i>Male</i>	18
West School	Total	47 (19%)
	<i>Female</i>	26
	<i>Male</i>	21
East School	Total	63 (25%)
	<i>Female</i>	28
	<i>Male</i>	35
North School	Total	110 (43%)
	<i>Female</i>	60
	<i>Male</i>	50
All Schools Total		254
		Female 130 (51%)
		Male 124 (49%)

The Cantril Ladder of Life Satisfaction

Overall, the mean Cantril ladder score pre-PauseUP was 7.04, and post-PauseUP, 6.93. The standard deviation indicates variability in scores, with a range of 2 to 10 both pre- and-post implementation.

Table 31 summarises mean score findings from the Cantril ladder between gender and table 32 and 33 shows the range, mode, median and percentage of scores above 6 for females and males, respectively.

Table 31 Mean scores for Cantril ladder across genders.

Gender	No. of Pupils	Mean score pre-PauseUP	Mean score post-PauseUP	Change
<i>Female</i>	130	6.8	6.9	+0.1
<i>Male</i>	124	7.3	7.0	-0.3

Females (n=130)

Table 32 Summary of Cantril ladder findings for female students

	Range	Mode	Median	Percentage \geq 6
Pre-PauseUP	2-10	8	7	85%
Post-PauseUP	3-10	8	7	88%

Males (n=124)

Table 33 Summary of Cantril ladder findings for male students

Gender	Range	Mode	Median	Percentage \geq 6
Pre-PauseUP	1-10	8	8	92%
Post-PauseUP	1-10	8	7	85%

For female students, there was a marginal change in mean score following PauseUP, with an increase from 6.8 to 6.9. This is mirrored in the percentage of females scoring above 6, which rose from 85% to 88%. Both median and mode remained stable at 7 and 8, respectively, suggesting a consistency in central tendency and most common responses. The range of scores pre- and post-PauseUP indicates a slight narrowing, from 2-10 to 3-10, however this still highlights that there were some female students who felt a lot less satisfied with their lives than others.

Contrarily, male students experienced a slight decrease in mean score, moving from 7.3 to 7.0 post-PauseUP. This reduction is reflected in the percentage of males scoring above 6, decreasing from 92% to 85%. The median score also decreased slightly from 8 to 7, but the mode remained constant at 8, pointing towards a prevalent high satisfaction level despite mean score reductions. The range of scores remained unchanged at 1-10, indicating a stable and broad spread of responses despite the overall decline in mean score. The range again indicates that while some male students felt highly satisfied with their lives, others did not.

In reference to the pilot study, the number of Year 7 participants (both male and female) was 116 and the range of scores were between 2-10. Mean and mode were 7 and 84% of participants scored above 6. The mean male score pre-main study was higher than the mean

year 7 score during the pilot study, the female slightly lower. However, after the main study the male and female score show about the same mean as well as matching the overall mean score of 7 shown during the pilot study.

In comparing these life satisfaction scores with the SHRN survey conducted in Wales during the same academic year (2021/22), year 7 boys (88%) were more likely than girls (85%) to rate their satisfaction as 6 or above (Page et al. 2023). This shows an equal percentage of scores for females above 6 pre-trial as the SHRN data (85%) but higher percentage post-trial. The male participants showed a higher percentage of scores above 6 pre-trial than SHRN data (88%) but lower post-trial indicating a gender disparity in perceived life satisfaction.

It was useful to compare year 7 participant scores between schools. The findings reveal changes in life satisfaction with variations across gender and context.

Central School observed marginal changes. Female students experienced minor decreases in mean scores from 7.1 to 7.0, maintaining a stable rate of 63% scoring above 6. For male students, a more notable decrease from 7.4 to 6.7 was recorded, alongside a decline from 78% to 67% scoring above 6. Despite these changes, central tendencies (range, mode, median) remained constant, suggesting a uniform pattern in responses.

East School saw decreases in mean scores, with females moving from 7.3 to 7 and males from 7 to 6.5. The proportion of students scoring above 6 decreased for both genders, yet central tendencies persisted unchanged.

West School faced reductions in mean scores among both female and male students. Females' scores declined from 7.2 to 6.4, with those scoring above 6 decreasing from 81% to 54%. Males scores decreased from 8.2 to 6.2, with a reduction in higher scorers from 95% to 48%. The changes in mode and median from 7 to 6 (females) and 8 to 6 (males) highlight a decline in life satisfaction.

North School demonstrated improvements in life satisfaction among both genders. Female students' scores rose from 6.4 to 7.1, and males from 7.0 to 7.6, with increases in the proportion scoring above 6 for both groups. The mode and median changed from 6 to 7 (females) and 7 to 8 (males), indicating reported improvement in life satisfaction.

The contrasting trends across schools suggest that while Central, East, and West schools experienced a general decrease in life satisfaction following PauseUP, with West School showing the most pronounced decline, North School presented an improvement. This disparity points to the potential influence of programme implementation differences or varying levels of responsiveness, underscoring the need for an exploration of the contextual factors influencing outcomes. The larger decrease in West School prompts a critical examination of the

programme's fit or the challenges encountered in this context, while the improvement in North School highlights the application or positive reception of PauseUP. These changes may be due to other contextual factors internal or external within these contexts during the course of the main study.

The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale

During the pilot study, the mean SCWBS score for Year 7 students stood at 42. During the main study this was recorded the same pre-PauseUP (42) and then increased slightly (43) post-PauseUP. It was apparent that scores diverged along gender lines, like in the Cantril ladder scores. Females began the main study with a total score of 41 which was lower than the overall Year 7 pilot study mean. However, this score increased to 43 post-PauseUP during the main study.

Conversely, the male SCWBS score pre-PauseUP was 44, slightly higher than the pilot study, but there was a reduction in score following the main study (43) bringing it closer to the pilot study mean for year 7's and aligning with the female mean score but still remaining slightly elevated.

Figure 12 highlights these total mean SCWBS scores between schools and genders.

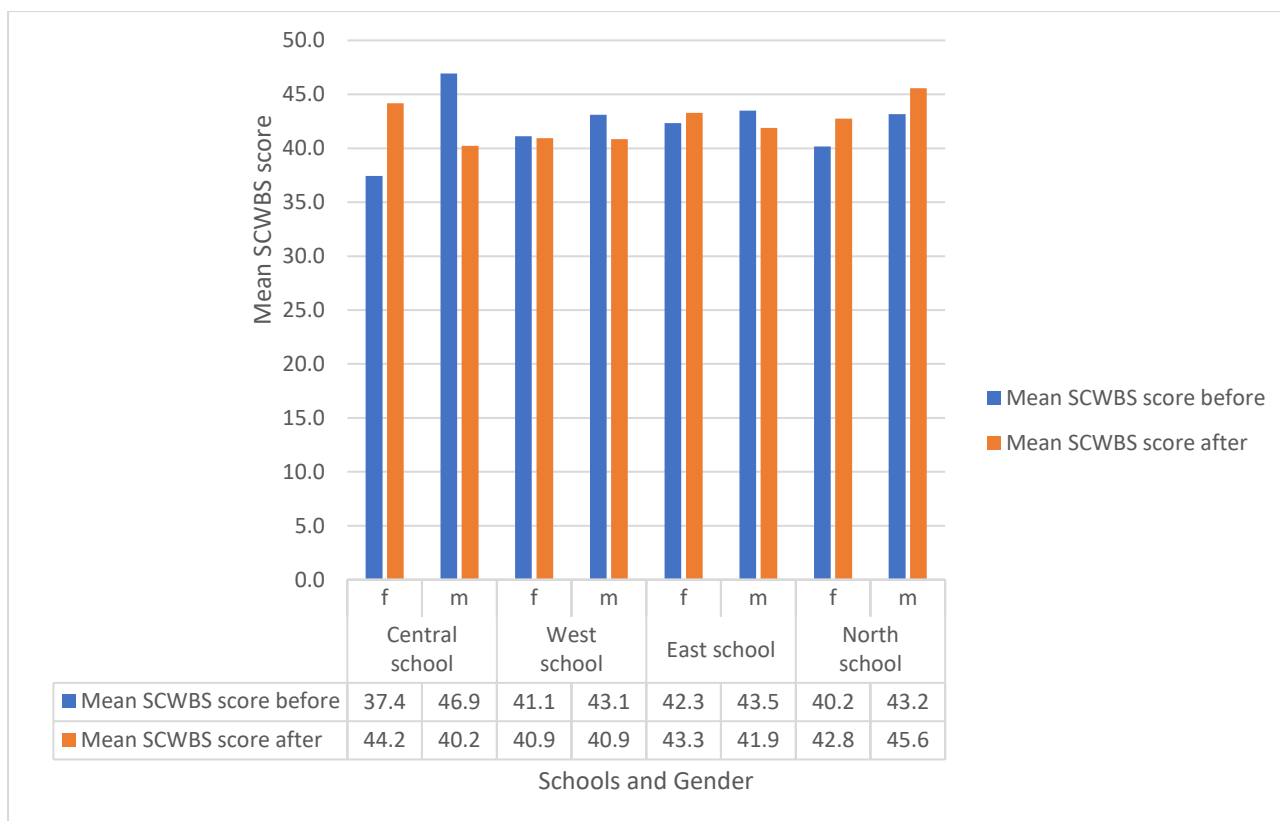


Figure 12 Mean SCWBS across schools and by gender for the year 7 pupils during the main study.

In Central and East schools, an increase in mean score was observed for female students. However, this was not mirrored in scores of their male peers. In West school, both male and female students showed a decrease in their mean scores during the main study. In North school, both genders recorded increases in scores, like the mean Cantril ladder scores.

In further analysis of the data as shown in table 34, there was an observed increase in mean scores for the PES sub-scale, but the PO sub-scale remained relatively consistent, experiencing only a slight increase for year 7's during the study. Despite this, PO continued to score higher than PES, pre, and post-PauseUP.

Table 34 PO and PES subscale findings for all year 7 students

N	Mean PO pre-PauseUP	Mean PO post-PauseUP	Mean PES pre-PauseUP	Mean PES post-PauseUP
254	21.6	21.7	20.5	21.1

Overall, there were more changes in emotional state during the main study than the outlook of year 7 participants. However, students' PO did remain higher than PES throughout both studies, indicating a consistent PO baseline level.

Figures 13 and 14 demonstrate differences in PO and PES scores respectively between schools and genders.

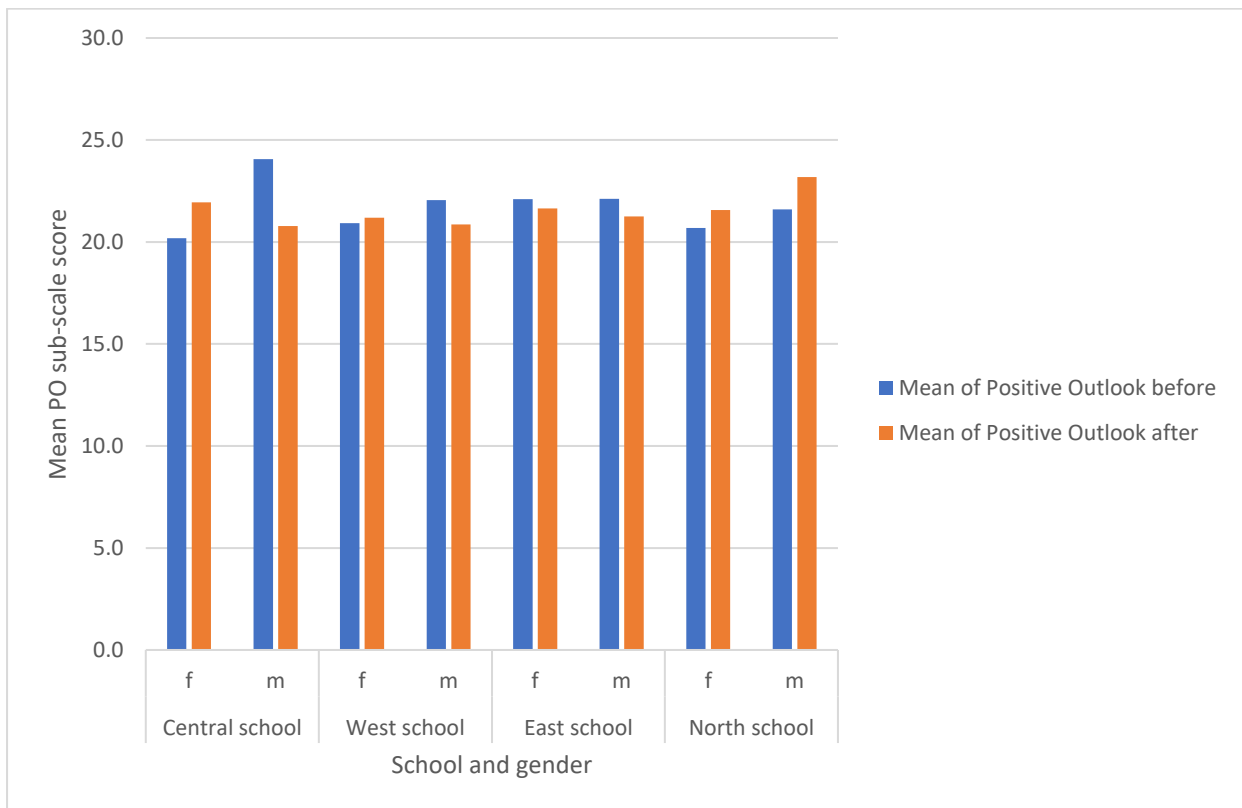


Figure 13 PO sub-scale mean scores during main study for year 7 pupils by gender across all schools.

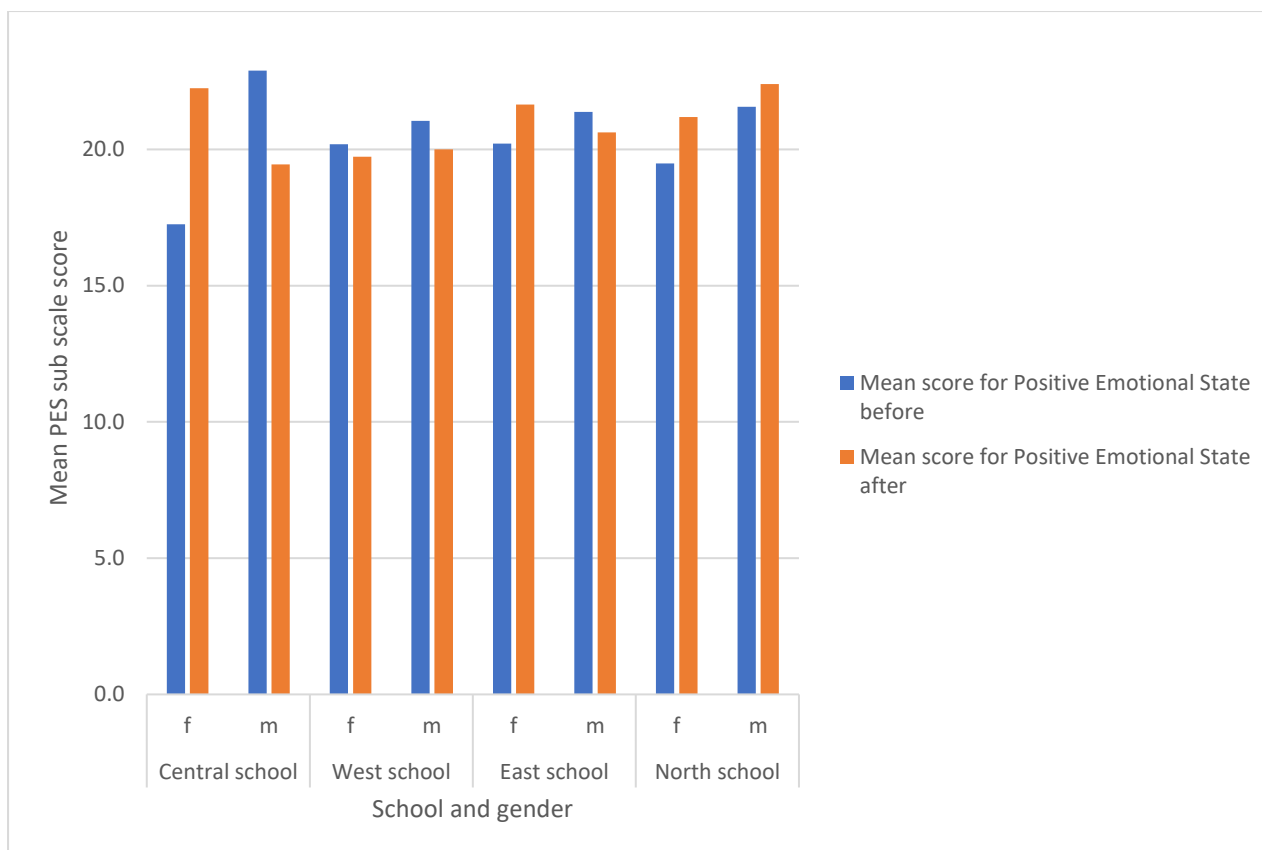


Figure 14 PES sub-scale mean scores during main study for year 7 pupils by gender across all schools.

Central School reveals further gender-specific shifts in PO scores. Specifically, female students experienced a rise in PO scores, while their males witnessed a decline, mirroring the trend in PES scores. West School showed this pattern in PO scores but, saw a decrease in PES scores for both genders.

East School demonstrated a reduction in PO scores for both genders. While males experienced a decline in PES scores, female students showed an increase. North School findings indicate both genders showing an increase in both PO and PES scores pre- and post-PauseUP.

The differentiation between PO and PES is needed for understanding the possible influence of PauseUP on students. While PO reflects longer-term dispositions, PES captures immediate emotional states. The observed trends suggest that while some students maintain or even improve their general outlook, their day-to-day emotional experiences might be more receptive to change. This disparity highlights the challenge of addressing both long- and short-term wellbeing states within a single programme and strengthens the need for school interventions that are conducive to the whole school environment and sensitive to the immediate emotional

realities of students within them. The variation in outcomes across schools and genders emphasises the complexity of effectively addressing student wellbeing through school-based programmes. It provides evidence on the challenges of achieving psychological wellbeing outcomes from PauseUP as there is a diverse response rate from participants depending on gender and context.

Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

The SWEMWBS scale, an adaptation of the WEMWBS used in the pilot study, was employed during the main study. The mean score obtained from this scale can be contrasted with SHRN data for the academic year 21/22, specifically for Year 7 pupils where the mean was 24, with a score of 23 for females and 25 for males (Page et al. 2023).

The total raw scores in this study needed to be converted to their metric score using the conversion table for SWEMWBS (Appendix J) as shown in table 35.

Table 35 SWEMWBS Raw scores and converted Metric scores between genders.

N	Gender	Total mean Raw pre-PauseUP Score	Total mean Raw post-PauseUP Score	Converted Metric score pre-PauseUP	Converted Metric score post-PauseUP
130	F	23	25	21	22
124	M	26	25	23	22

The mean converted SWEMWBS metric score for females prior to implementing PauseUP in the main study is lower than (21) the data reported in the SHRN study (23). However, after implementation, the score for female students increases (22) and gets closer to the SHRN mean (23). The initial male metric score pre-PauseUP was lower than (23) the score indicated by SHRN (25) and decreased further post-PauseUP (22). These observations align with patterns observed in both Cantril Ladder and SCWBS scores, wherein female students exhibited an increase in scores, while male students on average, demonstrated a decrease. Interestingly, post-PauseUP mean SWEMWBS scores for both females and males converged to a similar level (22).

Table 36 shows mean SWEMWBS converted metric scores across schools and genders.

Table 36 Mean converted metric SWEMWBS scores across schools and genders.

School	Gender	Mean Score pre-PauseUP	Mean Score post-PauseUP
Central	f	19.3	23.2
	m	24.1	20.7
West	f	22.4	21.5
	m	24.1	20.7
East	f	20.7	22.3
	m	22.3	21.5
North	f	20.7	22.3
	m	22.4	22.4

Across schools, females show an improvement in mental wellbeing post PauseUP, except for West School, where there is a slight reduction. For males, three out of four schools show a decrease in mean scores, with North School being the exception where no change is observed.

Analysis of the three scales highlights gender and school specific responses, with females and students in North school tending to exhibit more favourable wellbeing outcomes. Notably, changes in scores for males and students from West school were more variable. The disparity in results across contexts may reflect various challenges, including programme adaptation, approaches used, academic pressures, and personal or societal issues. The backdrop of the pandemic, with its disruptions and media coverage, may have also contributed to heightened anxiety about academic recovery and the stress of an uncertain environment. Such speculation, while plausible, requires corroboration with references to the literature, particularly within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, which emphasises the influence of multiple environmental layers on individual development and in turn wellbeing, especially within the school microsystem (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2007).

Assessing the influence of PauseUP on year 7 participants wellbeing scores is complex due to these many factors. Any observed changes, positive or negative, cannot be conclusively attributed to PauseUP without considering the system that these young people are surrounded by. This highlights the necessity for understanding the multi-dimensional factors at play in complex settings and programmes which aim to promote wellbeing within them.

Year 8 and 9 students from East School

East School provided enough consent (n=94) to use quantitative data for Year 8 and 9. One pupil was removed for anonymity as they were the only participant who identified as neither male nor female. These students had also participated in the pilot study the previous academic year (20/21), offering an opportunity to compare wellbeing data both within and across studies. Table 37 shows the distribution of participation from year 8 and 9 groups across genders.

Table 37 Participation from year 8 and 9 cohorts in East school

Year Group	N	Female	Male
Year 8	38 (41%)	18	20
Year 9	55 (59%)	28	27
Total	93	46	47

The Cantril Ladder of Life Satisfaction

As depicted in table 38, during the main study, all Year 8 and 9 students displayed an increase in mean life satisfaction scores. Both year groups exhibited higher scores during their participation in the pilot study, when they were one year younger, compared to their pre-PauseUP scores at the commencement of the main study. However, post-PauseUP mean scores during the main study indicate that both year groups displayed slightly higher mean scores, surpassing their reported satisfaction during the pilot study and pre-PauseUP during the main study. Particularly the Year 9 group, who demonstrated the biggest increase in score pre- and post-PauseUP. However, it is important to interpret these results with caution. The observed increases could be influenced by various factors, including natural fluctuations in student wellbeing or external influences during the main study unrelated to the programme.

Table 38 Mean Cantril ladder score across the two studies for the year 8 and 9 students.

Year Group	N	Mean score Pilot study	Mean score Main study pre- PauseUP	Mean score Main study post-PauseUP
Year 8	38 (41%)	6.8	6.5	6.9

Year 9	55 (59%)	6.7	6.4	7.1
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Pre-PauseUP, mean Cantril Ladder scores for all participants in year 8 and 9 was approximately 6.49, with a variance of 3.40, indicating a moderate spread of scores around the mean. Scores ranged from 0 to 10. Post-PauseUP, the mean score increased slightly to 7. The minimum score increased to 2, with scores still ranging up to 10.

Both genders show an increase in mean score during the main study as shown in table 39. This increase in scores is fairly consistent across genders within each year group. In Year 8, females show an increase of 0.5 points and males 0.3. In Year 9, both genders show an increase of 0.6.

Table 39 Mean Cantril ladder scores pre- and post-PauseUP by year group and gender.

Year Group	Gender	Mean score pre-PauseUP	Mean score post-PauseUP
Year 8	Female	6.4	6.9
	Male	6.6	6.9
Year 9	Female	6.4	7.0
	Male	6.5	7.1

Cantril ladder data suggests a positive change to students' life satisfaction, as indicated by the increase in mean scores during the main study. Differences in responses by gender and year level suggest that the influence of PauseUP may have varied by classroom context.

Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale

Pre-PauseUP, the mean total SCWBS score for all participants (year 8 and 9) was approximately 40.42 and scores ranged from 19 to 59. Post-PauseUP, the mean score for all participants increased to 42.30. The minimum score increased slightly to 20, with scores ranging up to 58.

As highlighted in table 40, variations can be identified when comparing outcomes from the pilot and main study for this cohort when looking at sub scales of PO and PES.

Table 40 Mean SCWBS sub-scale scores across studies.

Year	Pilot study		Main study			
	Total mean PO	Total mean PES	Total mean PO pre-PauseUP	Total mean PO post-PauseUP	Total mean PES pre-PauseUP	Total mean PES post-PauseUP
8	22.1	21.1	21.2	20.4	19.5	20.1
9	21.0	20.4	20.2	22.1	19.8	21.6

In the pilot study (when the year 8 participants were in Year 7), higher mean scores on both PO and PES sub-scales were reported. Despite a decrease in PO score post-PauseUP in the main study, there was a slight increase in PES scores, though it did not exceed the mean score from the pilot study.

When the Year 9 students participated in the pilot study (as Year 8's), they recorded higher scores on both sub-scales compared to total mean scores pre-PauseUP during the main study. However, following use of PauseUP in the main study, scores on both sub-scales increased to higher levels than those attained during the pilot study which is like the trend observed for life satisfaction.

Table 41 and 42 show that for both male and female Year 8 students, despite an observed decline in PO scores following PauseUP, an increase was observed in PES scores. All Year 9 students, apart from male PO scores, experienced an increase post-PauseUP.

Table 41 Mean PO scores pre- and post-PauseUP.

Year Group	Gender	Mean PO score pre-PauseUP	Mean PO score post-PauseUP
Year 8	Female	20.8	20.7
	Male	21.5	20.1
Year 9	Female	19.4	22.0
	Male	21.3	20.1

Table 42 Mean PES scores pre- and post-PauseUP.

Year Group	Gender	Mean PES score pre-PauseUP	Mean PES score post-PauseUP
Year 8	Female	19.3	19.8
	Male	19.6	21.6
Year 9	Female	19.4	21.6
	Male	20.3	21.8

The slight decrease in PO scores for year 8's could imply a stability or a slight decline in their longer-term outlook. However, PES scores increase, which indicates a possible improvement in daily emotional experiences.

In year 9, female students exhibit an increase in both PO and PES scores, implying that during the main study both general outlook and daily emotions may have been positively influenced. Male students display a decrease in PO scores but an increase in PES scores. This pattern highlights that while general dispositions might not have been as positively influenced during the main study, emotional states on a day-to-day basis may have improved.

Observations can be made revealing that students' emotional states (PES) could be more amenable to change than their outlook (PO). Since PES scores have increased for both genders in year 8 and 9, this could be an indicator of the programme's successful implementation in East school, creating a supportive environment that has had more immediate positive effects on the way students' felt about their emotions. Mixed results in PO scores post-PauseUP, with some decreases noted, particularly among males, might suggest that these longer-term wellbeing outcomes are less susceptible to shorter-term wellbeing programmes or that PauseUP, if it aims to address positive outlook, may need more time or adjustments to better target deeper psychological wellbeing areas.

Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Analysis of scores pre- and post-PauseUP reveals an overall improvement in mental wellbeing. Specifically, the mean scores for all students in year 8 and 9 increased from 21.26 to 22.35 with a small change in median scores.

Notably, trends emerged when disaggregating data by gender and year group as highlighted in table 43. Year 8 male participants were the exception in this pattern, experiencing a slight decrease in mean SWEMWBS score by 0.8. Conversely, Year 9 females demonstrated the highest increase of 2.5. Overall, female students across both year groups exhibited more pronounced increases in mean SWEMWBS scores compared to males, highlighting possible gender differences in response to PauseUP.

Table 43 Mean SWEMWBS scores pre- and post-PauseUP.

Year Group	Gender	Mean SWEMWBS score pre-PauseUP	Mean SWEMWBS score post-PauseUP
Year 8	Female	19.3	21.5
	Male	21.5	20.7
Year 9	Female	20.7	23.2
	Male	21.5	22.4

Data indicates that while PauseUP has potential to interact with mental wellbeing as measured by SWEMWBS, its influence may vary by gender and age group. The overall positive trend for females and Year 9 students could indicate that PauseUP was implemented in more conducive classroom environments within this year group. Female students may have been more receptive to the interventions presented on the programme.

The SWEMWBS, which uses seven statements taken from the lengthier 14 item WEMWBS used during the pilot study, allows for a comparison for this group of participants. By analysing the mean score for each of the seven statements used in both versions of the scale, changes in response to these statements between studies can be explored and are illustrated in figure 15 for year 8 and figure 16 for year 9.

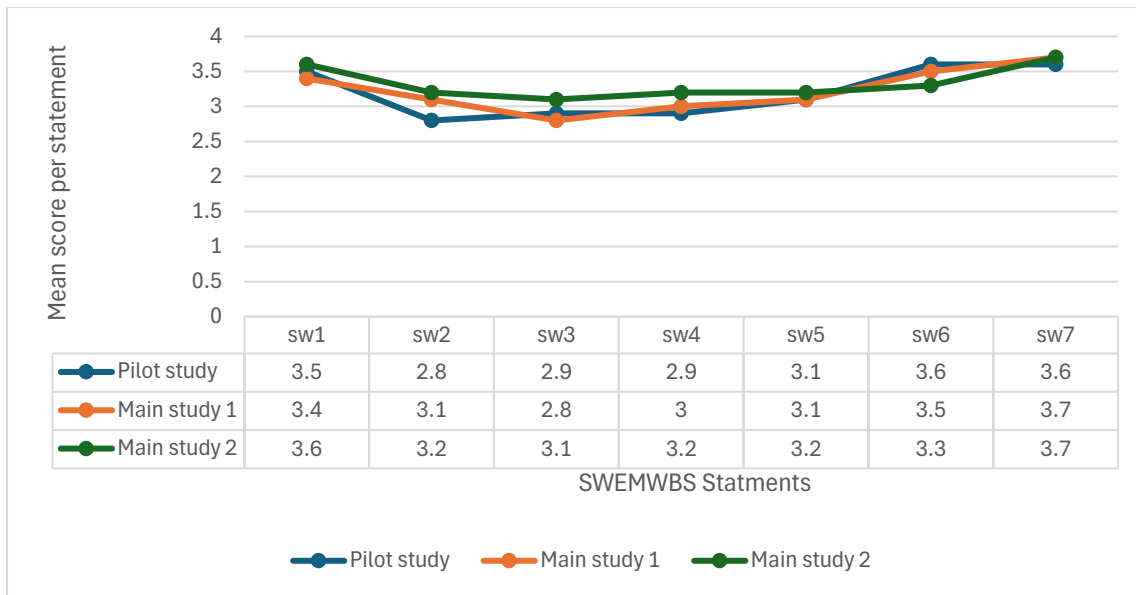


Figure 15 SWEMWBS individual statement score across studies for East school year 8 pupils.

During the pilot study, year 8 participants, then year 7, showed the lowest levels of agreement with statements SW2 ("I've been feeling useful"), SW3 ("I've been feeling relaxed"), and SW4 ("I've been dealing with problems well"), indicating areas of lower mental wellbeing. In contrast, statement SW7 ("I've been able to make up my own mind about things") consistently received the highest mean score, suggesting a stronger sense of autonomy within the group.

Post-PauseUP implementation during the main study exhibited improvements in mean scores for nearly all statements, demonstrating a positive shift in students' mental wellbeing. This upward trend was particularly pronounced for SW2 ("I've been feeling useful"), which saw the most substantial increase between studies. However, statement SW6 ("I've been feeling close to other people") experienced a slight decline during the main study compared to the pilot study, indicating a potential area for further attention and may reflect the disrupted nature of social connections in a pandemic influenced environment.

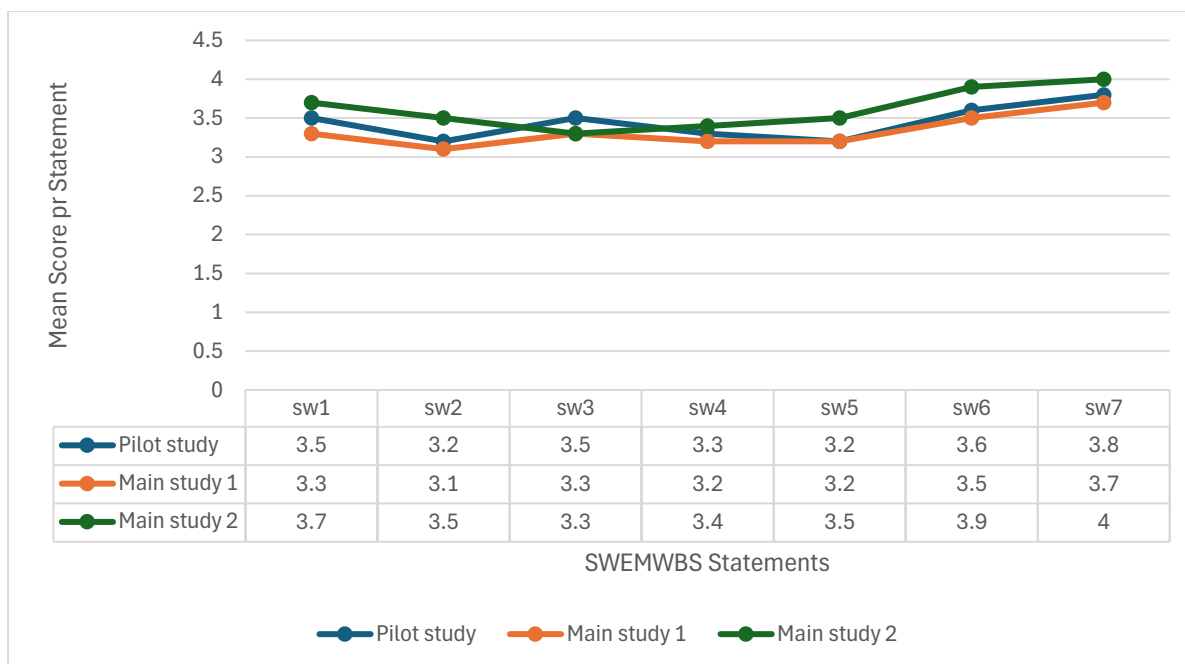


Figure 16 SWEMWBS individual statement score across studies for East school year 9 pupils.

In the pilot study, Year 9 students, then year 8, showed the least agreement with statements SW2 ("I've been feeling useful") and SW5 ("I've been thinking clearly"), suggesting these were areas where students felt less positive. However, following PauseUP during the main study, both statements experienced an increase in mean score, indicating an improvement in how students felt about these aspects of mental wellbeing.

Throughout both studies, statement SW7 ("I've been able to make up my own mind about things") stood out with the highest mean scores, reinforcing that these students felt confident in their decision-making abilities. Notably, the biggest improvement was seen in response to SW2 ("I've been feeling useful"), which had previously received one of the lowest scores. Conversely, SW3 ("I've been feeling relaxed") saw a decrease in mean scores after the pilot study, suggesting that feelings of relaxation may have been adversely impacted between academic years 20/21 and 21/22 and as these students made their way from year 8 to year 9. Scores for this statement did not show recovery during the main study, remaining consistent and indicating a potential area for further research to address stress or anxiety that may not have been mitigated by the interventions in PauseUP or that may have been influenced by other environmental factors.

Observations can be made to suggest that PauseUP appears to have had a generally positive influence on East school Year 9 students' mental wellbeing, with most statements showing improved scores, specific areas related to relaxation however may need additional focus in future iterations. The consistent high performance of SW7 ("I've been able to make up my own

mind about things”) across both year groups could be indicative of these students gaining a sense of personal agency in this context. Both year groups showed improvement in feeling useful post-PauseUP, indicating that these students felt a sense of utility and contribution.

Year 9 is an important period in the UK schooling system as students typically select GCSE subjects, decisions that influence future pathways. This decision-making process might explain the higher scores in SW7, reflecting their engagement in making these choices. Conversely, the stress associated with upcoming exams, class cancellations due to the pandemic, and pressures of subject selection might account for the lack of improvement in feeling relaxed (SW3) among older Year 9 students.

Year 8 students might be settling into the rhythm of secondary school. This transitional phase could explain the decline in feeling close to others (SW6) post-PauseUP, as they navigate new social dynamics and face challenges in forming relationships. This adjustment period was compounded by their Year 7 and 8 experiences being impacted by pandemic-related disruptions and school closures.

The differing impacts on various aspects of emotional, psychological, and mental wellbeing across Year 8 and 9 in East School, combined with data from Year 7 groups and observed gender differences, underscore the importance of contextualising evaluations of wellbeing programmes. The quantitative data highlights the need for age-appropriate and contextually sensitive approaches in schools, considering the unique challenges and pressures students face at different stages of their secondary education.

West School Nurture Group

The Nurture Group were chosen as a focus group due to their lower wellbeing scores during the pilot study. The group comprised of 14 students from Year 7, 8, and 9. As reported by the WR of the school these students were showing a variety of wellbeing issues ranging from behavioural difficulties to school-related phobia and anxiety. One student was removed from the data for anonymity as they were the only student in this group who identified as neither male nor female. Table 44 show the participation rates within this group.

Table 44 Participation in main study between genders in the Nurture group

Gender	N
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Female	6 (46%)
Male	7 (54%)
Total	13

Across all scales and sub-scales of SCWBS, students in this group demonstrated, on average, an increase in scores post-PauseUP during the main study, shown in table 45. Notably, females showed a lower score for all scales than males both pre- and post-PauseUP.

Table 45 Summary of findings from wellbeing scales pre- and post-PauseUP for the Nurture group pupils.

Gender	N	Mean Cantril ladder pre-PauseUP	Mean Cantril ladder post-PauseUP	Mean SCWBS score pre-PauseUP	Mean SCWBS score post-PauseUP	Mean SWEMWBS score pre-PauseUP	Mean SWEMWBS score post-PauseUP
Female	6	5.3	6.0	29.7	34.3	16.9	18.0
Male	7	6.1	7.3	38.4	40.6	20.0	22.4

Both sub-scales of SCWBS also increased in mean score, on average, for all pupils, with a slightly higher increase in PES post-PauseUP as shown in table 46.

Table 46 Mean PO and PES scores pre- and post-PauseUP across genders.

Gender	N	Mean PO score pre-PauseUP	Mean PO score post-PauseUP	Mean PES score pre-PauseUP	Mean PES score post-PauseUP
Female	6	15.8	17.3	13.8	17.0
Male	7	19.6	20.6	18.9	20.0

Each individual participant was given a unique code during the main study which they wrote on the front of the wellbeing pack containing the three scales. This enabled the observation of

individual responses pre- and post-programme. This is illustrated in figure 17 and 18 showing responses to the three scales and sub-scales.

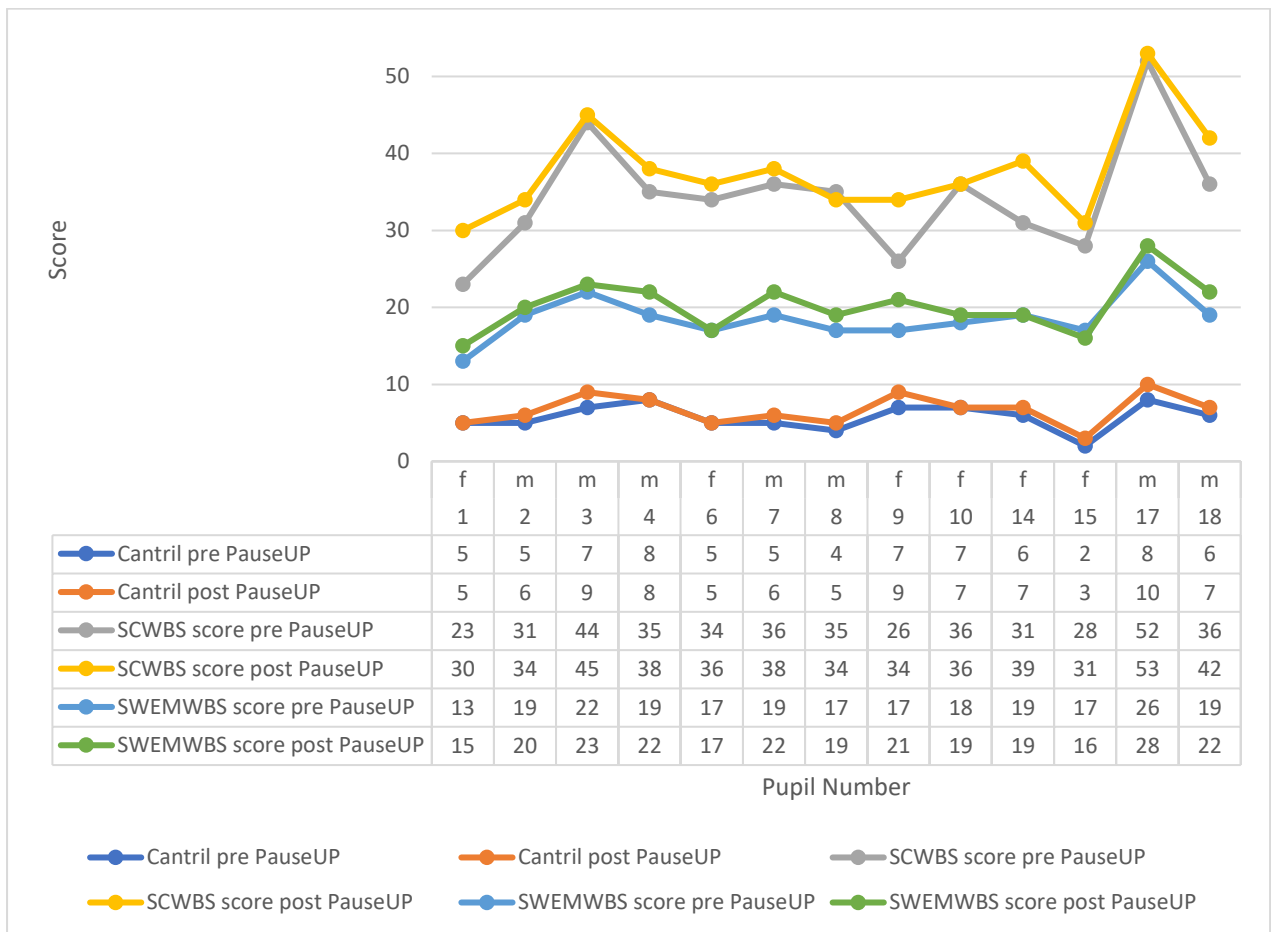


Figure 17 Individual pupil responses to the three wellbeing scales pre- and post-PauseUP.

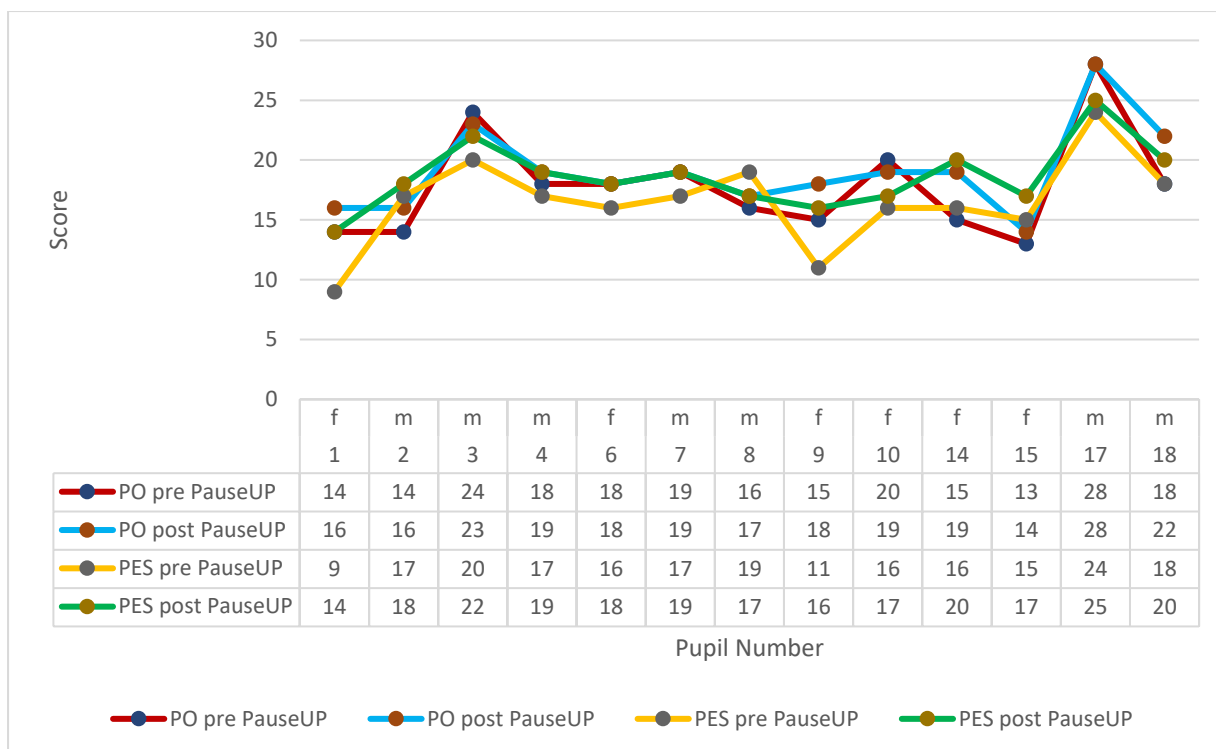


Figure 18 Individual pupil responses to the PO and PES sub-scales pre- and post-PauseUP.

Post-PauseUP, scores generally increased across all scales and sub-scales for both male and female students, though Cantril Ladder changes were less pronounced. SCWBS showed the most noticeable increases, with a total aggregate gain of 16 points on the PO scale and 27 points on the PES scale, indicating greater change in PES overall. SWEMWBS scores also rose for most pupils.

Despite overall improvement, individual variability was present. Pupil 3 (Male) saw a rise in life satisfaction but a slight decrease in PO, while Pupil 10 (Female) also had a small PO decline. Pupils 6 (Female), 7 (Male), and 17 (Male) had no change in PO but stable or slightly higher PES scores. Pupil 9 (Female) showed increases in both SCWBS and SWEMWBS, while Pupils 1 (Female) and 14 (Female) had marked improvements in PO and PES. However, Pupil 15 (Female) and Pupil 8 (Male) experienced slight declines in SWEMWBS and SCWBS.

Individual outcomes may reflect baseline wellbeing, personal circumstances, and responses to PauseUP. Given the small sample size and lack of a control group, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. These students were part of a Nurture group, identified by the school as needing extra support to return to mainstream classes. The positive changes suggest that PauseUP may have been effectively implemented in this context, with staff support and pupil engagement, helping address some of the school's wellbeing challenges.

Key Findings from the Wellbeing Measures

Findings reveal notable gender-specific influences on wellbeing. Girls generally showed increases in wellbeing scores, whereas boys exhibited mixed or decreased responses, especially among Year 7's. This suggests that the success of PauseUP may depend on several factors, including programme implementation, socio-cultural contexts, and unique school and individual characteristics.

The PES sub-scale measured students' experiences of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment. The PO sub-scale focused on optimistic perspectives towards life and the future. Data indicated that many participants felt more positive in their daily lives, contributing directly to their immediate sense of wellbeing. However, improvements in PO were less notable, suggesting that while PauseUP may influence immediate emotional states, a longer timeframe or additional support might be necessary for changes in general outlook. Further investigation and long-term monitoring are required to ensure that improvements in emotional wellbeing transfer to sustained psychological wellbeing.

Data from East School suggested a positive relationship between programme duration and wellbeing. Year 8 and 9, engaged with PauseUP for two academic years, showed increased wellbeing scores, indicating a cumulative effect. Year 8 pupils felt more competent and clear-minded during the main study, while Year 9 's felt less relaxed transitioning from Year 8 in the pilot study to 9 in the main study. Both year groups consistently reported greater autonomy and confidence in decision-making across the studies.

Nurture Group data supports the potential of programmes like PauseUP in settings where staff can choose when and how to use them, perhaps benefitting pupils with lower initial wellbeing scores. Smaller group sizes and personalised attention likely facilitated deeper engagement with the programme content, leading to observed improvements. This suggests that the context of implementation, including levels of personalised attention, may be a requirement for increased effectiveness.

The current dataset may not fully meet the assumptions required for certain statistical tests, limiting the ability to draw definitive conclusions about PauseUP's efficacy. To more robustly assess impact, future analyses could be conducted in more controlled settings, employing appropriate statistical tests such as t-tests, non-parametric equivalents for paired samples, or ANOVA for repeated measures, if sample sizes and data distributions are suitable. The initial studies of this evaluation were exploratory in nature, intended to identify trends and patterns rather than establish causality.

While initial findings showed some positive trends, it is important to also acknowledge the potential for PauseUP to have caused unintended harm. Downward fluctuations in scores may suggest that the intervention is not beneficial. Recognising these possibilities highlights the need for critical evaluation in future research to thoroughly examine the range of outcomes. Future quantitative studies should aim to validate and refine these findings, ensuring a balanced understanding of the programme's influence in schools.

6.3.4 Which mechanisms and contextual factors influence the outcomes of the programme?

This section summarises observations from site visits and discussions with pupils (n=6) at West School, WRs (n=4), and a wellbeing lead from Local Authority C (n=1) during June/July 2022. Field notes captured contextual factors and mechanisms influencing outcomes, documenting how PauseUP was implemented and received across various settings (see Appendix I).

These qualitative findings, informed by ongoing discussions with WRs, offer insight into factors shaping outcomes, though the post-hoc nature of the analysis is important to note. In complex school environments, it is difficult to predict all influencing factors, so patterns are often identified retrospectively. This approach can introduce bias, as interpretations are based on specific observations rather than predefined hypotheses. While realist evaluation seeks objectivity, the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis, especially during social disruption, can make this difficult. Transparency about these limitations ensures integrity in the evaluation.

Site visit data were summarised by school context, highlighting variations and commonalities. This was done alongside quantitative findings, which suggested PauseUP's impact might not be uniformly positive. Comparing the qualitative data to initial programme theories helped identify alignment or divergence, underscoring the need for caution in attributing outcomes solely to PauseUP and reflecting the complexities of wellbeing programme implementation in schools.

Contextual Analysis of Participating Schools

Notes were made in reference to distinct school characteristics to provide an understanding of the conditions in place which may have influenced the implementation process. These contexts created varying challenges and successes.

North School

At North School, the strategic integration as part of the curriculum, led by a dedicated wellbeing coordinator, situated PauseUP in alignment with the school's wellbeing ethos. This approach may have facilitated higher engagement levels observed among Year 7 pupils in this school. As expressed by the wellbeing co-ordinator,

"We made sure that teachers of year 7 classes knew that this was one of our approaches to wellbeing now as part of the curriculum and I think that helped them understand the point in doing it."

The linguistic uniformity at North School, where Welsh served as the primary medium of instruction, may have also played a role in the successful integration and reception of PauseUP. This aspect of the school's environment may have contributed to a sense of cultural cohesion among students and staff, which is particularly relevant for wellbeing and in Wales, a nation where language is not just a means of communication but a component of the curriculum. The wellbeing co-ordinators comment about the uniformity in language use underscores the importance of PauseUP being offered in Welsh,

"When students receive instruction and support in their first language, it validates their cultural identity."

This validation is important for wellbeing programmes in schools, which rely on personal connection and reflection for higher engagement levels. By delivering PauseUP in Welsh, North School may have ensured that the programme was a more natural extension of the students' and teachers daily learning environment. The programme's interventions could have resonated with members of this school, and as was commented on previously by the WR, the school would not have used the programme had it not been for this language factor.

The socioeconomic context, indicated by a below-average FSM percentage, suggests a student population in North school that might experience different challenges and needs compared to those at schools with higher FSM rates. In such contexts, students might have more external support systems in place, potentially making them more receptive to wellbeing initiatives like PauseUP.

North School's excellent Estyn report and wellbeing ratings indicate a strong pre-existing foundation for wellbeing which likely facilitated a receptive environment for new initiatives to be introduced. These ratings reflect the school's established commitment to and efficacy in promoting wellbeing, creating an established supportive atmosphere for programme implementation. The co-ordinator remarked,

"Our focus as a school has always been on wellbeing and Estyn confirmed this...Perhaps this made my job a bit easier in introducing PauseUP. I was definitely helped by teachers in year 7 being familiar with it as they were using it last year."

The familiarity of PauseUP by staff members in the year group coupled with student's familiarity of existing products (PausePoints) being used in the feeder primary schools likely supported the transition to use PauseUP in secondary school. The concept of a digital wellbeing programme being used on the whiteboard in class and the practices it introduced may have been more acceptable. As evidenced by the wellbeing co-ordinator,

"Some Pupils arriving from primary schools were already using Saib y Symud (PausePoints), which I think helped them engage more with Saib a Sylwi (PauseUP) in year 7".

This pre-existing knowledge and comfort with the programme likely contributed to greater engagement and a smoother integration of PauseUP in this school context.

Central School

Central School's implementation of PauseUP, was also assisted under the leadership of a wellbeing coordinator. There was strong support of the head teacher in the school which presents a case of how leadership can be of influence. The expansion of PauseUP to involve more year groups than at North School introduced challenges, notably reported resistance from staff, highlighting the need for sustained engagement and regular training. The leadership's commitment to wellbeing, evidenced by the head teacher's personal enthusiasm for PauseUP, may have given the programme a more supportive introduction. As evidenced by the wellbeing co-ordinator,

"Our head was really eager to introduce PauseUP as she has a background in Yoga herself, when the Local Authority organised a webinar on wellbeing and PauseUP was introduced she was really keen to set it up in school and asked me to facilitate."

The head teacher's background and proactive response to the LA's webinar highlights the importance of top-down support in driving programme adoption. This alignment between the programme's wellbeing objectives and the leadership's vision for school wellbeing approaches could have helped navigate initial resistance from staff to create a conducive environment for implementation. This leadership support is reflected in the decision to use PauseUP within

their WSA to wellbeing in the curriculum, using it in all year groups and specifically for years 7-9 as part of this evaluation.

Central School's excellent wellbeing rating, assessed at inspection during the main study, reflects an already existing school culture dedicated to student wellbeing. This established environment may have provided a conducive space for the introduction and acceptance of PauseUP, ensuring that it was building upon other wellbeing practices. The inspection's timing, coinciding with the main study, likely offered an additional layer of validation for the school's wellbeing efforts, as commented on by the co-ordinator,

“We had to think about the inspection this year, and they don’t give you much time to prepare...having PauseUP being used was a great way to show some of the strategies that were in place”.

The role of the LA seemed to support shared decision making for implementing PauseUP at Central School. PausePoints had previously been introduced to all feeder primary schools within this authority and this may have facilitated familiarity for Year 7 students entering Central School giving them prior exposure to similar wellbeing concepts and interventions. As supported by a comment from the LA lead for wellbeing,

“It was great to see PauseUP do well, it was a useful time for me to introduce ideas for secondary schools, especially after the lockdowns and pandemic when wellbeing was being reported on as an area of concern from many schools. We had already decided to include PausePoints in all primary settings so wanted to encourage secondary schools to think about using PauseUP.”

The comment provides evidence on the strategic considerations behind the implementation, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. Acknowledging PauseUP's potential opportunity to promote wellbeing, the statement reflects an understanding of the heightened need for wellbeing support in the aftermath of such a global crisis. The proactive dissemination of information and findings from the programme's evaluation by the LA using webinars and sending emails to schools about PauseUP shows a shared commitment to seek new approaches.

The support from the LA, coupled with the established wellbeing-focused environment at Central School and wellbeing co-ordinator, illustrates the system working together as required for the implementation of programmes. It highlights the importance of both internal school frameworks and external support in creating proactive strategies.

However, there was still resistance encountered in this context. Extending the programme across more year groups and the necessity for ongoing staff engagement and training was

mentioned by the co-ordinator. This resistance could be attributed to various factors, including additional demands placed on staff and the complexities introduced by a bilingual educational context with an average FSM percentage. The experience of Central School demonstrates that while strategic leadership and pre-existing wellbeing frameworks provide motivation, the success of such initiatives also depends on addressing staff resistance through sustained engagement, training, and support. In combining top-down enthusiasm with bottom-up familiarity, awareness and support, schools like Central School could be better equipped to address the inherent internal complexities of implementing a digital wellbeing programme like PauseUP in the future.

West School

Both West and Central schools provide an example of inter-school collaboration and support from the shared LA. Both schools gained this supportive platform of information sessions and webinars provided by the LA wellbeing lead during the main study, as well as the use of PausePoints in feeder primary schools. The exchange of information between West School's assistant head, serving as the WR for the school, and the wellbeing coordinator at Central School, particularly regarding lessons learned from the pilot study, exemplifies an approach to knowledge sharing and preparation between contexts. This collaboration, facilitated by the LA, may have enhanced the readiness of Central School for the implementation of PauseUP during the main study and demonstrates the value of shared experiences in overcoming potential challenges. When asked to comment on this, the assistant head (WR) of West School noted,

"It was good to talk about our experiences...we had a difficult time last year getting PauseUP started and staff on board, so it allowed us to anticipate and plan around these challenges, making our approach this year a bit more informed."

West School however faced challenges in integrating PauseUP into its mainstream classes across the curriculum, including reported inconsistent application and concerns about the programme disrupting academic schedules. One of the year 8 pupils reported at interview,

"We sometimes didn't use it and had to remind the teacher in the afternoons...they'd forget and then we didn't have time at the end of the class".

The inconsistency shows the challenge in ensuring that the wellbeing activities were being used as part of the daily routine. This student's experience of needing to remind teachers to use PauseUP points to potential gaps in teacher engagement or the prioritisation of academic content over PauseUP. Such gaps may have inadvertently signalled to students that PauseUP was secondary or optional. Teachers could have also simply not thought the programme was

very good due to their own beliefs that either wellbeing was not needed, or that other wellbeing initiatives and times of the day were more appropriate for students. The reception given to PauseUP by students may have also caused some teachers to not see the value of using it. One year 8 spoke of PauseUP not being well received in class and other students not really paying attention or seeing the reasoning behind doing it,

"We didn't really see the point, some of the activities were ok, like the music and stories but movements and things just felt a bit funny."

The mixed reception, with some students not fully understanding the purpose, speaks to a broader issue of how wellbeing is communicated in classrooms. Feedback about movement activities feeling "a bit funny" indicates a disconnect between the intentions of PauseUP and its perception by students and may have led staff members in this school to disengage. Interestingly a year 7 student from the same school reported a different opinion and spoke of PauseUP,

"...Being a great thing to do, especially in the mornings, not everyone liked it though and some would laugh and mess around, but I liked it, sometimes I'd have to remind the teacher to use it but that got a bit embarrassing, so we stopped doing that too."

The positive reflection from a Year 7 student highlights that when PauseUP works for students, it may be valued. However, this student's reluctance to continue reminding the teacher due to embarrassment highlights another layer of challenge involving student advocacy for wellbeing. This underscores the need for creating a supportive environment where students feel empowered in voicing their needs and preferences regarding wellbeing approaches. Discussions and creating mechanisms for student feedback and involvement in the implementation process may improve programme reception among end users.

The challenges faced by West school, including reported inconsistent application, underscore the need for a flexible approach in certain contexts. These may have been more pronounced in this context due to the larger school cohort, its bilingual instruction, their average FSM percentage, and a "Good" wellbeing rating, which together suggest a context requiring more tailored approaches to introducing and facilitating wellbeing across multiple year groups. The school's response to these challenges, particularly the strategy shown in implementing PauseUP within the Nurture Group, highlights the importance of adaptability in meeting the needs of the student population in a larger context. The WR of West School reflected on this, stating,

"Using PauseUP across more year groups and classes created logistical challenges, but the positive influence in the Nurture Group confirmed the value of doing it. This process has

taught me the importance of finding the right fit for wellbeing which will be useful for planning it more now in the curriculum."

This quote highlights the necessity of flexibility and the willingness to adapt approaches to the unique demands of each context and student group. The enthusiasm and commitment of the assistant head at West School to introduce PauseUP again in the main study, despite the many other shared responsibilities and existing workload he faced, underlines the role of leadership motivation for implementation. The engagement shown communicating with the wellbeing coordinator at Central School and the subsequent adjustments made to PauseUP's strategy exemplify how leadership can drive positive outcomes, even in complex school environments where at first things don't quite succeed as planned.

East School

East School's approach reflects a strategic and WSA to integrate wellbeing into the school experience, using the Welsh language as a key driver. The school's linguistic context, mirroring that of North School, with Welsh as the primary language of instruction, played a role in the programme's initial acceptance. The school had also been using PausePoints within its primary sector which may have made students more familiar with the interventions.

East School's excellent Estyn and wellbeing reports likely contributed to a conducive atmosphere for PauseUP, reflecting a pre-established focus on wellbeing. The below-average FSM percentage at the school suggests a socio-economic backdrop that might have contained less variability in wellbeing needs with potentially fewer external stressors affecting the student body which in turn may have made the programme, as a general wellbeing intervention, more accepted and useful.

The schedule of three times a week during registration periods was a strategic decision made by the deputy head across multiple year groups within the school and highlights institutional prioritisation of wellbeing, adopting a WSA. This decision demonstrates East School's commitment to embedding wellbeing into the school timetable, ensuring that PauseUP was not seen as an add-on but as a part of the school's routine and another approach to wellbeing in the curriculum. As expressed by the deputy head (WR) of the school,

"We learnt a lot from the pilot study and decided to maintain the momentum of all staff by keeping it going in the morning, we managed to make morning registrations a bit longer to fit it all in and were supported by form teachers and heads of each year group."

The way that the school managed to maintain support from staff and introduce the programme to multiple year groups across both studies during a period of disruption is testament to a supportive environment required for implementing PauseUP.

East school had a unique contextual situation in that it was a modern school, recently built, with a progressive inclusion of year groups each academic year. For example, during the pilot study and academic year 2020/21 the school had a smaller cohort, year 7-9 and then added a year group, to increase the cohort of the school during the main study and academic year 2021/22 to years 7-10. This expansion in size may have permitted the school to better gauge the challenges and influences of PauseUP and make informed decisions about implementation, likely contributing to increased influences on wellbeing as observed in the year 8 and 9 wellbeing data across the two studies. This may have helped with engagement from users as there was familiarity with PauseUP from students who had used it previously and were continuing to use it as well as from staff members in knowing how to use it. As reported by the WR,

“We had a consistent approach and many of the students and staff using it last year were using it this year, I think this made it less of a task to introduce it again. The new year 7’s were supported by form teachers who were already aware and this prevented us from having to send out constant reminders.”

The leadership role of the deputy head as the WR underscores the importance of having dedicated oversight for new initiatives. This helped ensure that PauseUP was aligned with the school's pastoral needs and strategies, facilitating engagement among staff, and relevance within their existing framework.

Despite strong commitment and strategic implementation, East School still faced challenges in integrating PauseUP within the timetable, highlighting the need for adaptable scheduling solutions. As the deputy head (WR) noted,

“We tried to spread it across the day, but it proved too difficult along with everything else, keeping it in the mornings was the best option for us and I know that caused some issues with form teachers trying to fit other things into that time. It’s such a good programme and an important area to try and figure out will be scheduling it in right to help keep activities going”.

This challenge was a common issue faced by the schools across both studies, attempting to balance academic demands and timetabling with a new programme. Addressing this challenge may require more innovative approaches to scheduling in schools that allow for the incorporation of wellbeing without compromising existing workloads.

Comparative Analysis and Reflections from the main study.

Analysis across schools, summarised in table 47, reveals that the implementation of PauseUP is affected by common factors: adaptability, leadership commitment, and active staff engagement. While each school had its unique context, there were key similarities in how these factors shaped the programme's outcomes, particularly in the shared challenges of the pandemic and the introduction of the new curriculum.

In all schools, dedicated wellbeing representatives and supportive leadership were required in introducing PauseUP within existing frameworks and routines. For instance, North School's strategic alignment with its linguistic context and phased implementation approach mirrors East school's success through leadership support and targeted introductions during registration periods. These strategies helped navigate common challenges such as resistance and varying levels of engagement.

The pandemic and the approach to the new curriculum created a contextual backdrop where all schools faced heightened pressure to address student wellbeing, making adaptability essential. West school embraced flexible approaches, such as personalising the programme to specific student needs, and this created observed influences on outcomes. However, issues like inconsistent implementation and scheduling conflicts were widespread, especially involving multiple year groups in larger contexts, highlighting the need for continuous support and clear communication across schools.

These shared experiences underline the importance of strong leadership, adaptable strategies, and staff engagement in implementing wellbeing initiatives like PauseUP. In focusing on these common factors, the study offers broader insights into the complexities of embedding such programmes during significant systemic changes. These findings will guide future adjustments to PauseUP, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of students across Wales.

Table 47 Across school programme implementation overview

School	Integration (Supportive Leadership and Environment)	Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support	Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies	Overcoming Resistance
North School	<i>Strong leadership from the designated wellbeing coordinator and focused wellbeing training for Year 7 staff. Integration of PauseUP into school routines showcases a supportive environment.</i>	<i>Emphasis on the practical activities for stress and reported engagement from younger year 7 pupils demonstrating targeted support for mental health.</i>	<i>Phased introduction across younger cohorts highlights the adaptability and progression needed in strategy to this school's larger context.</i>	<i>High student engagement and positively reported outcomes indicate successful strategies to overcome initial resistance.</i>
Central School	<i>High commitment from leadership, including an enthusiastic headteacher and dedicated wellbeing coordinator. Regular sessions indicate integration into the school's routine.</i>	<i>Reports of using the various PauseUP activities during exams showcases targeted support for stress relief. Reported enjoyment from younger cohorts.</i>	<i>WSA in using PauseUP demonstrates the school's shared strategy for wellbeing. Top-Down support from Headteacher.</i>	<i>Sharing information across schools, support from LA and clear communication across the trial with the wellbeing co-ordinator helped to overcome resistance to their WSA to the implementation of PauseUP.</i>

<p>West School</p>	<p><i>Varied teacher engagement, but active promotion by the assistant head demonstrates leadership's role in support.</i></p>	<p><i>Diverse feedback for stress management effectiveness depending on age group. Targeted sessions for Nurture group showing improvements to emotional wellbeing.</i></p>	<p><i>Multiple year group approach proved more challenging in this larger context. Targeted sessions for Nurture group as a strategy proved more successful on student wellbeing outcomes.</i></p>	<p><i>Continued participation over time, especially adapting for targeted groups and younger cohorts, reflects adaptable strategies to overcome resistance. Motivation and support from Assistant Head proved vital for continued use in this larger context.</i></p>
<p>East School</p>	<p><i>Deputy head and year group leaders' strong backing, with the programme integrated during registrations and occasional assemblies, indicates leadership commitment.</i></p>	<p><i>Active engagement during registration periods indicates targeted support strategies for pupils. Longer term use for pupils as they transition to other year groups demonstrated an increased influence on emotional wellbeing.</i></p>	<p><i>WSA and progressive, continued use in year groups along with other wellbeing initiatives facilitated the strategy of integrating PauseUP into the school routine.</i></p>	<p><i>Gradual acceptance and familiarity across different student age groups over longer time frame along with the school's growth demonstrates a way of overcoming resistance. Leadership commitment and shared approaches were needed to navigate initial resistance.</i></p>

The chapter will now conclude with a summary of the initial programme theory themes which were developed across the studies. These help to introduce the discussion chapter which will follow and begin to draw the thesis to a close. A copy of the developed initial programme theories and CMOs for PauseUP can be found in Appendix M.

Integration (Supportive Leadership and Environment)

The successful integration of PauseUP depends on a dynamic relationship between engaged leadership and a nurturing school environment. Critical to this relationship is a commitment to teacher development and a continuous support system for new wellbeing approaches that extends past initial training sessions. Maintaining teacher enthusiasm and motivating PauseUP's introduction is essential for its success.

The studies highlighted the role of cultivating an open and collaborative school culture. The mutual exchange of information, informed by the research and evaluation phases, supported the understanding of PauseUP, facilitating its implementation. This collaborative of shared practices helped overcome challenges inherent in programme implementation, especially during a disruptive period.

Moreover, both studies highlighted the importance of consistent monitoring and tailored support to ensure uniform application across contexts. Leadership's proactive involvement in introducing PauseUP, coupled with clear guidance and advocacy for system-wide programme acceptance, emerged as another element in facilitating its integration into the school day.

CMO Configuration

Context: The integration of PauseUP is set against the backdrop of school environments where supportive leadership, a strong existing culture of wellbeing, teacher development, and open communication are evident. Schools' inclination to adopt and embed new wellbeing initiatives is influenced by their internal dynamics, structural characteristics, and the benefits derived from inter-school collaborations.

Mechanism: The driving mechanisms behind PauseUP's integration involve ongoing teacher training, support, and endorsement by leadership, and leveraging collective learnings and experiences across classrooms. These elements cultivate a receptive atmosphere, encouraging acceptance to PauseUP, thereby facilitating its implementation.

Outcome: The result of these efforts is the smooth introduction of PauseUP into classroom practices and school routines, signifying its successful implementation. This may lead to

observable improvements in student wellbeing and the enrichment of wellbeing practices across classrooms using the programme.

Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support

PauseUP is designed as a general wellbeing support programme focusing on improving students' overall wellbeing. Its framework provides a range of supportive interventions across various components, rather than targeting specific psychological conditions. This approach recognises that students face various stressors and emotional challenges, which were heightened by the pandemic context. PauseUP's adaptability allows it to be tailored to the school timetable.

PauseUP includes a variety of activities with the flexibility to modify components to suit different age groups. This ensures the programme can cater to general wellbeing needs while offering more targeted support, acknowledging, and responding to the variability in students' experiences and challenges and assessed through data.

Users generally reported more positive influences on students' emotional wellbeing. Teacher observations of students who actively participated in the activities reported reduced stress levels and improved capacity to manage emotional distress. This flexibility in addressing general and widespread emotional health concerns among adolescents underscored PauseUP's capacity to provide timely support.

CMO Configuration

Context: The introduction of PauseUP was set against the backdrop of increasing student stress and mental health concerns, intensified by the pandemic. Schools' commitment to proactively tackle these issues created a context for implementing PauseUP's intervention support strategies.

Mechanism: PauseUP's change mechanism was anchored in its ability to tailor activities to students' mental health needs. This was achieved through research and the programme's flexible phased development and design. Schools' various engagement strategies and adaptability provided direct, targeted support in specific conducive contexts to alleviate students' emotional stressors.

Outcome: Implementing PauseUP's interventions led to observable increases in students' subjective emotional wellbeing. Staff reports and observations indicated decreased stress levels and improved emotional regulation among some students. These outcomes can be attributed to the strategic and consistent application of activities.

Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies

The studies highlighted the importance of developing and applying adaptable strategies to work with school schedules, technical infrastructures, and diverse student needs. A straightforward, user-friendly technical setup emerged as a key facilitator for effective programme implementation, ensuring PauseUP could be introduced without substantial technical barriers. The introduction of video tutorials and responsive programme adjustments based on direct feedback demonstrated the value of tailoring the programme's features to user experiences. Each school adjusted its strategy based on the specific decision-making processes required for its context, proving useful for more effective implementation approaches.

CMO Configuration

Context: Implementation occurred within various school and classroom contexts, each with distinct challenges, including fluctuating academic schedules, diverse technical infrastructures, and a wide spectrum of student needs. Schools' readiness and approach to use PauseUP was influenced by these factors, leading to varied implementation strategies from targeted interventions to whole-school approaches.

Mechanism: The mechanisms facilitating PauseUP's integration included user-friendly interfaces, flexible content delivery methods, and real-time feedback adaptations. The variation in strategies—ranging from focused efforts addressing specific student needs to whole-school initiatives—reflected the need for adaptability to each school's requirements.

Outcome: The use of adaptable strategies led to varied outcomes. Schools employing targeted approaches reported specific improvements in the wellbeing of student groups directly engaged with the programme. Schools that adopted a broader approach noted mixed engagement and challenges. Across all contexts, the programme's ability to adjust to changing conditions resulted in involvement from multiple schools and classrooms, facilitating a more impactful evaluation and delivery of wellbeing support during a unique timeframe.

Overcoming Resistance

The evaluation identified various strategies effective in mitigating resistance and fostering wider engagement with PauseUP. Targeting specific student groups or demographics—particularly younger pupils more open to new experiences—proved effective. Aligning programme implementation methods with students' demographic and developmental characteristics increased receptivity to the interventions.

Customising activities to cater to different student groups' varying preferences and needs facilitated programme engagement. Offering a range of activities within PauseUP helped schools ensure the programme offered value, reducing resistance, and encouraging participation.

A phased or targeted introduction of PauseUP, beginning with groups already familiar with the programme or similar ones, emerged as a possible method for gradually increasing acceptance. This approach could leverage the familiarity and experiences of past participants to introduce new students to the programme, easing the transition for new users.

CMO Configuration

Context: Initial resistance encountered during PauseUP's implementation was marked by scepticism from students and teachers due to pre-existing perceptions, the programme's novelty, and varied openness among different age groups.

Mechanism: Mechanisms for overcoming resistance included targeted engagement of specific student demographics, customisation of programme activities, and phased introductions based on previous familiarity with other wellbeing programmes and PauseUP. These approaches addressed resistance to change, making PauseUP more appealing and accessible.

Outcome: Implementing targeted and adaptive strategies led to increased programme engagement and acceptance. Schools observed continued participation in PauseUP activities in certain groups, indicating that these strategies countered initial resistance and fostered a more receptive environment for the wellbeing programme.

General Programme Theory for Implementing PauseUP

Based on the four themes developed around the initial programme theories, a general programme theory can be articulated. This theory incorporates the multifaceted and flexible approach necessary for the successful integration and influence of wellbeing programmes like PauseUP within school settings. The core of this theory revolves around the interaction between leadership and the school environment, targeted support, adaptability, and overcoming resistance, each contributing to the programme's efficacy towards implementation.

“The effective implementation of PauseUP in secondary schools is predicated on creating a nurturing microsystem where supportive leadership, targeted support, adaptable strategies, and proactive measures to overcome resistance converge. This system nurtures the conditions necessary for PauseUP to be introduced into the school routine and culture,

enabling the programme to address the diverse wellbeing needs of students, which may contribute to positive changes in the school's overall approach to wellbeing.”

The pilot and main studies provided data on the complex nature of implementing new school-based wellbeing programmes. The findings identified factors contributing to the programme's implementation across various schools, highlighting the benefits of providing wellbeing support and offering a case study to explore and address students' needs in school contexts during the pandemic. Both studies underscored the importance of research, collaborative learning, and shared resources in supporting wellbeing programmes.

The next chapter will explore the wider implications of these findings, examining how lessons from both studies can inform future wellbeing programme implementation and evaluation. It will discuss the observed influence of PauseUP on student wellbeing in participating schools, the inherent challenges encountered, and the strategies that proved most effective in producing an environment conducive to more positive wellbeing outcomes.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research objectives: exploring participants' perceptions of wellbeing, identifying which activities within PauseUP were effective, assessing its impact on student wellbeing, and analysing the contextual factors influencing outcomes. The discussion situates these findings within existing literature, highlighting the complexities of implementing wellbeing initiatives in schools. Given the exploratory nature of the data generated in this research, the chapter critically evaluates the tentative nature of the results, acknowledging the difficulty in drawing firm conclusions about the effectiveness of PauseUP, including whether it did more good than harm. It emphasises the influence of factors such as the disruptions caused by the pandemic in shaping outcomes, underscoring the need for cautious interpretation and further research to substantiate these initial observations.

The chapter then explores broader factors within school microsystems, such as context and leadership support, that affect the implementation of new initiatives. It considers how these conditions may impact the feasibility and effectiveness of programmes like PauseUP, suggesting that schools require more adaptable and responsive approaches to effectively address wellbeing challenges.

Finally, the chapter reflects on the implications of these findings for educational practice, considering how the experiences with PauseUP can inform broader discussions on educational change and curriculum development to better support student wellbeing. The discussion addresses the strengths and limitations of the study, clarifying the thesis's original contributions by distinguishing what was already known from the new insights provided, particularly within the context of significant social disruption. It concludes with recommendations for future research and practice, highlighting the need for flexible, context-sensitive implementation and a balanced approach to wellbeing promotion in schools.

7.1 Young people's understanding of wellbeing.

Literature on the wellbeing of young people highlights a change towards embracing their voices and lived experiences, moving away from previously adult-centric viewpoints (Crivello et al. 2009; Ben-Arieh 2010; Hamilton and Redmond 2010). This study, which was conducted in Wales within the context of the 'Right Way' framework and the advent of the new curriculum,

attempted to explore student participants' conceptualisations of wellbeing via their engagement with the evaluation of PauseUP. The findings support the choice made of a developmental, stepped approach incorporated into the new curriculum in Wales (Children's Commissioner for Wales 2017, 2022; Hwb 2022).

Young people's wellbeing has previously been described with an array of dimensions, including physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual, showing its inherent complexity (Pollard and Lee 2003; Awartani and Looney 2015). This breadth stresses the importance of integrating young voices into school-based practices, a perspective supported by Powell et al. (2018) through their Australian research who found that the key to understanding students' wellbeing lies in nurturing relationships, fostering autonomy, and ensuring meaningful engagement within the school.

This study's exploration of the student perspective, through findings from surveys and focus groups, acknowledges the developmental path of students. It revealed that younger Year 7 (11–12-year-olds) students primarily linked wellbeing to physical health, reporting on engaging more actively with the tangible aspects of exercise and sports and this may have been why they engaged more with the immediate practical experiences offered by PauseUP. This perspective on wellbeing started to broaden among Year 8 and 9 students, incorporating mental, emotional, and social facets, paralleling the cognitive and emotional development in adolescence (Ernst et al. 2006; Blakemore and Mills 2014).

Notably, Year 9 students articulated a connection between wellbeing and aspects of self-awareness and personal growth, resonating with theoretical frameworks that identify adolescence as a period for introspection and identity formation (Kegan and Lahey 2010; Barger 2021). This progression from a concrete to a holistic understanding among older students reflects the cognitive and socio-emotional changes characteristic of this stage of development (Steinberg 2005).

This study findings show the importance of developing wellbeing approaches that are sensitive to the developmental stages of students. The themes of mental health awareness, self-reflection, and personal development, identified during student focus groups, highlight the need for strategies that are both adaptable and responsive. As supported by the literature, the efficacy of wellbeing programmes like PauseUP increases when they align with the developmental stages of the target audience (Gootman and Eccles 2002; Pearson et al. 2015; Sawyer et al. 2018). Malti et al. (2016) similarly advocate for acknowledging developmental diversity to improve student engagement and programme effectiveness. Tailoring strategies to meet these varied needs can lead to more effective wellbeing interventions in schools,

ensuring that programmes support students comprehensively across all year groups or 'Progression Steps' (Gov.Wales 2022; Hwb 2022).

A critical reflection on this study's findings highlights the importance of aligning school interventions with developmental stages, while also actively involving young people in the co-design and evaluation process. The limited direct input from students in developing PauseUP may have restricted its ability to fully address their experiences. Research emphasises that involving young people in shaping strategies that affect them improves relevance, with participatory approaches shown to be more effective (Forshaw and Woods 2023). 'Adulthood,' or adult-driven decision-making, can marginalise young people's perspectives perhaps reinforcing power imbalances in education (Teixeira et al. 2021).

A limitation in this study was the lack of student involvement due to the pandemic, which limited opportunities for in-person engagement and participatory research. This hindered direct feedback during the early stages of PauseUP's development. While unavoidable, these disruptions highlight the need for alternative strategies, like virtual platforms or digital tools, to ensure student voices are included even during challenges. Future iterations of PauseUP and similar programmes should prioritise student participation throughout design, implementation, and evaluation. Involving young people as co-creators aligns with participatory research best practices (Percy-Smith et al. 2023; Lundy et al. 2024) and ensures interventions are more impactful. Engaging students may help reflect their priorities and experiences while remaining developmentally appropriate.

7.2 What intervention activities on the programme worked best and for whom?

The findings draw attention to the varied influence of the specific interventions on PauseUP depending on the developmental stage, emotional needs, and the school context of the students involved. A pattern emerged early on revealing that younger adolescent students (ages 11-13) generally enjoyed the physical and practical activities more, which may be linked to their interests and perspectives on wellbeing as previously discussed. In contrast, mid-adolescent older students (ages 13-15) showed a preference for spiritual aspects of PauseUP, including SEL and PPI themes, stories, music, and class discussions, indicating a possible change in preference as students develop. There were also students who enjoyed all sections as well as some older students who enjoyed the practical components, but overall, a trend in engagement levels emerged over the course of the two studies.

Notably, the Nurture Group, which experienced higher engagement and more pronounced changes in wellbeing outcomes, reported that PauseUP interventions were useful for themes related to connection in the classroom and anxiety management. This feedback suggests that many interventions within PauseUP may serve students and teachers well in nurturing classroom environments, providing targeted support to vulnerable students. The teacher of this group commented on the interventions being of use when planning and structuring curricula as part of the Health and Wellbeing AoLE indicating the value of practical strategies and short activities to help with ideas for teaching wellbeing.

Feedback from students and staff exposed that the method of programme delivery played an important role in the influence of these interventions. For instance, there was a need in many schools for them to be integrated within pastoral time, to fit into the school day, and be facilitated by teachers with wellbeing experience, and this resulted in higher engagement levels from students. This finding highlights the importance of contextual factors for introducing these types of interventions in a classroom setting and the need for flexible delivery methods that can adapt to changing circumstances.

One of the key findings relates to the practical interventions in the Physical and Emotional components. These interventions, initially developed for the primary school resource PausePoints and adapted for PauseUP and secondary students, were shown to potentially influence emotional regulation and stress management among users. This finding affiliates with existing research indicating that such interventions can improve cognitive function, stress resilience, and emotional wellbeing, with the impact varying based on factors such as the age of participants, the specific activities used, and the methods of delivery (Zenner et al. 2014; Carsley et al. 2018).

Findings revealed general positive engagement with these sections from many students, especially younger adolescents in year 7 and 8. At survey, students from these year groups named the mindfulness, breathing exercises, and yoga practices to be enjoyable and many of these activities were also reported by a large percentage of students, even from older year groups, to have been used outside of school. This finding is supported by evidence showing the simplicity of mind-body interventions for resilience, mood, and self-regulation skills among young people (Serwacki and Cook-Cottone 2012; Khalsa et al. 2016; Chung 2018; Miller et al. 2020).

Support for incorporating mindfulness practices in classrooms is found in research that demonstrates their positive influence on emotional wellbeing in children and adolescents (Dunning et al. 2019). Nonetheless, the findings of using these interventions on PauseUP highlights that ongoing research is required to tailor and refine them to fit the unique demands

of school contexts and student users. Challenges emerged during both studies with some activities not being well-suited for classrooms with limited space, and there was a notable discrepancy in engagement levels between younger and older students—the latter group expressing feelings of self-consciousness doing movement activities in front of their peers. This indicates the need for mindful implementation methods that considers school culture and the adaptability of interventions to align with the specific context of the school, as highlighted by Weare (2019).

The findings call attention to the dynamics of larger secondary school environments. They show the importance of selecting and adapting the types of interventions used for wellbeing, recognising individual and group sensitivities as supported by the literature (Pluess et al. 2015 2018; Lionetti 2018; Greven et al. 2019). Understanding that not all students will respond uniformly to practical activities is needed in crafting group-based programmes that cater to the spectrum of student needs (Griebler et al. 2017; Nocentini et al. 2018). More effective strategies that were reported in this evaluation, such as flexibility and integration within existing school routines, emerged as mechanisms for the deployment of PauseUP as a programme, advocating for an approach that respects the school timetable and the wide range of students using them (Darlington et al. 2018; Gee et al. 2021).

The SEL and Positive Psychology activities in PauseUP, such as group discussions, role-playing, and team-based problem-solving, proved effective across a range of schools and ages. These activities were selected based on evidence supporting their role in developing social skills in schools (Durlak et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2017). This study reinforces the importance of effective implementation to promote SEL, with younger adolescents, particularly Year 7 students at North School, seeming to benefit most. Teachers noted that these activities helped foster social skills, crucial during early adolescence for peer connection (Allen 2017).

Some students also responded positively to the interactive, 'modular' activities, such as classroom discussions and stories, indicating the broad appeal of these kinds of interventions. These approaches may provide structured opportunities to improve social competencies, empathy, and kindness (Seligman 2009), skills that are well-documented to support wellbeing (Greenberg et al. 2003; Hecht and Shin 2015). Older students (13–14-year-olds) indicated a need for social connection and growth as a theme for wellbeing during focus group discussions. Activities aiming to support this on PauseUP were also reported as being enjoyable in participating schools with older students. This suggests a possible transition as students make their way through school towards activities that help to facilitate more meaningful connection in classrooms.

The integration of BPPI's within PauseUP, offering progressive activities focused on themes such as empathy, kindness, and gratitude, supports the development of a structured approach to wellbeing as highlighted in the literature (Parks and Schuller 2014; Shankland and Rosset 2016). These interventions may contribute to a classroom environment conducive to wellbeing (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Aronson and Patnoe 2011). Further evaluation on the specific interventions would be needed within a certain group of students of similar developmental stage to discover more about what works best.

In assessing PauseUP, it became evident that schools and classes using the Welsh language version reported more engagement, which may have reinforced cultural connections and relatable content on wellbeing for schools. Students also reported appreciation for cultural narratives and stories from local community members, featured in the programme, and this underlines the value of integrating these elements into wellbeing initiatives (Bishop et al. 2009; Durie 2011).

Interpreting these findings requires caution. The engagement reported by younger students and the beneficial outcomes observed in specific contexts, such as the Nurture Group, should not be overgeneralised as evidence of the programme's overall effectiveness. The observed engagement may reflect subgroup preferences rather than a broader impact, particularly given the exploratory nature of the data generated within this study. The upward trends in wellbeing outcomes should be tentatively viewed, and downward fluctuations in other subgroups suggest that the programme is not universally effective or could even cause harm in some settings. This variability underscores the importance of understanding the role of context, delivery methods, and individual differences in understanding the influence of wellbeing programmes.

The varied responses to PauseUP highlight the complexities of implementing wellbeing interventions in secondary schools. While there were areas of success, the findings also point to the need for ongoing refinement and evaluation to better understand which components work best, for whom, and under what conditions. Future iterations should incorporate mechanisms for monitoring and adjusting the programme in response to student feedback and engagement data.

7.3 The influences of PauseUP on student wellbeing

The assessment of PauseUP's influence on student wellbeing illustrates a variety of responses, highlighting the multifaceted challenges and potential embedded within the school

system for promoting wellbeing. The variance in outcomes emphasises the importance of adept implementation, as suggested by research in implementation science, to fully realise a programme's benefits (Forman et al. 2013; Cabassa 2016; Wensing and Groll 2019). Using the framework of the Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner 2005), this study contemplates the array of factors influencing outcomes. The range in wellbeing outcomes points to the challenges some young people face within their unique ecological systems and the protective buffers others may have (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Branje and Morris 2021; Jones et al. 2021; Alamolhoda et al. 2022). The depiction of schools as complex adaptive systems (Moore et al. 2019; Murphy et al. 2021) further suggests that the diverse influences on student wellbeing result from the confluence of factors within the school environment and one can therefore only speculate and explore the initial wellbeing changes made by PauseUP with further research being a requirement for more concrete conclusions.

Consistent with past research the findings reinforce the role of implementation quality in determining programme effectiveness (Weare and Nind 2011). In the case of PauseUP, its introduction across various schools underscored the importance of ensuring clarity, intensity, and fidelity within the school microsystem to support implementation and wellbeing outcomes. This approach was required in the understanding that attempting the complex task of introducing new mental health interventions, a unified commitment to the programme's objectives and methodologies is needed (Weare 2003).

Adhering to the programme's design and intentions were evident in the influence of PauseUP (Proctor et al. 2011; Blasé and Fixsen 2013). Contexts such as North school and the Nurture Group highlighted how fidelity to the interventions facilitated more pronounced realisation of its objectives, showing the necessity of maintaining integrity while accommodating and adapting to existing contexts of each school (Gottfredson et al. 2015; Dowling 2020). The variable responses among year 7's across schools show the complex nature of integrating wellbeing programmes even for students of similar developmental age. This variability, while suggesting potential benefits for certain groups, necessitates further exploration of the specific contextual elements and mechanisms influencing such outcomes.

Previous research highlights that girls generally exhibit greater emotional awareness and social skills than boys, potentially predisposing them to derive more benefit from interventions focused on emotional learning (Rickwood et al. 2005; Van der Graaff et al. 2014). However, the influence of gender stereotypes and societal norms must also be considered in relation to these findings (Hanlon 2012). The gender-differentiated responses to PauseUP stress the importance of further research to customise the programme, ensuring it meets the needs of the student body. This customisation is particularly pertinent in the understanding that there

may also be individual differences in responsiveness to environmental influences (Pluess et al. 2015, 2018; Lionetti 2018). The gender-based disparities in mental health among secondary school girls in Wales post-pandemic (Page et al. 2023) draws attention to the mechanism of PauseUP perhaps being timely in providing support to their emotional wellbeing, as shown in the findings of the main study.

The data gathered from the PES sub-scale, coupled with qualitative feedback, indicates that specific components of PauseUP may have influenced the emotional wellbeing of students. Notably, yoga, breathing and mindfulness exercises were frequently cited by younger students from all settings for their effects on themes related to the emotions (Serwacki and Cook-Cottone 2012; Khalsa et al. 2016; Chung 2018; Miller et al. 2020). These activities were mainly used in registration periods in the morning and younger students reported at survey that this helped get them ready for the day ahead. Older year 9 students during focus groups spoke of some of the practical activities being valuable during periods of heightened stress, such as during exams, aligning with findings that demonstrate their physiological benefits in managing stress and anxiety (Zenner et al. 2014; Saradananda 2017; Carsley et al. 2018; Nestor 2020).

Positive psychology suggests that enhancing positive emotions broadens cognitive abilities, improving adaptability and creativity, especially during stressful times (Fredrickson 2001, 2004). This concept underpins PauseUP, which integrates SEL and PPI practices to promote wellbeing through enhanced ER. In this study, subjective wellbeing—measured by life satisfaction and emotional state questionnaires—was linked to students' perceptions of life events, consistent with existing research (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005; Diener et al. 2009b). Effective ER is necessary during adolescence, a stage marked by vulnerability to mental health issues (Aldao et al. 2010; Gross 2014).

PauseUP aimed to improve ER and stress management, mechanisms shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Zenner et al. 2014; Domitrovich et al. 2017). The programme's adaptability was tested during the pandemic, with its logic model focusing on embedding wellbeing practices into daily routines and using digital tools to customise activities for classroom needs (Pearson et al. 2015; Fullan 2021). However, the effectiveness of these interventions varied, and some students experienced negative effects. While some responses were positive, downward fluctuations for certain students suggest potential harm, reflecting broader research on possible iatrogenic effects in mental health programmes (Foulkes and Stringaris 2023). These findings stress caution against a one-size-fits-all approach to wellbeing. Future iterations of PauseUP should incorporate robust monitoring to capture the range of outcomes.

The observations on student wellbeing from this evaluation must be understood within the pandemic context, which highlighted the urgent need to support adolescent mental health. Research in Wales revealed significant mental health concerns among secondary school students, especially girls and those from mixed ethnic backgrounds (James et al. 2021; Moore et al. 2022). Although innovative responses emerged during the pandemic, the need for robust support mechanisms in schools was clear (de Miranda et al. 2020). The more positive effects of PauseUP on student wellbeing, noted in certain contexts of this evaluation, contribute to understanding the value of context-sensitive interventions designed to support adolescents in challenging times. Wellbeing representatives reported the introduction of PauseUP as timely and relevant, with staff noting its success, particularly in engaging younger students and in settings like the Nurture group.

However, attributing changes in wellbeing solely to PauseUP is difficult given the complex external influences and lack of a clear counterfactual. The absence of comparative analysis makes it unclear whether the programme 'worked' or may have caused harm. The realist approach taken in this study highlights the complex interaction of factors needed to introduce a new programme as well as the varied outcomes, helping schools make informed decisions about interventions. Without this balanced perspective, schools risk adopting ineffective or even harmful programmes. Thus, any conclusions about PauseUP's efficacy for promoting student wellbeing should remain tentative. The exploratory nature of the data calls for further research and more analysis to better understand which aspects of the intervention work, for whom, and under what conditions (Pawson and Tilley 1997). This iterative approach will better equip schools to make decisions that account for the range of potential outcomes when implementing wellbeing programmes.

7.4 What mechanisms and contextual factors influenced the outcomes of the programme?

PauseUP was influenced by various contextual factors and mechanisms, as highlighted by the study's realist evaluation approach. Insights from both studies were analysed through CMO configurations, revealing the array of factors that shaped the programme's influence. Explored through a systems framework the evaluation draws attention to the roles of both macro and micro-level factors in shaping outcomes (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Domitrovich 2008). This research, within the backdrop of conducive policy frameworks in Wales which support the promotion of wellbeing in schools formulated a programme theory, as outlined in section 6.3.4 and Appendix M, highlighting the need for adaptable approaches for successful delivery and

impact. This theory appreciates the roles of leadership, environmental support, targeted interventions, adaptability, and strategies for overcoming initial resistance, illustrating how these components collaboratively contribute to implementation.

Key elements facilitating the integration of PauseUP included school ethos, resource availability, and a general orientation towards wellbeing initiatives. Supportive leadership and ongoing teacher development emerged as important contexts, creating a nurturing environment that helped activate mechanisms, such as interventions aimed at enhancing students' mental health management. Active staff engagement proved essential in embedding the programme into classroom routines, which positively influenced student wellbeing in certain contexts. Customising activities to suit student needs and making real-time adjustments between studies improved the programme's usage. Phased introductions, particularly among younger students familiar with a similar programme (PausePoints) and creating a flexible and supportive classroom environment were also helpful in fostering gradual acceptance.

7.4.1 Supportive Leadership and School Environment

Supportive leadership is critical for the integration of PauseUP. The findings indicate that committed, engaged leadership that endorses the programme while fostering a conducive environment is essential for its success (Datnow 2002; Hoagwood and Johnson 2003; Kallestad and Olweus 2003; Ringeisen et al. 2003; Leger et al. 2022). Schools with strong organisational commitment to health, as noted by Moore et al. (2016), tend to engage in more extensive health improvement activities, demonstrating the impact of visionary leadership on educational initiatives (Fullan 2007; Robinson et al. 2009).

The study found that effective leadership extends past individual actions, relying on collaborative efforts and a supportive environment. For instance, Central School, with its headteacher and wellbeing coordinator along with discussions with West school, exemplified how leadership can facilitate the deployment of wellbeing programmes. Conversely, South School faced challenges in maintaining programme continuity due to leadership disagreements and other school commitments, underscoring the complexities of leadership dynamics. A positive school and classroom environment also play a role. A nurturing setting with strong student-teacher relationships is fundamental for creating a receptive atmosphere for wellbeing initiatives (Aldridge and McChesney 2018; Wang et al. 2020). Schools with an established high wellbeing rating reported less resistance to introducing PauseUP, highlighting

the importance of an existing supportive environment with experience in wellbeing as a part of the school day.

Professional development was observed as another factor to support the implementation process. Effective training should align with teachers' beliefs, values, and the specific challenges they face in their contexts, equipping them with skills and confidence needed to deliver content effectively (Guskey 2002; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). This study highlighted the need for ongoing, tailored professional development, particularly given PauseUP's digital format. Teachers sought clearer guidance on integrating digital components into their classroom practices. The varied school environments, different levels of teacher experience, and diverse student needs underscored the importance of adaptable training approaches (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010; Hutchison and Reinking 2011).

The shift to digital platforms during the pandemic may have facilitated an increase in knowledge of using these tools which could have contributed to initial engagement with PauseUP across the study, demonstrating the potential of digital tool use in professional development (Dhawan 2020). However, varying engagement and communication levels across schools indicated that patience and customised responses are required (Selwyn 2023). While some teachers found digital tools useful to facilitate the integration of wellbeing interventions, others faced barriers due to digital literacy challenges or limited access due to time constraints, highlighting the need for training in both programme content and strategy as well as an understanding of digital competencies to support implementation efforts (Haleem et al. 2022; Livingstone et al. 2023).

This stresses the need for professional development that addresses unique school challenges (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). Teachers' perceptions of their role in supporting student wellbeing may influence their engagement with new initiatives and when training is relevant to their daily practice, they may be more proactive in applying new strategies (Smith and Gillespie 2023). Creating professional learning communities within schools, where teachers share experiences, could further support programme sustainability. This collaborative approach fosters adaptation of practices, which are key to the long-term success of professional development (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017).

The introduction of the new curriculum in Wales, which positions health and wellbeing in the educational framework (Hwb 2023), probably influenced the adoption of PauseUP. This alignment allowed PauseUP to be seen as an extension of the school's wellbeing approach rather than an external addition. Leadership feedback reported the importance of evidence-based practices in facilitating this alignment with the curriculum, with this evaluation providing data to guide which interventions within PauseUP may be most effective. The pandemic further

increased the focus on student wellbeing during this time, perhaps prompting greater investment from leadership in resources like PauseUP. Wellbeing representatives were proactive in seeking tools that could support the heightened emotional needs of students during this time. The disruption may have created opportunities for innovation in delivering new wellbeing programmes. The urgency of the situation may have therefore pushed schools to rapidly adopt new approaches, including digital solutions, to meet students' needs (Dhawan 2020; Zhao 2020).

Institutional support from various levels, including school leadership and local authorities, were important factors in facilitating the implementation process. The pandemic period underscored the need for flexible and responsive leadership, with distributed leadership models proving more effective (Azorín 2020; Netolicky 2020). The alignment with the new curriculum, combined with institutional support, allowed PauseUP to be introduced during a difficult period for many, though outcomes varied across different contexts, there was a general reported sense of appreciation from school leadership throughout the evaluation.

7.4.2 Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies

The implementation process for PauseUP underscored the need for adaptable and flexible strategies to fit within school environments. This evaluation highlighted the importance of aligning the programme with school schedules, technological readiness, and the varied needs of student populations, especially in the challenging context of the pandemic. Such findings reflect broader literature on integrating educational technology, which highlights the importance of maintaining pedagogical integrity and aligning digital tools with existing school infrastructures (Selwyn 2011, 2016).

In modern classrooms, the blend of digital and physical learning environments is increasingly necessary, demonstrating the potential of using technology when thoughtfully integrated into curriculum and teaching practices (Cuban 2013; Penprase 2018). However, it is not just about using technology; it is about leveraging it to drive meaningful educational change (Selwyn 2011). PauseUP was designed with simplicity and user-friendliness in mind, aiming to fit into the school day with minimum disruption. Although initially met with resistance in some schools, the programme's adaptability was improved through iterative feedback and engagement with end-users, which proved necessary in the implementation process. PauseUP's flexible design, derived from the primary school resource PausePoints, allowed for the creation of practical interventions that fit within brief, targeted breaks during the school day.

However, despite its adaptable design, PauseUP's application varied across secondary schools, revealing a need for further refinement. For example, some struggled with the initial structure of three distinct sections, prompting a revision to reduce these to two, which were better suited to pastoral periods like registration classes. Even with these adjustments, outcomes on student wellbeing varied and engagement challenges were expressed. South School for example, where technological barriers hindered implementation, were unable to relaunch PauseUP during the main study. This variability highlights the importance of customising the approach for schools and offering support when required. Schools demonstrated varied strategies to adapt PauseUP to their contexts, from targeted support within specific student groups to wider whole-school approaches. This variability underscores the necessity for a flexible strategy that can accommodate distinct challenges and readiness levels of schools.

The implementation of PauseUP within the Nurture group is an example of an adapted approach and targeted support in this evaluation and aligns with Noddings' (2018) philosophy of care ethics, emphasising the importance of fostering caring relationships as the foundation for student wellbeing. This nurturing environment was conducive to PauseUP, suggesting that creating such spaces in schools may improve the impact of wellbeing promotion. This finding is relevant for wellbeing policy initiatives, including the WHO's Health Promoting School framework and Welsh education policies, which advocate for integrating health holistically into the educational system (WHO 2021; Gov.Wales 2022). The more positive outcomes observed in the Nurture group highlight the importance of embedding nurturing and supportive environments more broadly into wellbeing-focused schools and curricular design.

SHRN in Wales exemplifies a complex adaptive systems model that promotes collaborative, data-driven approaches to improving health and wellbeing in schools (Murphy et al. 2021). This study's findings support the need for such a model, recommending context-aware, adaptable strategies that take into account the complexities of school microsystems to facilitate change. The evaluation of PauseUP highlights the importance of understanding the contextual factors in developing and evaluating interventions, advocating for holistic and systems thinking throughout the implementation process. This discussion will now explore the strengths and limitations to better understand the reliability and validity of the findings and will conclude by exploring the research questions and implications of this evaluation on the curriculum with thoughts on future research directions.

7.5 Strengths and Limitations

Research, irrespective of its size, is shaped by its strengths and challenges. Numerous studies highlight the importance of recognising and addressing these in research designs. Challenges, ranging from methodological issues to sample sizes as noted by Smith and Noble (2014), must be acknowledged to guide the study's interpretations. It is important to use feedback from PauseUP's current evaluation to fine-tune research methods to better align with goals and objectives for future evaluations (Creswell 2013).

In line with realist evaluation principles (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Pawson 2006; Pawson and Manzano-Santaella 2012), this evaluation employed a mixed methods data collection approach. This enabled an understanding of the programme's influence and facilitated interpretation of the findings in relation to the complexity of the programme, providing a realist picture of its implementation (Bhaskar 2014). This interpretation is reinforced by Thorogood and Green (2018), suggesting that the convergence of qualitative and quantitative data in health research results in a well-rounded methodology capable of exploring complex issues.

Qualitative methods, such as observations and discussions during site visits as well as interviews and focus groups with teachers, pupils, and wellbeing leads, allowed for the exploration of personal experiences and contextual factors influencing the programme's implementation and outcomes. This narrative data provided perspective into the mechanisms and contextual factors at play, a key aspect of realist evaluation (Manzano 2016; Wong et al. 2016).

The quantitative measures using tools like surveys and wellbeing scales, have long been appreciated and used for their ability to capture measurable data (Creswell 2014). In this evaluations, such techniques proved useful in exploring the influences of PauseUP on various wellbeing indicators. Through this data, patterns, and tentative correlations pertaining to wellbeing emerged, providing data to compare against the narrative-driven qualitative insights. However, as highlighted by Field and Golubitsky (2009) quantitative data, while invaluable, has its inherent limitations, especially when trying to establish causality in complexity. It was essential to interpret such data with circumspection. Even though the collected data presented trends in certain contexts that seemed to align with the objectives of implementing PauseUP, the multifaceted nature of wellbeing, influenced by a variety of external and internal factors, makes it a complex task to pinpoint PauseUP as the sole or even primary catalyst for observed changes. As Rubin and Babbie (2016) note, correlation does not necessarily imply causation, and hence, while PauseUP might have been a mechanism for some of the observed wellbeing

changes, claiming it as the definitive cause would be a leap that overlooks the other variables that contribute to wellbeing and development (Bronfenbrenner 2005).

In evaluating the potential influence of PauseUP, it is important to acknowledge some methodological constraints inherent in this evaluation. Chief among these was the absence of a control group. Without a control group, it is challenging to determine whether the observed outcomes can be attributed to PauseUP or other external factors (Cook et al. 2002). A control group would have enabled a comparison to establish causal relationships between the programme and its effects on participants (Wilson and Lipsey 2001). Evaluations made without a control group can also introduce potential confounding variables and biases that threaten the study's internal validity. For example, participants may have experienced changes in wellbeing due to maturation, history, or testing effects rather than the programme itself (Creswell 2017). It is therefore difficult to assess PauseUP's influence compared to other wellbeing programmes or no programme at all (Boruch 1997). This limitation hinders the ability to draw wider conclusions and specificities about PauseUP's potential applicability in different contexts (Cook et al. 2008).

However, the inclusion of multiple school settings mitigated this limitation somewhat as it provided the opportunity for an understanding of PauseUP's applicability across different contexts. The participating schools had varying characteristics, such as size, location, and student backgrounds and the study was able to capture a wide range of perspectives (Patton et al. 2015). This research has shown that the effectiveness of school wellbeing programmes can be influenced by contextual factors, such as school environment, resources, and student population (Rowling and Weist 2004; Langford et al. 2014). Therefore, including schools with varying characteristics, provided a range of possibilities to explore how the programme could be adapted. The involvement of five schools across the two studies aligns with the principles of realist evaluation, which stresses the importance of understanding contexts to explore outcomes. The evaluation was able to identify some of the mechanisms through which PauseUP was implemented and the conditions under which it was most likely to produce intended wellbeing outcomes.

The comparison of contextual factors aimed to deepen the realist understanding of PauseUP and guide tailored strategies, reflecting the importance of context in school wellbeing research (Greenberg et al. 2003; Durlak et al. 2011). However, this evaluation was conducted post hoc, deviating from traditional realist evaluation principles (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Conducting the analysis retrospectively limited the ability to explore causal mechanisms and increased the risk of over-interpretation or selective reporting. While post hoc analyses can provide insights, transparency about this process is essential to acknowledge potential biases and

limitations. The lack of a control group and the exploratory nature of subgroup analyses further complicate causal claims, indicating that findings should be approached with caution.

In line with implementation science, which emphasises understanding factors influencing programme adoption, implementation, and sustainability (Fixsen et al. 2005; Damschroder et al. 2009), this research provides the need for a future prospective evaluation. Such an approach would offer more definitive evidence on what works, for whom, and under what conditions, thereby improving the validity and reliability of findings.

School leadership and wellbeing representatives' active involvement was prioritised throughout the evaluation, ensuring a collaborative approach. This was a choice embedded in the ethos of the study. Recalling phases one and two of the evaluation as described in the methodology chapter, stakeholders were actively consulted at various stages, from discussing the programme and evaluation design to providing feedback on preliminary findings. This interaction was a partnership where school members shared their lived experiences, aspirations, and concerns enriching the data (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). It is argued that engaging with these stakeholders, especially those directly associated with PauseUP, improved the validity of the findings. As Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) express, when the very people experiencing the programme's influence are involved in its assessment, the evaluation captures the realities and complexities on the ground. This close collaboration permitted better communication channels with each participating school to articulate their challenges and institutional dynamics (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

Navigating my dual role as both one of the developers and evaluators of PauseUP brought with it the challenge of potential biases and perceived lack of objectivity (Creswell and Miller 2000; Berger 2015). Being intrinsically involved in the creation of the programme, I was naturally vested in its success, which might have influenced my interpretations during the evaluation phases. This involvement carries the risk of amplifying successes and downplaying challenges, given the inherent human tendency to view one's own projects favourably (Berger 2015). However, a commitment to receiving constructive, actionable feedback mandated the methodology of a realist evaluation. Recognising and addressing these potential biases was needed for the study's integrity and for refining PauseUP. Actively cultivating self-awareness, continuously questioning my assumptions, and inviting stakeholder views were some of the strategies employed to mitigate these biases. The findings and discussion did not exclusively report on the programme's strengths. Instead, an effort was made to explore areas where PauseUP faltered or did not meet expectations. The focus on both successful and less successful facets of PauseUP supported the goal of understanding the programme as a mechanism of wellbeing change, in the pursuit of ongoing development and refinement.

Seeking feedback served as an additional check for potential biases in the analysis and interpretation of the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Creswell and Miller 2000). This was done through conversations with representatives of schools, students, representatives from the company partner and with university colleagues and supervisors.

As one of the developers, I had an understanding of the programme's underlying theoretical framework, objectives, and components (Rallis and Rossman 2012). This enabled me to identify patterns and connections that perhaps someone less familiar with may have found more challenging (Maxwell 2013). Knowledge of the programme may have allowed for a perspective which led to clearer understanding of the influence and related factors (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major 2013). My investment translated into an elevated level of personal commitment during the evaluation process. This was a product of professional responsibility coupled with a desire to understand and improve its influence. Given my association with PauseUP, stakeholders could perceive a sense of familiarity and shared purpose. This potentially fostered an atmosphere of trust and rapport, creating a conducive environment for open dialogue. The establishment of this trust is required in educational and evaluation research. When stakeholders believe in the genuine intentions of the evaluator and feel confident in the confidentiality and respect of their inputs, they are more inclined to communicate openly. Such open and honest communication during data collection can often unearth findings that might otherwise remain obscured, leading to data that captures authentic experience and the perceptions of those involved (Padgett 2016).

The pandemic presented a unique context to the study, impacting the implementation across the schools and influencing findings. The pandemic led to widespread school closures, remote learning, and changes in the educational and research environment. The unprecedented circumstances shifted schools' priorities, focusing more on immediate concerns such as adapting to remote learning and addressing health and safety measures. This, in turn, may have limited access to resources, such as new technology, which may have influenced the programme's outcomes (Reimers and Schleicher 2020; Schleicher 2020; Van Lancker and Parolin 2020). An additional constraint posed by the pandemic was the restricted access to schools. Not being able to physically enter the school settings during the pilot study meant an inability to directly observe, in real-time, how the programme was unfolding, how teachers and students were responding, and the immediate challenges they faced. This restricted access undeniably impacted the early stages of development and evaluation. As schools grappled with academic losses incurred during the prolonged closures, there was a shift in some settings towards academic catch-up activities. This side-lined PauseUP, potentially diminishing its role in the school.

Conversely, the pandemic also magnified the importance of wellbeing. As schools and teachers became more acutely aware of the psychological toll on students' wellbeing, programmes like PauseUP might have been timely and, in some cases, perhaps as a "tick" in the wellbeing box, especially in support of the new curriculum. Digital technology became a valuable tool at this time for schools as well as for the research and evaluation processes, facilitating the continuity of education and offering methodologies for introducing and gaining feedback from schools, adapting to the unprecedented challenges they faced.

Research underscores the importance of critically assessing the assumed benefits of educational technology, highlighting the need for a balanced and equitable approach to integrating digital tools into educational practices (Selwyn 2016). The requirement for using digital tools to initiate this study, and for the programme to be administered exemplifies the shift towards a more integrated approach. Technology, and the people using it during this period, enabled a responsive approach to understanding the school context. This aided in the collection and analysis of data which provided the findings on the efficacy and influence of the wellbeing interventions featured on PauseUP. These digital methods are supported by literature advocating for the use of these tools in research to improve the agility and depth of evaluations (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016). The use of digital technology in this context supported the operationalisation of research activities and aligns with the call for a better understanding of how digital tools can be best employed to support educational practice and research (Selwyn 2024). This is especially relevant when doing research with participants of an age group that have grown up in the digital age.

Given the influences and backdrop of the pandemic, directly relating findings from this interval to other school years is a challenge. The interactions between the programme and context in what we nostalgically may deem "regular times" might function differently. Recognising the subtleties shaped by the pandemic's lingering influence is also important, both in discerning the short-term influences of the programme and in tailoring its future evaluations in times that might resemble old standards. Yet, with the evolving educational landscape, the idea of reverting to a familiar past becomes elusive. In the words of John Dewey, "*Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself*" (Dewey 1916, 1996).

The study's findings offer a lens through which to view the potential for research and digital wellbeing programmes in a post-pandemic world. The lessons learned from this period about flexibility, technological integration, and the importance of wellbeing are likely to remain pertinent. The pandemic period demonstrated the capacity of schools to adapt to new challenges, highlighting the resilience and innovation within the educational sector. Therefore,

while the specific context of this study is unique, the underlying principles of adaptability for wellbeing approaches have enduring relevance for practice and policy.

7.6 Exploring the Research Questions and Contributions

Research question 1

(1) What factors and conditions within the school microsystem influence the implementation of new wellbeing initiatives during periods of significant social disruption, such as the Covid-19 pandemic?

The implementation of new initiatives in schools is inherently complex, shaped by various contextual factors (Osher et al. 2016). These complexities were magnified during the Covid-19 pandemic, which acted both as a disruptor and a catalyst for rapid change, underscoring the need for context-responsive approaches (Harris 2020). The "undeniable chaos" (Azorín 2020; Hargreaves 2021) brought by the pandemic highlighted the critical need for equitable educational practices and technological support (Darling-Hammond 2020). This study's findings align with broader literature, showing that effective implementation of new initiatives during periods of disruption depends heavily on factors such as teacher engagement, programme adaptability, and leadership support.

Teacher understanding and buy-in were pivotal for using PauseUP. Schools where teachers were well-informed about the programme and supported by leadership reported more positive outcomes. This finding reflects research that stresses the need for clear communication, supportive leadership, and inclusive decision-making during crises (Maitland and Glazzard 2022). In this study, staff involvement, particularly within the Nurture Group, improved their ability to adapt to the programme, reinforcing the idea that teacher engagement is crucial to successfully implementing educational programmes (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017).

Beyond general professional development, the use of digital tools for communication, training, and delivering wellbeing strategies during the pandemic was essential for bridging gaps in understanding and engagement. These tools helped sustain interest in PauseUP, highlighting the importance of adaptable, technology-supported professional support, particularly during crises. The flexibility of PauseUP, which allowed it to be adapted to different classroom environments and schedules, was another key factor that helped mitigate pandemic related challenges. This aligns with the literature that suggests wellbeing programmes must be flexible to fit varying contexts, especially during times of disruption (Collie and Martin 2016; Hickey and Stynes 2024).

Leadership played a role in facilitating the implementation during the pandemic. Strong school leadership, which prioritised wellbeing and allocated resources for the programme, created environments conducive to change, supporting Fullan's (2023) perspectives on educational transformation, which emphasises collaboration for maximum impact. Furthermore, distributed leadership, where responsibilities were shared across the school, proved valuable in managing the logistical complexities of introducing a new programme during the pandemic (Azorín et al. 2020).

School closures provided an exceptional context for evaluating PauseUP, demonstrating how disruptions can create opportunities for innovation. Schools were compelled to experiment with new methods of curriculum delivery, highlighting elements of self-organisation during times of instability (Lanham et al. 2013; Baxter et al. 2023). The concept of liminality, where established norms and structures are disrupted, offers a lens for understanding how the pandemic allowed schools to rethink and reshape student wellbeing strategies (Bamber et al. 2017; Turner 2017). This period of "in-between" presented a unique chronosystem—a time-bound system marked by significant changes that fundamentally altered how schools operated and responded to wellbeing needs (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006).

The introduction of PauseUP during this liminal period could have facilitated the reimagining of wellbeing practices, including the use of digital resources and external support, reflecting research showing that school leaders needed to adapt their strategies in response to pandemic-driven learning (Brown et al. 2023). However, as highlighted in this evaluation, some schools may have adapted well while others faced persistent challenges to implement the changes needed for introducing PauseUP across multiple year groups and larger staff cohorts. The unique chronosystem context of this research reveals that significant social disruptions, such as a pandemic create immediate challenges whilst also perhaps serving as periods of transformation, where new opportunities and models for supporting wellbeing can emerge.

Within this liminal space, 'communitas' may have emerged across schools as mechanisms for creating change (Turner 2017; Buechner et al. 2020; Bayrakdar and Guveli 2023). The shared experience of unprecedented challenges may have fostered a sense of solidarity among wellbeing representatives, participating schools, the company partner and university which facilitated new ways of thinking and exploring wellbeing. This collective spirit allowed schools to experiment and collaborate, thereby supporting the development of context-focused wellbeing initiatives like PauseUP.

Lewin's model of change, which describes the process of "unfreezing" established behaviours, is particularly relevant in this context (Cummings et al. 2016; Burnes 2020). The pandemic disrupted the status quo, creating space for new approaches. The urgency of the crisis may

have accelerated the acceptance of such changes, demonstrating how crises can act as powerful drivers of change (Baxter et al. 2023). Fullan's (2023) further supports this, emphasising that successful transformation requires changes not just in practices, but in the culture and structure of educational systems. The pandemic, by dismantling traditional ways of working and promoting distributed leadership, likely facilitated the systemic change needed to support new wellbeing initiatives like PauseUP in being introduced and used by multiple schools.

Despite the widespread postponement of many research projects globally (Bradley-Dorsey et al. 2022), this research proceeded, offering a rare perspective on how wellbeing initiatives can be adapted and integrated amidst crisis conditions. The evaluation phases outline practical steps from the pilot and main studies, showing how schools facilitated the introduction of PauseUP, considering factors like teacher engagement, leadership support, and adaptability. The fact that the research was conducted during this challenging period itself is a significant point of reflection, illustrating resilience in educational research and the feasibility of progressing with developing a programme under adverse conditions. The findings show that the pandemic may have acted as both a barrier and an enabler, driving changing approaches while also revealing challenges in programme implementation. The practical strategies developed during this timeframe provided resources to schools, but the uneven outcomes call for future exploration to recommend what might work best for their students post pandemic.

The pandemic period highlighted the risks of prioritising performance over wellbeing, underscoring the need to balance both educational and emotional needs (Eirdosh and Hanisch 2021; Wilson et al. 2023). The changes to digital learning platforms presented opportunities to rethink school design, pointing to the value of flexibility for strategies. Programmes like PauseUP demonstrate the relevance of fitting programmes into the school routine and the evaluation stressed the importance of involving stakeholders in co-designing strategies, reinforcing the need for user-informed, participatory approaches in guiding schools towards new ways of educating.

Research Question 2

(2) How can the findings from the implementation of various wellbeing interventions in schools during extraordinary times inform broader educational practices and curriculum development to support student wellbeing?

In modern education, the integration of student wellbeing within curricula is increasingly recognised. This research aligned with systemic changes in Wales' education system, suggesting that activities like those in PauseUP could be more regularly integrated into the curriculum, rather than restricted to sporadic sessions. Frequent inclusion across subjects and timetables, as advocated by Jones and Bouffard (2012) and supported by SEL literature (Durlak and Weissberg 2011; Taylor et al. 2017), would ensure wellbeing is embedded within the educational experience, reflecting a WSA and policy reforms around wellbeing as an area of learning and experience (Gov.Wales 2024).

However, embedding such activities poses challenges, including navigating the crowded academic timetable. Adjustments in school structures might be necessary to accommodate these changes, as noted by Hargreaves and Fullan (2015). The flexibility and adaptability in programme implementation, a requirement in the success of initiatives like Australia's MindMatters (Mullet et al. 2004), mirror the adaptability required in participating schools using PauseUP in Wales, drawing on lessons learned from this study it becomes necessary for schools to work collaboratively alongside research and evaluation to seek out curricula that fits into the already busy school calendar.

The Spiritual component of PauseUP, infused with principles of positive education, highlights the potential of these frameworks in enriching wellbeing curricula. In settings like Nurture groups where these principles were incorporated into lessons, their applicability and influence were more pronounced. Constructs from positive psychology such as savouring, empathy, and optimism, which research has shown to improve wellbeing and life satisfaction (Shankland and Rosset 2017; Moskowitz et al. 2021), could be more widely applied across the curriculum. The production of teacher training videos (Appendix C) developed in collaboration with local authorities as part of this research exemplifies proactive steps towards making these principles accessible for schools, supporting teachers in inserting positive education and SEL strategies into their daily practices and giving them ideas for implementing wellbeing as part of the curriculum.

The Health and Wellbeing AoLE in Wales guides a holistic approach that integrates physical, mental, and social development with academic skills (Donaldson 2015; Hwb 2022). PauseUP, which included yoga and breathing exercises, aligns with parts of this framework by embedding 'pauses' for an array of physical and mental wellbeing practices into the curriculum. Such activities, highlighted as beneficial by some pupils and staff on emotional state, proved particularly valuable during the pandemic, offering tools for students in stress management and emotional regulation amid the disruptions to everyday routines.

Research suggests that these practices can reduce stress and anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and enhance mental wellbeing (Butzer et al. 2016; Khalsa and Butzer 2016), making them particularly relevant during high-stress periods and within this research's extraordinary context (Feiss et al. 2019). Even post-pandemic, high stress levels persist among adolescents, underscoring the need for continued wellbeing support in schools (Bhutta et al. 2022; Baird et al. 2024).

Including yoga and mindfulness into the curriculum may also prepare students for future challenges, equipping them with lifelong coping skills (Zenner et al. 2014; Pascoe et al. 2017). These practices can be digitally integrated into school routines as shown in this study, easing the instructional burden which may lead to more sustainable adoption across settings (Dariotis et al. 2023). In normalising mental health practices in schools, educators could help reduce stigma and encourage students to prioritise their wellbeing to support their learning outcomes (Feiss et al. 2019). Such integration supports the goals of the Health and Wellbeing AoLE, aligning wellbeing activities with existing curricular objectives to create a balanced, holistic educational experience (Donaldson 2015; Hwb 2022). This proactive approach may strengthen students' overall development, preparing them for a complex and demanding future (Waters et al. 2022).

The study highlighted students' engagement with various wellbeing interventions, particularly mindfulness, which was valued in certain contexts for its ability to reduce stress and promote emotional regulation. This aligns with the current emphasis in Wales and the UK on integrating mindfulness into educational settings to address the heightened mental health challenges resulting from the pandemic (Hwb 2022; Weare 2023). The disruptions to learning environments, along with associated stressors like social isolation and uncertainty, worsened mental health issues among students (Loades et al. 2020; Viner et al. 2022). Mindfulness practices gained relevance as tools to help students manage anxiety and build resilience, reflecting trends in schools seeking to support students amidst external stressors (Dunning et al. 2019; Emerson et al. 2020).

The new Curriculum for Wales recommends integrating practices that support emotional and social skills, aligning well with mindfulness programmes (Hwb 2022). This research suggests that structured mindfulness interventions, such as those described by Hailwood (2020) and Pegram (2023), could benefit schools by fitting within the school day to improve emotional regulation (Kuyken et al. 2013; Zenner et al. 2014). However, the effectiveness of these programmes can vary significantly based on their implementation context and the specific needs of students, as noted in this study's findings.

Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and improve mood and cognitive functioning in adolescents, making it a potentially valuable addition to school settings during periods of crisis (Weare 2013; Emerson et al. 2020). However, these benefits are not guaranteed; effectiveness depends on how well the programmes are integrated into the curriculum and student engagement levels. Montero-Marin et al. (2023) found that student engagement with the “.b” mindfulness programme was low, with mixed responses indicating that while some students benefited from increased awareness and emotional regulation, many did not engage actively. The study highlighted the need for co-designed curricula, tailored to individual and school contexts, with a focus on high-quality teacher training to improve student engagement and responsiveness. Hailwood (2020) discusses the compulsory and prescriptive nature of some mindfulness programmes, arguing that such approaches can hinder their effectiveness by failing to account for students’ diverse needs. These findings resonate with the evaluation of PauseUP, suggesting that a more flexible and student-centred approach is necessary to genuinely support wellbeing. While mindfulness shows therapeutic potential, further research is needed to explore how to best tailor these interventions for student populations and ensure they are implemented effectively.

Storytelling also emerged as a valuable intervention within PauseUP, engaging students through community narratives that allowed them to explore emotions, reflect on personal and societal themes (Haven 2007). Combined with mindfulness, storytelling offers a holistic approach that addresses both emotional and cognitive development, making it particularly relevant during extraordinary times (Gunawardena and Brown 2021). As schools continue adapting to the post-pandemic context, the sustained integration of mindfulness and storytelling may play a role in supporting students. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these interventions, particularly their capacity to mitigate ongoing and emerging mental health challenges, ensuring that schools support holistic student development amid continued uncertainty and change (Hayes et al. 2023; Weare 2023).

The Welsh Government's commitment to increasing Welsh speakers and integrating the language into the wellbeing curriculum has the potential to improve students' educational experiences (Gov.Wales 2024). This study found that some schools adopted the programme specifically for its Welsh language components, reflecting the broader cognitive benefits of bilingual education in supporting holistic development goals (Bialystok 2001; Baker 2011). Implementing wellbeing approaches through the medium of Welsh in the curriculum could lead to future successful outcomes. Research on the early implementation of the Curriculum for Wales by Thomas et al. (2023) highlighted challenges and opportunities faced by senior leaders in both Welsh and English-medium schools in incorporating the Welsh language. Welsh-medium schools reported the need to address the pandemic's impact on students'

Welsh language skills and found the curriculum adaptable for promoting Welsh oracy and identity. English-medium schools valued initiatives that support incidental Welsh use. Both types of schools recognised the importance of Welsh culture and language, aligning with the Welsh Government's goals of increasing Welsh speakers and enriching educational experiences. This study advocates for embedding cultural language together with wellbeing approaches.

The vision of the new curriculum and a holistic education, underscores the necessity for ongoing support and resources to effectively embed wellbeing strategies within school settings (Littlecott et al. 2018a; Gov.Wales 2022). This vision became particularly relevant during the extraordinary times of the pandemic, which placed unprecedented pressures on schools to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. The pandemic highlighted the fragility of educational systems and the critical need for adaptability and sustained support. Research by Thomas et al. (2023) shows progress in implementing this new curriculum, with many schools reporting satisfaction and ongoing development despite these challenging conditions. Senior leaders reported that collaboration and iterative curriculum design were needed in overcoming the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The collaborative approach observed during this research allowed for shared learning and mutual support among schools. The process of adaptation was essential, as it enabled schools to tailor their wellbeing strategies, using PauseUP, within their specific contexts.

The pandemic highlighted the critical need for a responsive curriculum capable of navigating extraordinary circumstances. As Thomas et al. (2023) observed, an iterative and collaborative approach to curriculum implementation is essential for fostering greater practitioner ownership and adaptability. This method allows schools to make real-time adjustments to wellbeing strategies by incorporating feedback from students, teachers, and the wider school community, thereby ensuring that new approaches are effectively integrated even amid unpredictable challenges.

This study underscores the broader necessity for a curriculum that includes wellbeing as a central component while providing schools with the resources and guidance required to introduce initiatives during crises. The findings revealed that implementation of wellbeing strategies relies heavily on open communication channels, which enable schools to introduce wellbeing within their curricula meaningfully. Moreover, the findings stress the importance of professional development and targeted training to equip teachers with the skills needed to address the complex and evolving wellbeing needs of students.

The integration of wellbeing curricula should be underpinned by a framework that includes continuous evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and the flexibility to adapt to emerging

challenges. Such a framework would ensure their sustainability and resilience in the face of future disruptions. As Evans (2023) argues, for curricular reforms like the Curriculum for Wales to be truly effective, a national professional learning programme is important to give teachers the confidence and support needed to make these curricular visions a reality.

7.6.1 Implications for future research

Anchored in the philosophy of realist evaluation, this thesis has attended to the complicated landscape of promoting student wellbeing in schools. At its core, the exploration of PauseUP reveals its potential to influence some areas of student wellbeing, particularly with a link to emotions, and within Nurture groups of students viewed as vulnerable or more susceptible to risk. These outcomes complement findings of SHRN in Wales, which discuss the importance of tailored interventions to cater to the many needs of students within different groups (Page et al. 2023).

PauseUP as a mechanism of wellbeing change, with its many components still poses an intriguing question: which specific elements within the programme predominantly act as mechanisms for the observed emotional wellbeing changes? Research suggests that focused interventions like breathing exercises can have tangible effects on emotional control and stress reduction (Tang et al. 2015; Tang and Tang 2015). But is it the solitary effect of such activities within PauseUP, or is it a combination of various components, including the movements and modular elements, that triggers the emotional benefits for adolescents?

In considering the pathways for future research, it would be important to assess the mechanism templates traditionally used in realist evaluations. A shift toward a Context + Intervention-Mechanism-Outcome (CIMO) framework could provide a clearer distinction between the programme's interventions and their mechanisms of action. This framework is highlighted in the literature as improving clarity in realist evaluations (Frykman et al. 2017; Lemire et al. 2020). Interventions in PauseUP, such as specific movement or breathing exercises or thematic content within PPI's or SEL activities, could be distinctly analysed in more targeted groups of early or mid-adolescents in schools to understand their direct influence on student reasoning, beliefs, and behaviours.

The decision to maintain the traditional Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration in this study was due to the exploratory nature of PauseUP's initial implementation in schools. This approach allowed for an exploration of how various elements of the programme could be adapted and best used across year groups, aligning with the goals of the realist evaluation

philosophy, which seeks to understand "what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and why" (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

The more general understanding of the CMO configuration needed to introduce PauseUP was deemed appropriate for capturing the systemic dynamics within schools, where leadership, environmental factors, and teacher engagement converge to affect the implementation of new programmes. This method provided the necessary data and flexibility to actively tailor the programme components between studies to address the real-world complexities of educational programme applications. While the CIMO framework can offer a more granular focus on the chosen interventions in the future, it might have imposed constraints to this study that could have obscured the contextual and systemic factors needed for initial engagement (Marchal et al. 2013; Westhorp 2014). The traditional CMO configuration, therefore, supported a holistic view of the programme's initial influence during a challenging pandemic infused environment, allowing the study to adapt to the emergent needs of the schools, a key first step to informing future iterations. Focusing too much on specific interventions without acknowledging the ecosystem within which these interventions operate could have restricted the depth and applicability of the current findings, especially given the emergent and adaptive nature of social programmes (Pawson 2006). This approach may be required in pilot studies which aim to tailor interventions to real-world conditions and understand how contextual factors influence preliminary outcomes (Pawson 2006; Dalkin et al. 2015).

This evaluation revealed distinct preferences among various age groups, highlighting the importance of a targeted approach to wellbeing in schools. By integrating such age-specific insights into future delivery of some of the PauseUP components, there is potential for maximised engagement and outcomes. A future age-specific, and component-centred evaluation could allow for a more refined and effective implementation within schools.

The observed outcomes within the Nurture group reveals the importance of tailored interventions for students with specific needs, aligning with findings from Cheney et al. (2014), and Hughes and Schlösser (2014) who report on the benefits of customised approaches and Nurture groups in schools. To improve understanding on the influences of PauseUP for these students, it is necessary to analyse further which elements of the programme are most resonant. As reported earlier in the discussion, the content of PauseUP likely addresses the emotional and cognitive challenges faced by students in these groups, who, as the quantitative data indicated were experiencing more wellbeing challenges across the studies. In offering them practical tools and coping mechanisms that were immediately applicable, these students might have connected them to strategies for emotion regulation, which have been shown to be effective in supporting students with additional needs (Grantham and Primrose 2017;

Cunningham et al. 2019). Moreover, the mode of delivery of PauseUP may be specifically suited to the learning preferences of these students, potentially incorporating interactive or sensory-based learning methods that are more engaging for them compared to traditional teaching methods (Unwin et al. 2018).

To understand more about the benefits of PauseUP for this demographic, a thorough future evaluation of its components is required. This analysis should address the individual elements alongside some of the findings from this study into how they work within the context to support these students. Such detailed scrutiny can lead to more informed adaptations of the programme, ensuring it meets the needs of students effectively. This approach is in line with recent educational research on preparing educators in the time of covid, advocating for the development of inclusive teaching practices that address the diversity of student needs across settings (Darling-Hammond and Hylar 2020).

The potential adaptability of PauseUP extends beyond the classroom, in considering its applicability in other contexts that cater to vulnerable youth, such as social care settings, behavioural units, and even therapeutic environments (Evans et al. 2017; Roberts et al. 2019; Smith 2019, 2023; Macdonald et al. 2023). As Lerner (2005) highlighted, structured extracurricular activities in such settings can play a role in promoting positive youth development, particularly for those with increased vulnerabilities. While the initial findings from this study in certain contexts give promise, a systematic examination of its components and their adaptability across other settings could refine a programme that is versatile and useful for other vulnerable youth populations.

Using a comparative analysis between PauseUP and other wellbeing programmes with similar aims could also be illuminating (Thorburn 2020; Hanckel et al. 2021). Such comparisons may provide a vantage point to assess relative strengths and weaknesses whilst also fostering a deeper understanding of how programmes can be best optimised. As this research has highlighted, the effectiveness of school wellbeing programmes often lies in their adaptability and responsiveness to specific contexts. A future consideration is how PauseUP fares to similar programmes. Such comparative analyses can highlight elements of the programme that are uniquely effective, as well as potential areas that are not.

Addressing the challenge of implementation and the ethical considerations inherent in withholding support from certain groups, this study adopted an inclusive approach where all pupils who had been chosen by their school to use PauseUP were invited to participate in the evaluation. Many of the schools selected a large sample of students, from whole year groups to whole school approaches. The ethical framework guiding this decision aligns with Dixon-Woods and Bosk (2011), who caution against depriving any participant of potentially beneficial

interventions, especially in contexts where wellbeing is addressed. The decision to allow schools to make the choice of who had access to the programme was driven by a commitment to improve the wellbeing of the student body, reflecting an ethical stance that prioritises immediate support over the methodological benefits of a control group. However, this approach presents challenges, notably the potential for 'contamination' where pupils in different phases of the implementation could share experiences, potentially influencing the outcomes (Langford et al. 2017).

Future implementation could benefit from a phased approach incorporating control groups to strengthen the rigour of the research design. This methodology not only enhances the ability to accurately assess the effectiveness of interventions but also plays a role in identifying unintended harms—an often-underexplored area in educational research (Foulkes et al. 2024). As noted in studies by Weist et al. (2023), mental health and wellbeing programmes, while generally beneficial, can occasionally lead to adverse effects, such as increased anxiety, reduced self-esteem, or even exacerbation of mental health issues among certain subgroups. Control groups may be a requirement in this context, as they provide a comparative baseline against which the true impact of the intervention can be measured.

Including control groups allows researchers to discern whether observed effects are attributable to the intervention or are simply the result of external factors. To mitigate the ethical concerns that arise with control groups, strategies such as waitlist controls or staggered implementation phases can be employed (Straker et al. 2012). These approaches may ensure that all participants eventually receive the intervention while maintaining the integrity of the study. Moreover, strategies to minimise contamination between groups—such as restricting interactions or clearly delineating the phases of implementation—are needed in preserving the conditions needed for a controlled study. This approach is critical in school settings, where close interactions and shared environments can easily interfere with the interaction between the intervention and control groups, leading to unreliable results (Cappella et al. 2011).

While the inception and current grounding of PauseUP is in the Welsh context, the pervasive challenges tied to student wellbeing present across various cultural and geographic contexts hint at its broader applicability. This perspective is underpinned by the assertion of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) reports that have consistently highlighted the universality of student wellbeing challenges across countries and cultures (OECD 2019). A proposition for future research is understanding how PauseUP might translate in varied cultural and linguistic settings. Culture can influence the reception and efficacy of wellbeing programmes (Joshani et al. 2021). Hence, while the design of PauseUP is based on adaptability to school contexts, its transferability across other cultures and contexts would

likely necessitate more than just linguistic changes. Given this study's initial understanding of school context sensitivity there is a compelling argument that with thoughtful recalibrations, PauseUP can be adapted to resonate with other settings. To explore this, studies in varied cultural contexts would be necessary, providing evidence to inform potential programme adaptations.

The immediate benefits of PauseUP on some student emotional wellbeing outcomes provide a case for its future application in Wales. However, truly holistic, and impactful programmes are best assessed by their enduring effects. As noted by Masten (2018) understanding the trajectory of wellbeing programmes requires a longitudinal perspective to track the evolution of their influence over time. One key observation in this study was the engagement displayed by the Year 8 and 9 students at East school, where use of PauseUP spanned a longer duration. Additionally, an emergent pattern indicated that schools with feeder primary schools already acquainted with similar wellbeing resources may have had students more primed for engagement. It provides the idea that prior exposure and familiarity can serve as cognitive anchors, making subsequent experiences more meaningful and influential. It would be insightful to harness the potential of longitudinal studies to explore the sustained impacts of PauseUP in secondary schools. Specifically, research could concentrate on the transition phase where students, having been introduced to the programme in primary schools, continue its usage into secondary education. Such a focus would offer a richer understanding of the progression, and possible amplification of the programme's benefits (Moore et al. 2022; Donaldson et al. 2023). Tracking students' trajectories through this transition could elucidate the cumulative effects of some of the interventions on PauseUP and their role in fostering emotional resilience and wellbeing through this transitional phase. Longitudinal studies centred on this transition might unravel factors of how continuous exposure to the programme influences students (Compas et al. 2014).

A deeper understanding of the programme's influence and the contextual factors effecting its implementation could be attained by expanding the range of methods. Integrating more observations or introducing specific case studies with a set number of pupils would help in triangulating data, furnishing richer data on the underlying mechanisms, and influencing factors (Simpson and Tuson 2003; Gerring 2006). To get a more holistic picture of the programme's influence on wellbeing and the learning environment, it would be important to use similar scales like the SCWBS, SWEMWBS, and Cantril ladder to provide a comparison with benchmark findings from this study whilst also maintaining its significance within research in Wales (Page et al. 2023). On top of this, measuring a wider array of wellbeing indicators, including academic achievement, as discussed by Suldo et al. (2014) may be beneficial for policy makers to look at implications of the programme on the learning environment. Feedback

from other stakeholders in the wider community like parents, or school administrators could also yield a more rounded understanding of the programme's outcomes and its ripple effects on the school community, echoing the findings of Griebler et al. (2017).

The precision, choice, and relevance of data collection instruments, including surveys and assessment tools, are important. Hence, continuous refinement, as Creswell and Poth (2016) advocate, is imperative to capture the intricacies related to the programme's various outcomes. For a more comprehensive analysis on outcomes, leveraging advanced statistical methods like multilevel modelling or structural equation modelling could also help untangle complex relationships between wellbeing variables (Leyland and Goldstein 2001; Kline 2023). This approach would furnish a deeper understanding of the mechanisms propelling the programme and sharpen the understanding of its outcomes.

It is acknowledged that while the inclusion of various school settings enriched the research by providing a glimpse into the implementation of PauseUP across different contexts, the scope for generalisability of the findings could be improved. A more comprehensive inclusion of schools across a wider spectrum of environments—urban, rural, suburban—and varying levels of resources would allow for further realist understanding and broader applicability of the findings gained from this study. Stratified sampling, ensuring representation from schools of different socioeconomic statuses and specific educational needs, would offer a richer exploration of the programme's influence on wellbeing, as recommended by Langford et al. (2014). Furthermore, while the current study's multi-context exploration provides preliminary findings, a more detailed examination focusing on individual school cultures, leadership dynamics, community interactions, and identification of specific implementation barriers, akin to the approach suggested by Catalano et al. (2012), could further refine and contextualise the programme theories and understanding of PauseUP's integration and efficacy within the school environment.

During the pandemic, constraints such as limited access to schools, social distancing measures, and shifting priorities in school settings posed challenges to the inclusion of student voices in this research. The necessity for future research on genuinely focussing on and including young people in wellbeing initiatives remains clear, as student perspectives are critical to designing interventions that resonate with their needs and experiences. A more youth-centred, co-designed approach could have strengthened the current research, providing findings that may have led to faster refinements and higher engagement levels among participants. Future evaluations could adopt a broader array of participatory methods that actively involve young people throughout the intervention design and evaluation process. Techniques such as workshops, focus groups, and collaborative research sessions are vital

for democratising the research process, allowing students to contribute meaningfully to the content and delivery of wellbeing programmes (Foulkes et al. 2024).

Innovative approaches like arts-based activities and storytelling can provide avenues for researchers and young people to express their views on wellbeing in ways that are engaging and accessible (Mannay 2010, 2015; Mannay et al. 2017a; Mannay et al. 2017b). These visual methodologies may capture the unique perspectives of young people whilst also gaining insight between their lived experiences and the theoretical underpinnings of wellbeing initiatives. For example, using participatory video or photo-elicitation could allow students to document and share their daily experiences of wellbeing, thereby directly informing the programme design. Furthermore, implementing capacity-building activities could enable stakeholders, including students, to take active roles throughout the evaluation process, thus enhancing the intervention's relevance and impact beyond the immediate research question (Estrella et al. 2000; Preskill and Boyle 2008). These activities could include training sessions for students on research methods, empowering them to participate not only as subjects but as co-researchers who help shape the study's direction and outcomes.

The pandemic context undoubtedly limited the extent to which student voices could be integrated; however, reflecting on these constraints and planning for more robust engagement strategies in future work is essential. Establishing regular feedback loops with young participants could help promote a culture of iterative learning and responsiveness, allowing for real-time adjustments based on direct input from those most affected by the intervention (Forshaw and Woods 2023). Such an approach also aligns with a student-centred ethos that values the contributions of young people as equal partners in the research process (Children's commissioner for Wales 2023).

The findings from this study provide many potential research directions, inviting researchers to explore more and champion the cause of creating strategies that centralise student wellbeing in an ever-evolving school context. The possibility of PauseUP supporting emotional wellbeing is commendable. Yet, its differential influences, especially along the lines of context, gender, and age signal areas of further enquiry. Given this backdrop, it becomes necessary to be aware of the cultural, societal, and psychological factors that might account for the observed differences in response to the programme. Such examinations are required to ensure that interventions are equitable and appropriate.

Establishing partnerships with distinguished Welsh research institutions could prove beneficial for future research on PauseUP in Wales. Engaging with centres such as CASCADE (Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre), which specialises in social care research and the Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health, which focuses on

adolescent mental health issues, would enrich the robustness of the research on the programme. Additionally, collaboration with SHRN data, which addresses adolescent health in school settings, and DECIPHER (Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement), known for its public health impact assessments, would extend the research's applicability and depth.

These collaborations would offer a diverse range of expertise and perspectives, perhaps facilitating longitudinal studies to evaluate PauseUP's adaptability and effectiveness across various settings and demographics in Wales. This collaborative approach would ensure that the research aligns with existing educational strategies and health initiatives, thus improving its practical relevance and impact on policy and practice. Moreover, collaboration with the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, which integrates clinical practice with research and training focused on improving the mental health of children and young people through school-based interventions, could provide further data on some of the more effective wellbeing strategies incorporated into PauseUP.

A collaborative environment would increase the understanding of PauseUP's influence whilst supporting a systematic approach to improving student wellbeing across Wales. This would enable the delivery of detailed findings that could inform educational and wellbeing strategies more effectively and realistically.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The alignment of this research project with the UNSDG's is a testament to the global commitment towards creating sustainable futures through education. The SDGs, with their emphasis on holistic development, serve to guide numerous academic and practical initiatives worldwide. In this context, the focal points of wellbeing, equity in education, and collaboration, which are central tenets of the SDGs, were a global context on which this study was anchored.

This research on wellbeing within school settings in Wales was in recognition of policy that supports learners' well-rounded development, ensuring they are equipped, both emotionally and intellectually, to tackle the challenges of tomorrow. The SDGs support the idea of adaptable, inclusive, and forward-thinking education approaches. In this light, the development and realist evaluation of PauseUP as a case study encapsulated this grand vision by exploring strategies that are agile, responding to the changing needs of schools and young people. The variety of interventions included on PauseUP, and approaches used by schools ensured that a diverse array of students were given the opportunity for wellbeing provision, aligning with Welsh policy drive to leave no learner behind. This research contributes to a larger conversation on policy and curriculum changes in education in Wales. It highlights the role of tailored, responsive strategies in cultivating a generation of learners who are equipped to shape a sustainable future.

The timing of this study coincided with the advent of a revamped curriculum and the global pandemic, imbuing the research with logistical challenges and a heightened sense of relevance and immediacy. In a modern, digital world that is increasingly acknowledging the importance of wellbeing in education, where academic accomplishments are intertwined with emotional and psychological wellness, understanding new digital initiatives like PauseUP becomes necessary. This research aimed to understand the complex interaction of various contexts that contribute to or detract from the programme's implementation. Central to this exploration was an examination of variables to both the programme as a mechanism and its recipients' responses.

The factors influencing implementation ranged from the design of the programme itself to the inherent predispositions, strengths, and vulnerabilities of the schools, staff, and students. Particularly, the study put emphasis on understanding how such factors interacted and influenced outcomes for different student developmental stages. Students grow from early adolescence to late teens, and their challenges, needs and perspective on wellbeing shift. It was important to discern from this evaluation that PauseUP, as a wellbeing programme

needed to cater to these changes, ensuring relevance throughout a student's journey through secondary school.

This investigation has been useful in enriching the conversations surrounding student wellbeing. One of the objectives was to explore the capabilities of PauseUP and its implications for influencing wellbeing in schools. A finding was the programme's possible role in promoting attributes linked with emotional state and self-regulation. This was particularly evident among more vulnerable students where PauseUP seemed to guide them towards an improvement in wellbeing, with the assistance of the context and class teacher.

However, as the different contexts were explored, it became clear that the influences of PauseUP were not universal. Outcomes were varied, each representing influencing factors. Teacher perceptions and their understanding of the programme played a role. Their motivation served to shape the trajectory of the programme's implementation. The fidelity and frequency of the programme, denoted by the regularity of its sessions, and completion of the 12 weeks of included interventions emerged as another determinant supporting its implementation in classrooms. Consistency of use, as the findings suggest, often translated into more noticeable wellbeing changes among students.

The overarching school environment may have also caused an effect on the outcomes. Schools with existing wellbeing approaches and higher ratings as reported by the inspectorate seemed to report on more of the positive influences of the programme. Conversely where there was a lack of consistency and alignment between the school's timetable and schedule with PauseUP, the influences on student wellbeing were not observed. In one setting the resistance and challenge of integrating the programme became too great and this caused difficulty in reintroducing it. In essence, the relationship between PauseUP and the school environment emerged as a key context influencing the outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that the programme's success is not guaranteed and may be limited to specific conditions and contexts. Thus, the conclusions regarding its effectiveness should remain tentative, acknowledging that while PauseUP may work in some settings, it may not do so in others, and in some cases, the interventions may have minimal impact or even potential downsides. This understanding stresses the need for continued evaluation and adaptation, with careful consideration of the conditions under which such programmes are implemented in schools to ensure that they do more good than harm. Further research should prioritise exploring these conditions in greater depth to refine the intervention and more clearly delineate the contexts in which it can be most beneficial.

One of the academic contributions of this work lies in its approach to understanding wellbeing and the implementation of wellbeing support strategies in schools. Instead of treating

wellbeing as a standalone, isolated aspect of the educational experience, this thesis positions it within the school as defined as a microsystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979), interconnected with a wide array of factors. The enquiry adds a critical layer to the discourse on wellbeing promotion in schools, arguing that the success of wellbeing initiatives is deeply contingent upon the specific environments and contexts in which they are implemented (Lendrum and Humphrey 2012). Implementation can be enabled through stakeholder buy-in and allowing programmes to be tailored to contexts (Hung et al. 2014; Sadjadi et al. 2021). However, there has been a lack of contextual contingency between programmes and the settings they are delivered in (Craig et al. 2018). One of the aims of this thesis was to provide a template for how more customised wellbeing strategies can be integrated into schools in Wales, respecting their societal contexts.

The findings of the study support the notion that school leadership and teachers, who are the architects of change in the schooling system, can manifest heightened dedication, and passion for wellbeing approaches. This engagement, encouraged by training and development, matches with some of the theories constructed of PauseUP's implementation. Consequently, this guidance and teacher commitment ensures a more organic blend of the programme into day-to-day school routines. For the programme to be introduced, the leadership of the school must be proactive. School leaders helped to facilitate this study even within the difficult logistical hurdles brought about by school closures due to the pandemic. Digital tools equipped with open channels of communication, fostered a more unified vision and delivery of PauseUP. This collaborative approach consolidated trust among other staff members and students and accentuates the intent behind introducing PauseUP: improving student wellbeing. However, change within traditional, structured systems like schools is rarely straightforward; it often encounters resistance from both staff and students, who may view new initiatives with scepticism, an observation made over the course of the two studies on PauseUP.

The pandemic itself may have functioned as a liminal period, creating a "between" state where the regular order of school life was suspended, and new opportunities for change and innovation emerged. In such contexts, there is often space for rethinking and reimagining practices for wellbeing that may have previously been taken for granted. This research contributes to the literature on social change by demonstrating how liminal periods can act as catalysts for adopting new wellbeing strategies, even in school environments which may typically be more resistant to change. The iterative and responsive approach employed in the delivery of PauseUP—characterised by regular feedback, interviews, and periodic discussions with wellbeing representatives—allowed the programme to be refined and adapted to better meet the needs of schools in this disruptive period. This adaptability is of importance in liminal spaces, where fixed and rigid solutions may falter. Through continuous feedback, PauseUP

could change and refine in real-time, in attempting to make it more relevant. This participatory approach aligns with research on implementation science, which highlights the importance of stakeholder involvement and context-specific adjustments in achieving more successful intervention outcomes (Damschroder et al. 2009; Moore et al. 2019). The study's findings suggest that this flexible, iterative process helped mitigate initial hesitations and built a more receptive environment for introducing new wellbeing interventions. In actively involving wellbeing representatives and leveraging their views, the programme could be tailored to better fit the changing contexts of each school, perhaps gaining more of a sense of ownership and buy-in among these staff members. This approach, guided by more student user involvement may support PauseUP's future sustainability, as stakeholders are more likely to support initiatives that reflect their input and address their specific challenges (Thomas et al. 2023).

The implications of this study extend past the pandemic context, offering guidance into how schools can position themselves in other periods of social change and disruption. The lessons learned and initial theories developed from implementing PauseUP during the pandemic can inform future efforts to introduce wellbeing initiatives in schools, particularly in times of significant transition. The study highlights the potential for leveraging liminal spaces to foster positive change, suggesting that crises, while challenging, can also open doors for innovation and change in schools. In documenting the complexities of implementing a wellbeing programme, this thesis contributes to the broader understanding of how educational institutions can adapt in the face of uncertainty. It reinforces the importance of flexibility, stakeholder engagement, and context-awareness in the implementation process of school-based interventions. Furthermore, it underscores the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation, as the conditions that influence the success of such programmes are fluid and ever-changing. Within this context it is important to acknowledge that not all strategies fit every school. Findings of the studies on PauseUP highlight the notion that the choice of the strategy hinges on the demographic it is aimed at. Socio-cultural differences, linguistic variation, and even the content of a programme's interventions demand a diversified approach. This creates a need for teachers to remain open to change, adapting their pedagogical techniques to their students, especially when it comes to the complexity of teaching wellbeing as an area of learning and experience.

The realist perspective, which focuses on identifying "what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and why," is instrumental in understanding how programmes like PauseUP interact dynamically with their social, operational environments. The application of programme theories in this research is particularly important for future research. These theories, which are not as general as grand theories and not as narrow as specific hypotheses, provide an initial

platform for explaining how the mechanism of PauseUP influences student wellbeing. They help with understanding the link between theoretical abstraction and practical application, making them ideal for investigating interactions within school settings in further research.

The thesis has demonstrated that while PauseUP's programme theories are tailored to the specific context and timeline of this study, they also encapsulate principles that are applicable across various contexts. The theories provide a structured way to examine the regularities, or demi-regularities, observed in the implementation of a wellbeing programme. Demi-regularities in realist terms refer to the predictable patterns or outcomes that emerge under certain conditions, offering clues that may be both specific to the context of PauseUP and potentially generalisable to other settings, adapting the context and providing the mechanism as required.

The findings outline how specific interventions may lead to desired wellbeing outcomes in various contexts. This approach underscores the need for programmes to be responsive to the specific environmental and individual factors present in each implementation scenario. The observation of wellbeing changes in the study highlights some of the aspects of PauseUP that could be investigated further to refine the programme and increase its efficacy. Future research could open up the initial programme theories created in this study to explore other dimensions of school-based wellbeing initiatives, examining how different interventions interact with various student demographics and school cultures. This approach not only advances the understanding of wellbeing initiatives in schools but also contributes to the broader knowledge of how policy directives around wellbeing and programmes can be effectively adapted and enacted in complex and varied school environments.

This thesis is therefore just a beginning, it has unveiled initial layers of understanding, setting up a more refined exploration of wellbeing outcomes in future applications of the programme. The continued work would be to craft programmes and strategies that are effective and attuned to the changing dynamics of schools, ensuring they resonate with the many aspirations and requirements of the people within them. There have already been several engagement events with the wider education and research community directly resulting from this project and highlighted in Appendix N.

So, as this thesis draws to its close, it seems fitting to turn to the words of Bertrand Russell. His perspective provides a reminder that, "*The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.*" (Russell 1939). Such a life for future generations highlights the importance of a pedagogy that is emotionally resonant. As further research builds on this study, the aim should be for PauseUP and similar initiatives to thrive and adapt to their specific contexts, guided by a commitment to student wellbeing and a foundation of evidence-based practices. Evaluation

plays an important role in identifying what works and what doesn't, helping schools avoid ineffective or wasteful efforts and supporting more informed decision-making. Thus, with appreciation for the knowledge gained and optimism for future discoveries, this thesis concludes not as an endpoint, but as a starting point for ongoing evaluation.

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Appendix A – Information on PausePoints and Saib a Symud

A short introduction to the primary school resource can be found using the following links:

In English: [Welcome to PausePoints \(youtube.com\)](#)

In Welsh: [Croeso i Saib a Symud \(youtube.com\)](#)

As well as a link to the partner company website section on PausePoints:

[Pause Points - Raven Technologies Ltd](#)

Appendix B – Information on PauseUP and Saib a Sylwi

A short introduction to PauseUP and Saib a Sylwi, the programme used within this evaluation can be found using the following links:

English

[Welcome to PauseUP \(youtube.com\)](#)

Onboarding instructions for Main study: [PauseUP \(Main\) Getting Started Video \(youtube.com\)](#)

Welsh

[Croeso i Saib a Sylwi \(youtube.com\)](#)

Onboarding instructions for Main study: [Fideo Cyfarwyddiadau Saib a Sylwi \(Main\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

An introductory brochure was made for all schools involved as shown below:

PAUSE UP

A DIGITAL RESOURCE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



HELPING TO PROMOTE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

GWYLAN UK

PauseUP aims to make a significant contribution to building an emotionally resilient population of young people, reducing stigma and promoting good mental health. It is designed to increase wellbeing in the short and long term, giving students and staff self-help strategies to promote functional wellness.

WHAT IS IT?

*A complete
approach to:*

Physical wellness

Emotional Wellness

Spiritual wellness

HOW IT WORKS

PauseUP was developed to guide adolescents through activities with the 'body-mind-spirit' integrated model.

So, imagine a person surrounded by three sides of a triangle.

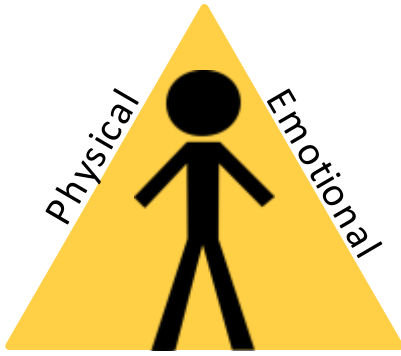
They are at the centre. Each of the three sides is an aspect of their wellbeing.

Pause Up provides short activities and exercises to support: Physical Wellbeing - to warm the body and mind up for the day ahead.

Emotional Wellbeing - to promote resilience, self-awareness and stress regulation.

- Spiritual Wellbeing - to encourage teachers and students to challenge, ponder and reflect at a personal and social level.
- The spiritual section is based around research on positive psychology and is divided into six categories:
 - Gratitude, Meaning, Optimism, Savouring, Empathy and Kindness. The resource is designed to be used three times a day, three days a week. But there is nothing to stop you taking advantage of the resource, every day, by practising and revisiting the tasks - routine is important. The Physical and Emotional sections include set practices. The spiritual section will guide you through an array of sequential activities, each building on what you have done so far.





Spiritual

*"The new curriculum will have more emphasis on equipping young people for life. It will build their ability to learn new skills and apply their subject knowledge more positively and creatively. As the world changes, they will be more able to adapt positively."
(Welsh Government, 2018)*

SAIB A SYLWI

ADNODD DIGIDOL AR GYFER YSGOLION UWCHRAD



HELPU I HYRWYDDO IECHYD MEDDWL CADARNHAOL

GWYLAN UK

Nod Saib a Sylwi yw gwneud cyfraniad sylweddol at greu poblogaeth o bobl ifanc sy'n gallu gwrthsefyll emosiwn, lleihau stigma a hybu iechyd meddwl da. Fe'i cynlluniwyd i gynyddu lles yn y tymor byr a'r tymor hir, gan roi arfau i fyfyrwyr a staff ymarfer y tu allan i'r ystafell ddosbarth, megis strategaethau hunangymorth i hyrwyddo lles swyddogaethol.

BETH YW E?

Strategaeth gyflawn ar gyfer:

Lles Corfforol

Lles Emosiynol

Lles Ysbrydol

SUT MAE'N GWEITHIO

Datblygwyd Saib a Sylwi i arwain pobl ifanc trwy weithgareddau gan ddefnyddio'r model ymyrraeth integredig 'corff-meddwl-ysbryd'. Felly, dychmygwch rhywun rydych chi'n gweithio gydag ef wedi'i amgylchynu gan dair ochr triongl. Mae'r person yn y canol ac mae pob un o'r tair ochr yn agwedd ar eu lles.

Mae Saib a Sylwi yn darparu gweithgareddau ac ymarferion byr i gefnogi:

Lles Corfforol - i gynhesu'r corff a'r meddwl am y diwrnod i ddod. Lles Emosiynol - i hyrwyddo gwytnwch, ymwybyddiaeth a rheoleiddio pryderon.

Lles Ysbrydol - i annog athrawon a myfyrwyr i herio, cnoi cil a myfyrion ar lefel bersonol a chymdeithasol.

- Mae'r adran ysbrydol wedi ei seilio ar ymchwil mewn seicoleg gadarnhaol ac mae wedi'i rannu'n
- chwe chategori: Diolchgarwch, Ystyr, Optimistiaeth, Sawru, Empathi a Charedigrwydd. Mae'r adnodd wedi'i gynllunio i'w ddefnyddio dair gwaith y dydd, dri diwrnod yr wythnos. Ond nid oes unrhyw beth
- i'ch rhwystro rhag manteisio ar yr adnodd bob dydd trwy ymarfer ac ailedrych ar y tasgau - mae trefn feunyddiol yn bwysig. Mae'r adrannau Corfforol ac Emosiynol yn cynnwys arferion penodol. Bydd yr adran ysbrydol yn eich tywys trwy amrywiaeth o weithgareddau dilyniannol, pob un yn adeiladu ar yr hyn rydych wedi'i wneud hyd yma.





Ysbrydol

*"Bydd y cwricwlwm newydd yn pwysleisio ar roi i bobl ifanc y sgiliau sydd eu hangen arnynt ar gyfer bywyd. Bydd yn datblygu eu gallu i ddysgu sgiliau newydd a defnyddio'u gwybodaeth bynciol yn fwy effeithiol ac mewn ffordd fwy creadigol. Wrth i'r byd newid o'u cwmpas, byddan yn gallu addasu, a hynny mewn ffordd gadarnhaol."
(Llywodraeth Cymru, 2018)*

Appendix C – Information on Wellbeing Matters and Llwyddiant Lles training videos

Information on the training videos created for schools as part of this research project and based on themes of Positive Psychology and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and can be found using the following links:

In English: [Wellbeing Matters - Longer introduction - YouTube](#)

In Welsh: [Llwyddiant LLES \(youtube.com\)](#)

As well as a virtual webinar which was made with the education consortia (ERW – Education through Regional Working) to introduce the various wellbeing themes incorporated into PauseUP.

[Gwylan Wellbeing MATTERS Webinar \(youtube.com\)](#)

Appendix D – Programme theories

Table one shows the programme theories developed by Pearson et al. (2015), in their realist systematic review of research and experience in the United Kingdom on implementing health promotion programmes in schools. These were adapted and discussed with the stakeholders from secondary schools' pre-evaluation in developing the initial hypothesised if...then statements for PauseUP's implementation.

<i>Programme Theory</i>	<i>Description</i>
Programme Theory 1: Preparing for Implementation	<p>Pre-delivery consultation: Varies based on the programme type and school history. Established areas like physical activity need brief consultations, while less established areas like SRE require extensive consultations. Pupil engagement: Programmes should be relevant and engaging for pupils, using appealing elements to attract attention. Reciprocity: Teachers need support to engage, and pupils need to see short-term benefits. Negotiation: Balances stakeholders' views, especially for SRE. Concordance: Aligns with school activities, potentially stimulating change and accommodation.</p>
Programme Theory 2: Introducing a Programme within a School	<p>Integrating a programme: Support from senior figures and practical assistance are required. Needs vary based on school level and who delivers the programme. A named coordinator is essential. Engaging deliverers and participants: Engagement depends on addressing relevant knowledge or skill gaps, perceived gains, and confidentiality. Flexibility helps tailor the programme to different developmental levels and skills.</p>
Programme Theory 3: Embedding a Programme into Routine Practice	<p>Sustainability: Limited evidence suggests coordination with other activities and senior support are key. Long-term sustainability is often not considered in programme design.</p>
Programme Theory 4: Fidelity of Implementation and Programme Adaptation	<p>Variation in delivery: Significant variation exists. Distinguishing warranted from unwarranted variation is challenging. Programmes with core and customisable elements need further evaluation. Fidelity is supported by a collegial atmosphere and support from senior staff and programme developers.</p>

Appendix E – Consent process and Information sharing

Below is the ethics approval letter received July 2021 for the amended research from Mphil to PhD.



School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

Cardiff University

Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3WT
Wales UK

Tel +44(0)29 2087 5179
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4175

www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences

20 July 2021

Our ref: SREC/3812

Simon Johns

PhD Programme

SOCSI

Dear Simon,

Prifysgol Caerdydd

Adeilad Morgannwg
Rhodfa'r Brenin Edward VII
Caerdydd CF10 3WT
Cymru, Y Deyrnas Unedig

Ffôn +44(0)29 2087 5179
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4175

www.caerdydd.ac.uk/social-sciences

Many thanks for advising us of the changes to your project entitled '*A realist evaluation of Pause UP - a digital resource designed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in adolescents.*' This has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

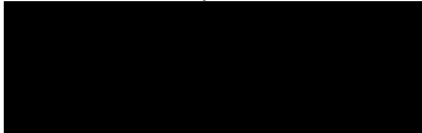
In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kirsty Hudson

Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics

Committee cc: Professor Alison Bullock, Dr Nina

Maxwell



Consent for Staff members involvement.

English



Ysgoloriaethau Sgiliau Economi Gwybodaeth
Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships



A realist evaluation of PauseUP Consent to take part in research.

- I..... voluntarily agree to take part in this research
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves a short half hour interview about the topic of well-being amongst the year 7 cohort, the resource Pause Up and any noticeable changes it may have on the learning environment.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name for a number code and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that anonymised extracts from my interview may be quoted in dissertation, conference presentation, published papers and Gwylan's publicity.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on a university encrypted laptop at a secure location, this laptop has a secure password that only the researcher has access too. This data will also be saved on the university OneDrive until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a minimum retention period of 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

Date

Name of researcher

Date

Welsh



Gwerthusiad realydd o Saib a Sylwi Cydsynio i gymryd rhan mewn ymchwil

- Rydw i.....yn cytuno'n wirfoddol i gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn.
- Rwy'n deall, hyd yn oed os cytunaf i gymryd rhan nawr, y gallaf dynnu'n ôl ar unrhyw adeg neu wrthod ateb unrhyw gwestiwn heb unrhyw ganlyniadau o unrhyw fath.
- Rwy'n deall y gallaf dynnu'n ôl ganiatâd i ddefnyddio data o fy nghyfweliad cyn pen pythefnos ar ôl y cyfweliad, ac os felly bydd y deunydd yn cael ei ddileu.
- Esboniwyd pwrpas a natur yr astudiaeth i mi yn ysgrifenedig ac rwyf wedi cael cyfle i ofyn cwestiynau am yr astudiaeth.
- Rwy'n deall bod cymryd rhan yn cynnwys cyfweliad byr hanner awr am les ymhlith carfan blwyddyn 7, yr adnodd Saib a Sylwi ac unrhyw newidiadau amlwg y gallai eu cael ar yr amgylchedd dysgu.
- Rwy'n cytuno bod fy nghyfweliad yn cael ei recordio ar ffurf recordiad sain.
- Rwy'n deall y bydd yr holl wybodaeth a roddaf ar gyfer yr astudiaeth hon yn cael ei thrin yn gyfrinachol.
- Rwy'n deall y bydd fy hunaniaeth yn aros yn anhysbys mewn unrhyw adroddiad ar ganlyniadau'r ymchwil hwn. Gwneir hyn trwy newid fy enw yn god rhif a chuddio unrhyw fanylion o fy nghyfweliad a allai ddatgelu fy hunaniaeth neu hunaniaeth y bobl rwy'n siarad amdanynt.
- Deallaf y gellir dyfynnu darnau dienw o fy nghyfweliad mewn: traethawd hir, cyflwyniad i gynhadledd, papurau cyhoeddiedig a chyhoeddusrwydd ar gyfer Gwylan.
- Rwy'n deall, os rhoddaf wybod i'r ymchwilydd fy mod i neu rywun arall mewn perygl o niwed, efallai y bydd yn rhaid iddynt roi adroddiad ar hyn i'r awdurdodau perthnasol - byddant yn trafod hyn gyda mi yn gyntaf ond efallai y bydd gofyn iddynt roi adroddiad gyda neu heb fy nghaniatâd.
- Rwy'n deall y bydd ffurflenni caniatâd wedi'u llofnodi a recordiadau sain gwreiddiol yn cael eu cadw ar liniadur prifysgol wedi'i amgryptio, mewn lleoliad diogel. Mae cyfrinair diogel i'r liniadur hwn a dim ond yr ymchwilydd sydd â mynediad iddo. Bydd y data hwn hefyd yn

cael ei arbed ar OneDrive y brifysgol nes bydd y bwrdd arholi yn cadarnhau canlyniadau'r traethawd hir.

- Rwy'n deall y bydd trawsgrifiad o fy nghyfweliad, lle mae'r holl wybodaeth adnabod wedi'i dileu, yn cael ei gadw am isafswm cyfnod cadw o 3 blynedd ar ôl cyhoeddi neu ryddhau gwaith yr ymchwil yn gyhoeddus.
- Rwy'n deall bod gen i hawl o dan ddeddfwriaeth rhyddid gwybodaeth i gael mynediad i'r wybodaeth rydw i wedi'i darparu ar unrhyw adeg tra'i bod yn cael ei storio fel y nodwyd uchod.
- Rwy'n deall fy mod yn rhydd i gysylltu ag unrhyw un o'r bobl sy'n ymwneud â'r ymchwil i ofyn am eglurhad a gwybodaeth bellach.

Llofnod cyfranogwr ymchwil

Dyddiad

.....

Enw'r ymchwilydd

Dyddiad

Information Leaflet for Staff, Parents and Students

English followed by Welsh Version overleaf

A REALIST
EVALUATION OF
PAUSE UP

A DIGITAL
RESOURCE
DESIGNED TO
PROMOTE
POSITIVE
MENTAL HEALTH
AND WELLBEING
FOR
ADOLESCENTS

CONTACT US

Simon Johns
School of Social Sciences
Cardiff
CF10 3WT

email: JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk



CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD



Cardiff University

Gwirionedd, Undod a Chytgord
Truth, Unity and Concord

DEAR PARENT/GUARDIAN

I am writing to invite your child to take part in a research study, with the rest of the year group. You may already be aware that your child's school has agreed to take part in this project.

Health and Wellbeing are areas of growing importance for pupils in secondary schools. I am investigating the effects of a digital resource designed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing throughout the school day. The resource - Pause UP uses an array of short, instructional videos to promote physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. It is designed to be incorporated into the normal school day therefore will not make any interruptions to other areas of the curriculum.

The research will help to improve understanding of the development of Pause UP and highlight positive areas of health and wellbeing that can be incorporated into the school day and used in day-to-day life.

I hope that your child will want to take part in the research, but before you decide, it is important that you understand what it will involve. Please take some time to read through the information on this pamphlet.

Simon Johns
Cardiff University, School of Social Science

RESEARCH

What

Your child's teacher will use the resource - Pause UP three times a week. Students will be following their usual timetable but for five minutes at the beginning of class they will engage with the digital resource. The research focusses on evaluating Pause UP to see what works, for whom and in what circumstances and whether this has an effect on the school environment.

How

Positively worded questionnaires on wellbeing will be given before and after the 12-week pilot, and some pupils will be invited to take part in some short meetings to give feedback about wellbeing. Some online surveys on enjoyment and engagement with Pause UP will be distributed by the school for the pupils to complete. I will also interview some teaching staff to gain their insight. All data gathered will be stored on a university encrypted laptop and anonymised. The research will not impact other timetabled activities.

When

The Pause UP pilot will be for 12 weeks from September 2021



GWERTHUSIAD
REALYDD O
SAIB A SYLWI

ADNODD
DIGIDOL SYDD
WEDI'I
GYNLLUNIO I
HYRWYDDO
IECHYD A LLES
CADARNHAOL
YMHLITH POBL
IFANC

CYSYLLTWCH Â NI

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CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY
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CAERDYDD

Ymchwil Caerdydd

Gwirionedd, Undod a Chytgord
Truth, Unity and Concord

ANNWYL RIANT/WARCHEIDWAD

Rwy'n ysgrifennu i wahodd eich plentyn i gymryd rhan mewn astudiaethymchwil, gyda gweddill y grŵp blwyddyn.

Efallai eich bod eisoes yn ymwybodol bod ysgol eich plentyn wedi cytuno i gymryd rhan yn y prosiect hwn. Mae Iechyd a Lles yn feysydd o bwysigrwydd cynyddol i ddisgyblion mewn ysgolion uwchradd. Rwy'n ymchwilio i effeithiau adnodd digidol sydd wedi'i gynllunio i hyrwyddo iechyd meddwl a lles cadarnhaol trwy gydol y diwrnod ysgol. Mae'r adnodd Saib a Sylwi yn defnyddio amrywiaeth o fideos byr, cyfarwyddiadol i hyrwyddo lles corfforol, emosiynol ac ysbrydol. Fe'i cynlluniwyd i'w ymgorffori yn y diwrnod ysgol arferol, felly ni fydd yn ymyrryd â meysydd eraill o'r cwricwlwm

Bydd yr ymchwil yn helpu i wella dealltwriaeth o ddatblygiad Saib a Sylwi ac yn tynnu sylw at feysydd iechyd a lles cadarnhaol y gellir eu hymgorffori yn y diwrnod ysgol a'u defnyddio mewn bywyd o'r naill ddiwrnod i'r llall.

Gobeithio y bydd eich plentyn eisiau cymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil, ond cyn i chi benderfynu, mae'n bwysig eich bod chi'n deall yr hyn y bydd yn ei olygu.

Cymerwch ychydig o amser i ddarllen trwy'r wybodaeth ar y pamffled hwn, os gwelwch yn dda.

Simon Johns

Ysgol y Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol,
Prifysgol Caerdydd

YMCHWIL

Beth

Bydd athrawon eich plentyn yn defnyddio'r adnodd Saib a Sylwi dair gwaith yr wythnos. Bydd disgyblion yn dilyn eu hamserlen arferol ond am bum munud ar ddechrau neu ar ddiwedd y wers, byddant yn ymgysylltu â'r adnodd digidol. Mae'r ymchwil yn canolbwyntio ar werthuso Saib a Sylwi i weld beth sy'n gweithio, i bwy ac o dan ba amgylchiadau ac a yw hyn yn cael effaith ar amgylchedd yr ysgol.

Sut

Rhoddir holiaduron ar les wedi'u geirio'n gadarnhaol cyn ac ar ôl y peilot 12 wythnos, a gwahoddir rhai disgyblion i gymryd rhan mewn rhai cyfarfodydd byr i roi adborth ynghylch lles.

Bydd rhai arolygon ar-lein ar fwynhad ac ymgysylltiad â Saib a Sylwi yn cael eu dosbarthu gan yr ysgol i ddisgyblion eu cwblhau. Byddaf hefyd yn cyfweld rhai staff addysgu i gael eu mewnwelediad. Bydd yr holl ddata a gesglir yn cael ei storio ar liniadur y brifysgol wedi'i amgryptio a'i gadw'n ddiennw. Ni fydd yr ymchwil yn effeithio ar weithgareddau eraill ar yr amserlen.

Pryd

Cynhelir peilot Saib a Symud am 12 wythnos o fis Medi 2021



Information Sheet for Parents

English

A realist evaluation of Pause UP - a digital resource designed to promote wellbeing in adolescents.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Your child's school is using a digital wellbeing resource – Pause UP. We would like to invite your child to be part of an evaluation of this resource.

What are we trying to find out?

The new digital resource – Pause UP uses an array of different activities to promote physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. The resource is designed for young teenagers and the research will look at how Pause UP works, who it works best for and to what extent it promotes positive mental health and wellbeing in the school.

Why has my child been invited to take part in the evaluation of Pause UP?

We are inviting your child to take part because they are a young person, aged between 12 and 15 years attending a school which is using Pause UP. We are inviting every child in the year group chosen by the school to take part.

What will happen if my child takes part in the evaluation of Pause UP?

- Your child will be asked to complete **questionnaires** before and after the teachers use the Pause UP resource (which will be used in the school for a 12-week period, or one term). The questionnaires will be distributed by teachers and completed in school. They will include questions about wellbeing, satisfaction with life as well as pupils' engagement and enjoyment of Pause UP. All responses will be anonymised - this means that no-one will ever know who wrote the answers. We keep all data safe on an encrypted computer.
- Some pupils may be asked by the school to take part in small **focus group** meetings to discuss the topic of health and wellbeing. This is voluntary and will not impact other timetabled activities. The discussions will be recorded, transcribed but all identifiable names removed. The school may give us some information on attendance and behaviour for the year group involved.
- All questionnaires, surveys and focus groups for research will be undertaken during the school day. If your child does not want to take part then the school will organize other, suitable activities to do during this time.

Does my child have to take part in the evaluation of Pause UP?

No. You can ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to allow your child to participate in the evaluation of Pause UP. If you do agree to participation, you may withdraw your child from the evaluation at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty, by advising the researchers or teachers of this decision. Your child's school will then provide relevant supervision and activities for your child to do while other pupils complete the necessary requirements for the research.

If you do decide to take part and your child is also happy to participate, we will ask you to sign a consent form to say that you agree for them to take part. Your child is free to stop taking part at any time during the research without giving a reason, by telling a teacher or the researcher.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?

There will be no disadvantage if you or your child decide not to take part. However, by taking part in the evaluation, your child will be helping to find out whether the Pause UP resource is worthwhile. That will help the school to decide whether to continue using it or expand or limit use to specific year groups.

What happens to the information collected for the study?

The data will be kept strictly confidential. The researcher will assign a code number to each participant which only he will have access to. All paper-based data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and electronic data will be kept on a secure, encrypted university laptop. All research data and records will be stored for a minimum retention period of 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

A summary report of the research will be made available to the school for you to access. The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research.

The company who developed Pause UP (Gwylan UK Ltd.) may ask to use some quotes about Pause UP; these will be entirely non-identifiable and may be used to promote the resource in other schools in Wales and further afield.

Who is conducting this research?

The research is organised by Simon Johns who is a postgraduate student at Cardiff University. His study is being paid for with a Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship (KESS 2). This is a major pan-Wales operation supported by European Social Funds (ESF) through the Welsh Government. KESS 2 links companies and organisations with academic expertise in the Higher Education sector in Wales to undertake collaborative research projects, working towards a PhD or Research Masters qualification. The link company for this study is Gwylan UK.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to the researcher, Simon Johns by email on johnssf@cardiff.ac.uk or contact the school directly. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how he/she intends to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the school of Social Science [socsi-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk].

Data Protection

Cardiff University is the data controller and as such determines that data is only used for the purpose of the research outlined above. All data for the study will be non-identifiable. Research is a task that the University performs in the public interest. Further information about data protection is available from <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>

What should I do next?

Please fill in the consent form and return it to your child's school if you agree for your child to take part in this study. Please remember that you may withdraw your child at any time, without penalty and without giving a reason, by notifying the researcher. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Simon Francis Johns

Email: JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk

Welsh

Gwerthusiad realydd o Saib a Sylwi – adnodd digidol sydd wedi'i gynllunio i hyrwyddo lles ymhlith pobl ifanc.

TAFLEN WYBODAETH I RIENI / GWARCHEIDWAID

Mae ysgol eich plentyn yn defnyddio adnodd lles digidol – Saib a Sylwi. Hoffem wahodd eich plentyn i gymryd rhan mewn gwerthusiad o'r adnodd hwn.

Beth ydym ni'n ceisio ei ddarganfod?

Mae'r adnodd digidol newydd Saib a Sylwi yn defnyddio amrywiaeth o wahanol weithgareddau i hyrwyddo lles corfforol, emosiynol ac ysbrydol. Mae'r adnodd wedi'i lunio ar gyfer pobl ifanc yn eu harddegau a bydd yr ymchwil yn edrych ar sut mae Saib a Sylwi yn gweithio, i bwy y mae'n gweithio orau ac i ba raddau y mae'n hybu iechyd meddwl a lles cadarnhaol yn yr ysgol.

Pam bod fy mhlentyn i wedi derbyn gwahoddiad i gymryd rhan yng ngwerthusiad Saib a Sylwi?

Rydym yn gwahodd eich plentyn i gymryd rhan gan eu bod yn berson ifanc rhwng 12 a 15 mlwydd oed sy'n mynychu ysgol sy'n defnyddio Saib a Sylwi. Rydym yn gwahodd pob plentyn yn y grŵp blwyddyn sydd wedi'i ddethol gan yr ysgol i gymryd rhan.

Beth fyddai'n digwydd os bydd fy mhlentyn yn cymryd rhan yng ngwerthusiad Saib a Sylwi?

- Bydd gofyn i'ch plentyn gwblhau **holiaduron** cyn ac ar ôl i'r athrawon ddefnyddio adnodd Saib a Sylwi (a fydd yn cael ei ddefnyddio yn yr ysgol am gyfnod o 12 wythnos, neu un tymor). Bydd athrawon yn dosbarthu'r holiaduron a byddant yn cael eu cwblhau yn yr ysgol. Byddant yn cynnwys cwestiynau am les, bodlonrwydd gyda bywyd ynghyd ag ymgysylltiad a mwynhad y disgyblion o Saib a Sylwi. Bydd pob ymateb yn ddiennw – golyga hyn na fydd neb byth yn gwybod pwy ysgrifennodd yr atebion. Rydym yn cadw'r holl ddata yn ddiogel ar gyfrifiadur wedi'i amgryptio.
- Efallai y bydd yr ysgol yn gofyn i rai disgyblion gymryd rhan mewn cyfarfodydd **grŵp ffocws** bychan i drafod testun iechyd a lles. Mae hyn yn wirfoddol ac ni fydd yn effeithio ar weithgareddau eraill sydd wedi'u hamserlennu. Bydd y trafodaethau'n cael eu recordio a'u hadysgrifio, ond bydd pob enw y gellir ei adnabod yn cael eu dileu. Efallai y bydd yr ysgol yn rhoi rhywfaint o wybodaeth i ni am bresenoldeb ac ymddygiad y grŵp blwyddyn dan sylw.
- Ymgymerir â'r holl holiaduron, arolygon a grwpiau ffocws ar gyfer ymchwil yn ystod y diwrnod ysgol. Os nad yw eich plentyn yn dymuno cymryd rhan, yna bydd yr ysgol yn trefnu gweithgareddau addas eraill yn ystod y cyfnod hwn.

A oes rhaid i fy mhlentyn gymryd rhan yng ngwerthusiad Saib a Sylwi?

Nac oes. Mae modd i chi ofyn cwestiynau am yr astudiaeth cyn penderfynu caniatáu i'ch plentyn gymryd rhan yng ngwerthusiad Saib a Sylwi neu beidio. Pe byddech yn cytuno i'ch plentyn gymryd rhan, gallwch dynnu eich plentyn o'r gwerthusiad ar unrhyw adeg, heb roi rheswm a heb unrhyw gosb, drwy gynghori'r archwilwyr neu'r athrawon o'r penderfyniad hwn. Yna, bydd ysgol eich plentyn yn darparu goruchwyliaeth ynghyd â gweithgareddau i'ch plentyn eu gwneud tra bydd disgyblion eraill yn cwblhau'r gofynion angenrheidiol ar gyfer y gwaith ymchwil.

Os byddwch yn penderfynu cymryd rhan a bod eich plentyn hefyd yn fodlon cymryd rhan, byddwn yn gofyn i chi lofnodi ffurflen gydsynio i ddatgan eich bod yn cytuno iddynt gymryd rhan. Mae eich plentyn yn rhydd i roi'r gorau i gymryd rhan ar unrhyw adeg yn ystod y gwaith ymchwil heb roi rheswm, drwy ddweud wrth athro neu wrth yr ymchwilydd.

Beth yw manteision / anfanteision cymryd rhan?

Ni fydd unrhyw anfantais os byddwch chi neu eich plentyn yn penderfynu peidio cymryd rhan. Fodd bynnag, drwy gymryd rhan yn y gwerthusiad, bydd eich plentyn yn cynorthwyo i ddarganfod p'un a

yw'r adnodd Saib a Sylwi yn fuddiol. Bydd hynny'n cynorthwyo'r ysgol i benderfynu p'un ai i barhau i'w ddefnyddio, neu i ehangu neu gyfyngu ar ei ddefnydd i grwpiau blwyddyn penodol.

Beth sy'n digwydd i'r wybodaeth a gesglir ar gyfer yr astudiaeth?

Cedwir y data yn hollol gyfrinachol. Bydd yr ymchwilydd yn neilltuo rhif cod i bob cyfranogwr, a dim ond ef fydd â mynediad at y rhif hwnnw. Cedwir yr holl ddata sydd ar bapur mewn cwpwrdd ffeilio wedi'i gloi, a chedwir data electronig ar liniadur prifysgol diogel wedi'i amgryptio. Cedwir yr holl ddata a chofnodion ymchwil am gyfnod cadw o dair blynedd ar y lleiaf yn dilyn cyhoeddiad neu ryddhad cyhoeddus y gwaith ymchwil.

Bydd adroddiad crynodeb o'r gwaith ymchwil ar gael i'r ysgol i chi gael mynediad ato. Bydd y gwaith ymchwil yn cael ei ysgrifennu fel thesis ar gyfer cymhwyster Meistr. Yn dilyn cyflwyniad llwyddiannus y thesis, bydd yn cael ei gadw yn archifau'r Brifysgol, mewn print ac ar-lein, er mwyn hwyluso ei ddefnydd mewn gwaith ymchwil yn y dyfodol.

Efallai y bydd y cwmni a ddatblygodd Saib a Sylwi (Gwylan UK Ltd.) yn gofyn i ddefnyddio rhai dyfyniadau am Saib a Sylwi; ni fydd modd adnabod unrhyw berson o'r dyfyniadau hyn, ac efallai y byddant yn cael eu defnyddio i hybu'r adnodd mewn ysgolion eraill yng Nghymru a thu hwnt.

Pwy sy'n cynnal y gwaith ymchwil hwn?

Trefnir y gwaith ymchwil gan Simon Johns sy'n fyfyrwr ôl-raddedig ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd. Telir am ei astudiaeth gydag Ysgoloriaeth Sgiliau Economi Gwybodaeth (KESS 2). Mae hwn yn weithrediad mawr ar draws Cymru a gefnogir gan Gronfeydd Cymdeithasol Ewropeaidd (ESF) drwy Lywodraeth Cymru. Mae KESS 2 yn cysylltu cwmnïau a sefydliadau gydag arbenigedd academiaidd yn y sector Addysg Uwch yng Nghymru i ymgymryd â phrosiectau ymchwil cydweithredol, gan weithio tuag at gymhwyster PhD neu Ymchwil Meistr. Y cwmni cyswllt ar gyfer yr astudiaeth hon yw Gwylan UK.

Beth os bydd unrhyw broblem?

Os oes gennych chi bryder am unrhyw agwedd ar y prosiect hwn, siaradwch gyda'r ymchwilydd, Simon Johns drwy e-bost ar johnssf@cardiff.ac.uk neu cysylltwch â'r ysgol yn uniongyrchol. Dylai'r ymchwilydd gydnabod eich pryder o fewn 10 diwrnod gwaith a dangos sut mae ef/hi yn bwriadu ymdrin ag ef. Os ydych yn parhau i fod yn anfodlon neu'n dymuno gwneud cwyn swyddogol, cysylltwch gyda Chadeirydd y Pwyllgor Moeseg Ymchwil yn yr ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol [socsiethics@cardiff.ac.uk].

Diogelu Data

Prifysgol Caerdydd yw rheolydd y data, ac sydd felly yn pennu bod y data yn cael ei ddefnyddio er dibenion y gwaith ymchwil a amlinellwyd uchod yn unig. Ni fydd modd adnabod neb o ddata'r astudiaeth. Mae ymchwil yn dasg y mae'r Brifysgol yn ei pherfformio er budd y cyhoedd. Mae gwybodaeth bellach am ddiogelu data ar gael o <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>

Beth ddylwn i ei wneud nesaf?

Cwblhewch y ffurflen gydsynio a dychwelwch hi i ysgol eich plentyn os ydych yn cytuno i'ch plentyn gymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth hon. Cofiwch fod modd i chi dynnu'ch plentyn o'r astudiaeth ar unrhyw adeg, heb unrhyw gosb a heb orfod rhoi rheswm, drwy hysbysu'r ymchwilydd. Os hoffech drafod y gwaith ymchwil gyda rhywun ymlaen llaw (neu os oes gennych chi gwestiynau wedyn), cysylltwch â:

Simon Francis Johns

E-bost: JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk

Information Sheet for Student Participants

English

The PauseUP Study.

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Simon Johns and I am a researcher at Cardiff University. I invite you to join my research study.

Why are we doing this research?

PauseUP is a new set of activities for schools to use that aim to help improve pupils' feelings of wellbeing. As PuaseUP is new, I will be finding out if it works.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are inviting you to take part because your school is using PauseUP with your year group.

Do I have to take part?

I would like you to take part but it is up to you to decide.

So, what happens if I do take part?

- You will be asked to fill in simple questionnaires before and after the teachers use Pause UP.

You will fill these out in school. They will include questions about your wellbeing (how you feel), as well as what you think of the PauseUP activities. You will not write your name on the form so no-one will ever know who wrote the answers.

- Some of you may be asked by the school to take part in small discussion group to talk about health and wellbeing. This is voluntary. Although the discussions will be recorded, no names be included.

What if I don't want to take part in the study any longer?

Just tell your parents/carer, teachers or let me know that you want to stop taking part. You don't have to give a reason and no one will be upset with you. It is YOUR choice.

What happens to the results of the study?

I will let the school know what I found out about PauseUP.

What if there is a problem or something goes wrong?

Please tell me if you are worried about any part of this study. You can email me at JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk. You may also talk to your teacher/parent/carer who can let me know.

What should I do next?

Please fill in the "assent" form and return it to school if you are happy to take part. If you have any questions, please ask me:

Simon Francis Johns

Email: JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this

Welsh

Astudiaeth Saib a Sylwi.

TAFLEN WYBODAETH

Fy enw i yw Simon Johns ac rwy'n ymchwilydd ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd. Rwy'n eich gwahodd i ymuno â'm hastudiaeth ymchwil.

Pam rydyn ni'n gwneud yr ymchwil hwn?

Mae Saib a Sylwi yn gyfres newydd o weithgareddau i ysgolion eu defnyddio sydd â'r nod o helpu i wella teimladau lles disgyblion. Gan fod Saib a Sylwi yn newydd, byddaf yn darganfod a yw'n gweithio.

Pam ydw i wedi cael gwahoddiad i gymryd rhan?

Rydym yn eich gwahodd i gymryd rhan oherwydd bod eich ysgol yn defnyddio Saib a Sylwi gyda'ch grŵp blwyddyn.

Oes rhaid i mi gymryd rhan?

Hoffwn i chi gymryd rhan ond chi sydd i benderfynu.

Felly, beth fydd yn digwydd os byddaf yn cymryd rhan?

- Gofynnir i chi lenwi holiaduron syml cyn ac ar ôl i'r athrawon ddefnyddio Saib a Sylwi. Byddwch yn llenwi'r rhain yn yr ysgol. Byddant yn cynnwys cwestiynau am eich lles (sut rydych chi'n teimlo), yn ogystal â'ch barn am weithgareddau Saib a Symud. Ni fyddwch yn ysgrifennu eich enw ar y ffurflen, felly ni fydd unrhyw un byth yn gwybod pwy ysgrifennodd yr atebion.
- Efallai y bydd yr ysgol yn gofyn i rai ohonoch chi gymryd rhan mewn grŵp trafod bach i siarad am iechyd a lles. Mae hyn yn wirfoddol. Er y bydd y trafodaethau'n cael eu recordio, ni fydd unrhyw enwau yn cael eu cynnwys.

Beth os nad wyf am gymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth mwyach?

Dywedwch wrth eich rhieni/gofalwr, athrawon neu gadewch i mi wybod eich bod am roi'r gorau i gymryd rhan. Nid oes rhaid i chi roi rheswm ac ni fydd unrhyw un yn ofidus gyda chi. Eich dewis CHI ydyw.

Beth sy'n digwydd i ganlyniadau'r astudiaeth?

Byddaf yn rhoi gwybod i'r ysgol am yr hyn a ddarganfyddais am Saib a Sylwi.

Beth os oes problem neu os aiff rhywbeth o'i le?

Dywedwch wrthyf os ydych chi'n pryderu am unrhyw ran o'r astudiaeth hon. Gallwch fy ebostio yn JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk. Gallwch hefyd siarad â'ch athro/rhiant/gofalwr a all roi gwybod i mi.

Beth ddylwn i ei wneud nesaf?

Llenwch y ffurflen "gydsynio" os gwelwch yn dda, a'i dychwelyd i'r ysgol os ydych chi'n hapus i gymryd rhan. Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau, gofynnwch i mi:

Simon Francis Johns

Ebost: JohnsSF@cardiff.ac.uk

Diolch i chi am ddarllen hwn.

Parent/Guardian Consent form

English

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

A realist evaluation of Pause UP a digital resource designed to promote wellbeing in adolescents.

I have read the participant information sheet and understand what this study is about. I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand I am free to request further information about the study at any stage.

I understand that:

Initials

My child's participation in this study is voluntary	
Any information my child provides will be confidential and their name will not appear in any report or publication and no one will be able to identify them from the information collected.	
My child's participation in this study will not lead to any harm or discomfort.	
Even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw their participation without providing a reason and without my child's education being affected in any way. I understand that if my child withdraws, information already obtained may be included in the study.	

I understand that all information will be held at Cardiff University in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation and in strict confidence unless disclosure is required by law or professional obligation.	
I consent for my child to take part in this study.	

Please complete the information below and return it to your child's school as soon as possible.

Name of child: _____
Surname
Forename

Name of school: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher: Simon Johns

Welsh

FFURFLEN GYDSYNIO RHIANT/GWARCHEIDWAD

Gwerthusiad realydd o Saib a Sylwi - adnodd digidol sydd wedi'i gynllunio i hyrwyddo lles ymhlith pobl ifanc.

Rwyf wedi darllen y daflen wybodaeth i gyfranogwyr ac yn deall beth yw pwrpas yr astudiaeth hon. Mae unrhyw gwestiynau a ofynnwyd gennyf wedi'u hateb yn foddhaol. Rwy'n deall fy mod yn rhydd i ofyn am wybodaeth bellach am yr astudiaeth ar unrhyw adeg.

Rwy'n deall y pethau hyn:

Llofnod

Mae cyfranogiad fy mhlentyn yn yr astudiaeth hon yn wirfoddol	
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Bydd unrhyw wybodaeth y mae fy mhlentyn yn ei darparu yn gyfrinachol ac ni fydd eu henw yn ymddangos mewn unrhyw adroddiad na chyhoeddiad ac ni fydd unrhyw un yn gallu eu hadnabod o'r wybodaeth a gasglwyd.	
Ni fydd cyfranogiad fy mhlentyn yn yr astudiaeth hon yn arwain at unrhyw niwed nac anesmwythder.	
Hyd yn oed os cytunaf i fy mhlentyn gymryd rhan 'nawr, gallaf dynnu eu cyfraniad yn ôl heb ddarparu rheswm a heb i addysg fy mhlentyn gael ei heffeithio mewn unrhyw ffordd. Rwy'n deall, os bydd fy mhlentyn yn tynnu'n ôl, y gellir cynnwys gwybodaeth a gafwyd eisoes yn yr astudiaeth.	
Deallaf y bydd yr holl wybodaeth yn cael ei chadw ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd yn unol â'r holl ddeddfwriaeth diogelu data berthnasol ac yn gwbl gyfrinachol, oni bai bod y gyfraith neu rwymedigaeth broffesiynol yn gofyn am ei datgelu.	
Rwy'n cydsynio i'm plentyn gymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth hon.	

Llenwch y wybodaeth isod a'i dychwelyd i ysgol eich plentyn cyn gynted â phosibl, os gwelwch yn dda.

Enw'r plentyn: _____
Enw cyntaf

Cyfenw

Enw'r ysgol: _____

Llofnod rhiant/gwarcheidwad: _____ **Dyddiad:** _____

Enw'r ymchwilydd: Simon Johns

Participant Student Assent Form

English

A realist evaluation of Pause UP - a digital resource designed to promote well-being in adolescents.

Child/Young Person (or if unable, parent/researcher/teacher on their behalf) to initial all they agree with:

I understand that:

Initials

Someone has explained this project to me	
I understand what this project is about	
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
My participation is voluntary	
I understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time in the evaluation	
I am happy to take part in this study.	

If you don't want to take part, that's OK!

If you do want to take part, please write your name below.

Your name _____

Date _____

The researcher who is conducting this project with you:

Print Name Simon Johns

Date _____

Thank you!

Welsh

Gwerthusiad realydd o Saib a Sylwi - adnodd digidol sydd wedi'i gynllunio i hyrwyddo lles ymhlith pobl ifanc.

Plentyn/Person Ifanc i lofnodi popeth y mae yn cytuno ag ef (neu os na all lofnodi, gall rhiant/ymchwilydd/athro wneud hynny ar ei ran):

Rwy'n deall:

Llofnod

Rwy'n deall bod rhywun wedi esbonio'r prosiect hwn i mi	
Rwy'n deall beth yw pwrpas y prosiect hwn	
Rwyf wedi cael cyfle i ofyn cwestiynau am y prosiect	
Mae fy nghyfranogiad yn wirfoddol	
Rwy'n deall ei bod hi'n iawn rhoi'r gorau i gymryd rhan yn y gwerthusiad ar unrhyw adeg	
Rwy'n hapus i gymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth hon.	

Os nad ydych chi eisiau cymryd rhan, mae hynny'n iawn!

Os ydych chi am gymryd rhan, ysgrifennwch eich enw isod.

Eich enw _____

Dyddiad _____

Yr ymchwilydd sy'n cynnal y prosiect hwn gyda chi:

Printiwch eich enw Simon Johns

Dyddiad _____

Diolch yn fawr!

Appendix F – Student Surveys

Student Survey 1 administered during the Pilot study.

English

Survey 1

Which section do you enjoy best, Physical, Emotional or Spiritual and why?

Can you name 3 activities you have enjoyed so far from any of the sections?

Can you describe Pause Up in less than 20 words?

Welsh

Arolwg 1

Pa adran ydych chi'n ei mwynhau orau: Corfforol, Emosiynol neu Ysbrydol a pham?

Allwch chi enwi 3 gweithgaredd rydych chi wedi'u mwynhau hyd yn hyn o unrhyw un o'r adrannau?

Allwch chi ddisgrifio Saib a Sylwi mewn llai nag 20 gair?

Student Survey 2 administered during the Main study.

English

Survey 2

Have you used any of the activities from the resource outside of school? If you have, which ones did you use?

Can you see this resource becoming an important part of the school day? Please give a reason for your answer.

Could you describe what wellbeing means in less than 20 words?

Welsh

Arolwg 2

A ydych chi wedi defnyddio unrhyw un o'r gweithgareddau o'r adnodd y tu allan i'r ysgol? Os ydych chi, pa rai wnaethoch chi eu defnyddio?

A allwch chi weld yr adnodd hwn yn dod yn rhan bwysig o'r diwrnod ysgol? Rhowch reswm dros eich ateb.

A allech chi ddisgrifio beth ydy ystyr lles mewn llai nag 20 gair?

Appendix G – Interview schedules

Interview Schedule 1

Below is the semi-structured interview script which guided discussions with staff members during the Pilot study. The interviewees included wellbeing representatives from each school and the heads of each year group taking part. These interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams.

Introduction

1. Would you start by briefly describing your role in the school?

School Wellbeing Approach

2. Could you explain your school's approach to wellbeing?
3. What challenges might alter these wellbeing plans you have in place?

Identifying Wellbeing Needs

4. What are the typical characteristics of a pupil that might suggest they have lower levels of wellbeing?

Pre-delivery Discussions

5. Can you describe the initial discussions you had about the PauseUP programme?
 - Probe: Who was involved in these discussions?
6. How was information about PauseUP communicated to your school?
 - Probe: Was the information clear and sufficient?
7. What factors influenced your school's readiness to adopt PauseUP?
 - Probe: Were there any concerns or resistance?

Active Engagement and School Leadership Support

8. How did school leadership respond to the idea of implementing PauseUP?
 - Probe: Can you provide examples of support or opposition from school leaders?
9. What role did senior school figures play in the introduction of PauseUP?
 - Probe: How did their involvement impact the programme's reception and integration?

Integrating PauseUP

10. How may PauseUP be integrated into your school's existing timetable and routines?
 - Probe: What challenges might you face in aligning the programme with your school's schedule?
11. What strategies can be used to ensure the teaching staff actively support PauseUP?

- Probe: Can you give examples of successful strategies or areas needing improvement?

Implementation and Adaptation

12. How do you think the level of experience and knowledge among the staff will influence how PauseUP is used in the school?
13. How consistently can PauseUP be implemented in your school?
 - Probe: Are there any variations in how different teachers or year groups speak about using the programme?
14. How should PauseUP be adapted to fit with your school's existing wellbeing efforts?
 - Probe: What adaptations might be made, and how will that affect the programme's delivery and effectiveness?

Outcomes and Expectations

15. What changes, if any, do you expect to observe in student wellbeing?
 - Probe: Can you provide specific examples or evidence of how these changes might be measured?
16. How do you hope the new resource will affect the wellbeing of the year groups/the school in general?
17. Is there a specific group at the moment that you've seen have been affected by everything that's going on at the moment (pandemic) which you think needs extra support?

Professional Practice

19. Do you foresee any changes in your own professional practice due to the new resource?
20. Do you see any changes in stress levels, because this is another new thing to do? Another thing for teaching staff to do? Do you think it might have the reverse effect on some of the staff members?

Language Considerations

21. The resources are separate in Welsh and English. Do you think that's an important thing to have? The use of Welsh language with wellbeing resources?

Interview Schedule 2

Below is the realist interview script used to guide discussions with wellbeing representatives towards the end of the Pilot study for the second set of interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. These questions are designed to explore the hypothesised statements in more detail to construct initial programme theories.

Introduction

1. General catch up, questions on the school environment.

Integration in School Routine and Supportive Environment

2. Can you describe how PauseUP has been integrated into your daily school routine?
 - Probe: What role did school leadership and staff play in this?
3. How does your school environment support the prioritisation of wellbeing strategies like PauseUP?
 - Probe: Can you provide specific examples of support from leadership or staff?

Addressing Student Stress and Mental Health

4. What are the primary stressors and mental health concerns you observe among students?
 - Probe: How have these been addressed?
5. How has PauseUP been used to address student stress and mental health concerns?
 - Probe: What practical activities have been implemented, and how effective have they been?
6. What changes have you noticed in students' emotional regulation and stress management since using PauseUP?
 - Probe: Can you provide specific examples or evidence of these changes?

School Wellbeing Approaches

7. How does your school's overall wellbeing strategy incorporate PauseUP?
 - Probe: Is it used in a whole-school or year group approach, and why?
8. How does the promotion of PauseUP align with your school's existing wellbeing data and approaches?
 - Probe: How has this alignment influenced engagement with the programme?
9. What opportunities have arisen to adapt PauseUP to better fit your school's wellbeing needs?
 - Probe: Can you provide examples of adaptations and their impact?

Resistance to Programme Introduction

10. What challenges did you encounter when introducing PauseUP in classrooms?
 - Probe: How did teachers and students respond initially?
11. What factors contributed to any resistance from teachers or students towards PauseUP?
 - Probe: Were there specific concerns or misunderstandings about the programme?

Outcomes and Reflections

13. Overall, what do you consider the key factors for the implementation of PauseUP in your school?

- Probe: Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other schools considering similar programmes?
14. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the use of PauseUP?
- Probe: Are there any aspects of the programme that you feel need further development or support?

Interview Schedule 3

Below is a short interview script which was used for informal discussions with staff members and students during site visits towards the end of the Main study. These were used to discover more about what worked best, for whom and in what circumstances.

Introduction

1. Can you briefly describe your involvement with PauseUP?

General Feedback on PauseUP

2. What are your overall impressions of PauseUP?
 - Probe: What aspects do you find most beneficial or challenging?

Relevance and Impact

3. How relevant do you find the activities to your (or the students') daily experiences?
 - Probe: Can you provide specific examples of how the activities relate to your daily life or classroom environment?
4. What influence has PauseUP had on your (or the students') wellbeing and stress levels?
 - Probe: Have you noticed any changes in emotional regulation, stress management, or engagement in learning?

Programme Delivery and Engagement

5. How have the delivery and structure of PauseUP activities influenced your engagement?
 - Probe: What elements of the programme's delivery (e.g., timing, format, content) worked well or could be improved?

Suggestions for Improvement

6. What suggestions do you have for improving PauseUP?
 - Probe: Are there any specific activities or support mechanisms you think should be added or changed?

Closing

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with PauseUP?

Appendix H – Student Focus Groups

Below are some examples of the question prompts used to gain a better understanding of the student participants perspective on wellbeing and their opinion on some of the intervention activities on PauseUP.

Focus Group Meeting 1

Agenda

Time: 60 minutes

- 1. Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes)**
 - Welcome and introductions.
 - Icebreaker activity
- 2. Discussion on Wellbeing (30 minutes)**
 - Defining wellbeing with examples
 - Factors affecting wellbeing in school using post it notes
- 3. Feedback on PauseUP (10 minutes)**
 - General impressions
 - Influence on wellbeing.
 - Most and least helpful activities
- 4. Closing Remarks (10 minutes)**
 - Summarise key points.
 - Thank you and next steps, see you next time.

Focus Group Meeting 2

Agenda

Time: 60 minutes

- 1. Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes)**
 - Brief catch up and outline purpose of the focus group.
 - Icebreaker activity to make students comfortable (a quick movement and breathing exercise from PauseUP).

2. Discussion Using Visual Aids from programme (20 minutes)

- **Show Visual Aids:** Present videos from the various sections of PauseUP
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - What do you see in these activities that relates to your experience with PauseUP?
 - How do some of these activities make you feel about your own wellbeing?
 - Are there any activities that you have tried outside of school?
- **Follow-up:** Encourage students to share stories or experiences related to them.

3. Programme-Specific Video Activities from Spiritual/Modular section (20 minutes)

- **Watch Videos:** Show short video clips of wellbeing themes and stories from local community members.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - What are your thoughts on the activities shown in the videos?
 - How do these activities compare to what you normally do in school?
 - Which activities do you find most helpful?
 - Are there any activities you think could be improved or done differently?
- **Follow-up:** Discuss any emotions or thoughts triggered by the videos.

4. Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- Summarise the key points discussed.
- Thank the students for their participation and valuable feedback.
- Inform them about the next steps and how their feedback will be used to improve the programme.

Appendix I – Field Notes

Below is a tabled example of some of the field notes that were made during the Main study and specifically using observations made during site visits to schools.

School	Notes of School	Time and Activity	General Learnings
North School	<p>- Supportive Leadership and Environment: Strong leadership from the designated wellbeing coordinator, with focused wellbeing training for Year 7 staff.</p> <p>- Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support: Emphasis on practical activities for stress management, with more engagement from younger Year 7 pupils.</p> <p>- Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies: Phased introduction of PauseUP across younger classes.</p> <p>- Overcoming Resistance: High student engagement and positive outcomes indicate successful strategies</p>	<p>- 9:00 AM: Mindfulness activity from PauseUP. Teacher leads guided breathing exercise. Students fairly engaged.</p> <p>- 9:15 AM: Group discussion on feelings and stress management proceeding activity.</p> <p>- 10:00 AM: Reflection session in PauseUP Gratitude journals.</p> <p>- 10:30 AM: Form teacher's positive feedback on programme's adaptability. Comments made on scheduling difficulties</p>	<p>PauseUP is well integrated, with strong leadership and supportive environment. Practical stress management activities are effective, with phased introduction aiding in implementation strategy.</p>
Central School	<p>- Supportive Leadership and Environment: High commitment from leadership, including an enthusiastic headteacher and dedicated wellbeing coordinator.</p>	<p>- 1:00 PM: Class discussion on stress management. High engagement with interactive format using exercise from PauseUP.</p> <p>- 1:40 PM: "Anxiety bin" activity, with high engagement.</p>	<p>Central School shows strong leadership commitment. WSA and supportive communication strategies help in overcoming resistance.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support: PauseUP activities commented on being used during exams for stress relief. - Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies: WSA with top-down support. - Overcoming Resistance: Clear communication and support from LA helped overcome resistance. 	<p>2:10 PM: Reflection session on use of strategies.</p> <p>2:40 PM: Wellbeing coordinator feedback on programme's integration and comments on continued use.</p>	
West School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supportive Leadership and Environment: Active promotion by the assistant head demonstrates leadership support. - Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support: Targeted sessions for the Nurture group show improvements in emotional wellbeing. - Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies: Multiple year group approach presents challenges; targeted sessions for the Nurture group are more successful. - Overcoming Resistance: Continued participation across studies and adaptation for targeted groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10:00 AM: Mindfulness and music meditation activity led by teacher. Students engaged. 10:15 AM: Discussion on kindness using PauseUP activity of older woman in the community. - 10:30 AM: "Pay it forward" activity with muted discussion - 11:30 AM: Positive teacher and LSA feedback on PauseUP's impact in Nurture Setting. Mixed response from mainstream classes. 	Varied teacher engagement, but strong leadership support. Targeted sessions for the Nurture group are effective. Both teachers and support staff enthusiastic.
East School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supportive Leadership and Environment: Strong backing from deputy head and year group leaders. - Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support: Active engagement during registration periods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11:00 AM: Registration period activity from PauseUP. Students listen to a story. - 11:15 AM: Group discussion on wellbeing using visual aid. 	East School shows strong leadership commitment and effective integration. Gradual acceptance and supportive environment contribute to overcoming resistance. Use of activities across the curriculum.

- Adaptable School Wellbeing Strategies: Progressive use across studies and year groups.
- Overcoming Resistance: Gradual acceptance over time, with leadership commitment aiding in overcoming initial resistance.
- 11:30 AM: "Yoga and breathwork activity" high engagement, fairly silent in class.
- 12:00 PM: Regular class time, English lesson before break
- 12:30 PM: Feedback from deputy head on integration. Discussion with Expressive Arts teacher highlighting benefits for confidence, Welsh factor mentioned and use of movements in PE lessons.

Appendix J – Wellbeing Scales

Below you will find copies of the instructions provided to staff in delivering the wellbeing scales to students, along with the scales used within the wellbeing packs of this study.

Instructions for teachers in completing Wellbeing pack.

English



Instructions for teacher in delivering wellbeing pack

Thank you for helping with this research.

The pupil wellbeing packs contain 3 wellbeing scales which will help us understand pupil feelings and thoughts.

- The Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale
- The Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale
- Cantril ladder of life satisfaction

You will also have been given a set of numbers. These are to be randomly chosen by pupils. They must keep a note of the number privately. These numbers are unique participant numbers, they will not allow us to identify **who** they are, but will help the researcher see if there are any changes over time at an individual level.

When you have distributed numbers and pupils are ready please could you read out the instructions for each scale along with the statements.

It is very important that you read the statements because you don’t want pupils with specific language difficulties to be hindered in their response (this is not a reading test) and also it enables a sensible pace to the test.

If any pupils have any questions or do not understand a particular word please try to explain as best you can and also if any pupil feels uncomfortable please remind them it is voluntary.

Before you begin, at the top of each pupil wellbeing pack you will see:

- A letter - This is your school and has already been filled in
- A number – This is your year group
- A letter – This will tell us registration group
- Blank space – This is for the participant number

Please ensure pupils fill in the blank space with their unique number and remind students we will re-visit these numbers later on in the research (it might help if they note it down somewhere they know).

Thank you for helping with this important research into wellbeing.

Welsh



Cyfarwyddiadau i'r athro wrth gyflwyno'r pecyn

Diolch i chi am helpu gyda'r ymchwil hwn.

Mae'r pecynnau lles disgyblion yn cynnwys 3 graddfa lles a fydd yn ein helpu i ddeall teimladau a meddyliau disgyblion.

- Byr Graddfa Lles Meddyliol Warwick–Caeredin
- Graddfa Lles Plant Stirling
- Ysgol boddhad bywyd Cantril

Byddwch hefyd wedi cael set o rifau. Mae'r disgyblion i ddethol o'r rhain ar hap gan gadw nodyn preifat o'r rhif maent yn ei ddethol. Mae'r rhifau hyn yn rifau cyfranogwyr unigryw. Ni fyddant yn

caniatáu i ni **adnabod** y disgyblion, ond byddant yn helpu'r ymchwilydd i weld a oes unrhyw newidiadau dros amser ar lefel unigol.

Pan fyddwch wedi dosbarthu'r rhifau a bod y disgyblion yn barod, a allech chi ddarllen y cyfarwyddiadau ar gyfer pob graddfa ynghyd â'r datganiadau, os gwelwch chi'n dda.

Mae'n bwysig iawn eich bod chi'n darllen y datganiadau oherwydd nad ydych chi am i ddisgyblion ag anawsterau iaith penodol gael eu rhwystro yn eu hymateb (nid prawf darllen mo hwn) a hefyd mae'n galluogi i'r prawf gael ei weithredu ar gyflymder synhwyrol.

Os oes gan unrhyw ddisgyblion unrhyw gwestiynau neu os nad ydyn nhw'n deall gair penodol, ceisiwch egluro orau y gallwch chi a hefyd os oes unrhyw ddisgybl yn teimlo'n anghyffyrddus, cofiwch eu hatgoffa nhw mai prawf gwirfoddol yw hwn.

Cyn i chi ddechrau, ar frig pob pecyn lles disgyblion fe welwch:

- Llythyren - Dyma'ch ysgol chi ac mae wedi ei lenwi eisoes
- Rhif - Dyma'ch grŵp blwyddyn chi
- Llythyren - Bydd hyn yn dweud wrthym pa un yw'r grŵp cofrestru
- Lle gwag – Mae hwn ar gyfer y rhif cyfranogwr

Sicrhewch fod y disgyblion yn ysgrifennu eu rhif unigryw yn y lle gwag ac atgoffwch nhw y byddwn yn ail-ymweld â'r rhifau hyn yn nes ymlaen yn yr ymchwil (gallai fod o gymorth pe baent yn ei ysgrifennu yn rhywle lle nad oes neb ond y nhw yn gwybod amdano).

Diolch am helpu gyda'r ymchwil pwysig hwn i les.

Numbers provided for Participants

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30

Wellbeing Pack used for the evaluation

The Pilot study contained the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), shown below.

The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)
 © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh,
 2006, all rights reserved.

Welsh

THE WARWICK-EDINBURGH MENTAL WELL-BEING SCALE (WEMWBS)

GRADDFA LLES WEMWBS – Person ifanc

Dyma rai brawddegau am deimladau a meddyliau. Ticia'r bocs ar bob llinell sy'n disgrifio orau dy brofiadau yn ystod y 2 wythnos ddiwethaf

BRAWDDEGAU	DIM O GWBL	YN ANAML	WEITHIAU	YN AML	DRWY'R AMSER
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n obeithiol am y dyfodol	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n ddefnyddiol	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo fel mod i wedi ymlacio	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo bod gen i ddiddordeb mewn pobl eraill	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi cael egni i sbario	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn delio'n dda gyda phroblemau	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn meddwl yn glir	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n dda amdanaf i fy hun	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n agos at bobl eraill	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n hyderus	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi gallu penderfynu pethau drosaf i fy hun	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo mod i'n cael fy ngharu	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod â diddordeb mewn pethau newydd	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo mewn hwyliau da	1	2	3	4	5

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved.

Translated into Welsh by LLAIS, Bangor University for the ADTRAC project (part funded through the European Social Fund through Welsh Government) Cyfieithwyd i'r Gymraeg gan LLAIS, Prifysgol Bangor ar gyfer prosiect ADTRAC (ariannwyd yn rhannol trwy Gronfa Cymdeithasol Ewrop drwy Lywodraeth Cymru)

The Main study contained the Shorter Version Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) which was added to the Wellbeing pack. Below is the Metric conversion table used to convert the Raw SWEMWBS scores to their Metric equivalents. Source: Stewart-Brown et al. Health and Quality of Life Outcomes 2009 7:15 doi:10.1186/1477-7525-7-15

Table 1: Raw Score to Metric Score Conversion Table for SWEMWBS

Raw Score	Metric Score
7	7.00
8	9.51
9	11.25
10	12.40
11	13.33
12	14.08
13	14.75
14	15.32
15	15.84
16	16.36
17	16.88
18	17.43
19	17.98
20	18.59
21	19.25
22	19.98
23	20.73
24	21.54
25	22.35
26	23.21
27	24.11
28	25.03
29	26.02
30	27.03

31	28.13
32	29.31
33	30.70
34	32.55
35	35.00

The SWEMWBS was placed alongside the Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) and Cantril ladder of Life Satisfaction, both of which were also used during the Pilot study. These packs were distributed to student participants and shown below.

English



B participant code

Wellbeing pack

Thank you for agreeing to help with this important research.

You will shortly be asked to complete this pack by your form tutor.

They will read out each section and you will be given time to think and respond.

Please answer as truthfully as possible. Your answers are anonymous, which means no one will be able to identify you by your responses.

If you have any questions feel free to ask your form tutor. This is for you to complete individually.

Before we begin, you will see at the top of this paper a unique participant number containing:

- A letter - This is your school
- A number – This is your year
- A letter – This is your registration group
- Blank space – You will fill this in when you have picked your number

Please fill in the blank space with your number. Please try to remember this number, we will re visit it later on in the research (maybe try writing it down somewhere only you know, somewhere you remember for next time). This number will not allow us to identify **who** you are, in fact it is only there to help us and see if there are any changes over time at an individual level.

The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale

Here are some statements or descriptions about how you might have been feeling or thinking about things over the past couple of weeks.

For each one please put a tick in the box that best describes your thoughts and feelings; there are no right or wrong answers.

Statements	Never	Not much of the time	Some of the time	Quite a lot of the time	All of the time
1 I think good things will happen in my life	1	2	3	4	5
2 I have always told the truth	1	2	3	4	5
3 I've been able to make choices easily	1	2	3	4	5
4 I can find lots of fun things to do	1	2	3	4	5
5 I feel that I am good at some things	1	2	3	4	5
6 I think lots of people care about me	1	2	3	4	5
7 I like everyone I have met	1	2	3	4	5
8 I think there are many things I can be proud of	1	2	3	4	5
9 I've been feeling calm	1	2	3	4	5
10 I've been in a good mood	1	2	3	4	5
11 I enjoy what each new day brings	1	2	3	4	5
12 I've been getting on well with people	1	2	3	4	5
13 I always share my sweets	1	2	3	4	5
14 I've been cheerful about things	1	2	3	4	5
15 I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5

The Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

Statements	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

Here is a picture of a ladder.

The top of the ladder '10' is the best possible life for you and the bottom '0' is the worst possible life for you.

In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment?

Tick ✓ the box next to the number that best describes where you stand.

<input type="checkbox"/>	10	Best possible life
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
<input type="checkbox"/>	0	Worst possible life

Welsh



B cod cyfranogwr

Pecyn lles

Diolch i chi am gytuno i helpu gyda'r ymchwil pwysig hwn.

Cyn bo hir, bydd eich tiwtor blwyddyn yn gofyn i chi gwblhau'r pecyn hwn.

Byddant yn darllen pob adran i chi a rhoddir amser i chi feddwl ac ymateb.

Atebwch mor eirwir ag y gallwch chi os gwelwch chi'n dda. Mae eich atebion yn anhysbys, sy'n golygu na fydd unrhyw un yn gallu'ch adnabod chi trwy eich

ymatebion.

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau mae croeso i chi ofyn i'ch tiwtor blwyddyn. Mae hyn i chi ei gwblhau yn unigol.

Cyn i ni ddechrau, fe welwch rif cyfranogwr unigryw ar frig y papur hwn, sy'n cynnwys:

- Llythyren - Dyma'ch ysgol chi
- Rhif - Dyma'ch blwyddyn chi
- Llythyren - Dyma'ch grŵp cofrestru
- Lle gwag - Byddwch yn ei lenwi pan fyddwch wedi dewis eich rhif

Ysgrifennwch eich rhif yn y lle gwag, os gwelwch chi'n dda. Ceisiwch gofio'r rhif hwn, byddwn yn ail-ymweld â'r rhif yn nes ymlaen yn yr ymchwil (efallai y gallech ei ysgrifennu yn rhywle lle nad oes neb ond y chi yn gwybod amdano, rhywle rydych chi'n ei gofio ar gyfer y tro nesaf). Ni fydd y rhif hwn yn caniatáu i ni nodi **pwyl** ydych chi. Mewn gwirionedd, unig bwrpas y rhif ydy i'n helpu ni i weld a oes unrhyw newidiadau dros amser ar lefel unigol.

Graddfa Lles Plant Stirling

Dyma rai datganiadau neu ddisgrifiadau am sut y gallech fod yn teimlo neu'n meddwl am bethau dros y cwpl o wythnosau diwethaf.

Ar gyfer pob un rhowch dic yn y blwch sy'n disgrifio'ch meddyliau a'ch teimladau orau; nid oes atebion cywir nac anghywir.

Gosodiadau		Byth	Dim llawer o'r amser	Peth o'r amser	Cryn dipyn o'r amser	Trwy'r amser
1	Rwy'n credu y bydd pethau da yn digwydd yn fy mywyd	1	2	3	4	5
2	Rwyf wedi dweud y gwir bob amser	1	2	3	4	5
3	Rydw i wedi gallu gwneud dewisiadau yn hawdd	1	2	3	4	5
4	Gallaf ddod o hyd i lawer o bethau sy'n hwyl i'w gwneud	1	2	3	4	5
5	Rwy'n teimlo fy mod i'n dda am rai pethau	1	2	3	4	5
6	Rwy'n credu bod llawer o bobl yn poeni amdanaf	1	2	3	4	5
7	Rwy'n hoffi pawb rydw i wedi cwrdd â nhw	1	2	3	4	5
8	Rwy'n credu bod yna lawer o bethau y gallaf fod yn falch ohonynt	1	2	3	4	5
9	Rydw i wedi bod yn teimlo'n ddigynnwrf	1	2	3	4	5
10	Rydw i wedi bod mewn hwyliau da	1	2	3	4	5

11	Rwy'n mwynhau'r hyn a ddaw yn sgil pob diwrnod newydd	1	2	3	4	5
12	Rydw i wedi bod yn dod ymlaen yn dda gyda phobl	1	2	3	4	5
13	Rydw i bob amser yn rhannu fy losin/fferins	1	2	3	4	5
14	Rydw i wedi bod yn siriol am bethau	1	2	3	4	5
15	Rydw i wedi bod yn teimlo'n hamddenol	1	2	3	4	5

Diolch am gymryd yr amser i gwblhau hyn.

Graddfa Iles (SWEMWBS) – Person ifanc

Dyma rai brawddegau am deimladau a meddyliau. Ticia'r bocs ar bob llinell sy'n disgrifio orau dy brofiadau yn ystod y 2 wythnos ddiwethaf.

Brawddegau	Dim o Gwbl	Yn Anaml	Weithiau	Yn Aml	Drwy'r Amser
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n obeithiol am y dyfydol	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n ddefnyddiol	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo fel mod i wedi ymlacio	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn delio'n dda gyda phroblemau	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn meddwl yn glir	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi bod yn teimlo'n agos at bobl eraill	1	2	3	4	5
Rwyf wedi gallu penderfynu pethau drosaf i fy hun	1	2	3	4	5

Dyma lun o ysgol.

Mae '10' ar frig yr ysgol yn cyfleu'r bywyd gorau posibl ac mae '0' ar y gwaelod yn cyfleu'r bywyd gwaethaf posibl.

Yn gyffredinol, lle ar yr ysgol rwyd ti'n sefyll ar hyn o bryd?

Ticia'r ✓ blwch wrth ymyl y rhif sy'n disgrifio orau lle rwyd ti'n sefyll.

<input type="checkbox"/>	10	Bywyd gorau posibl
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
<input type="checkbox"/>	0	Bywyd gwaethaf posibl

Appendix K – Additional Student Definitions on Wellbeing

Health and Mental Health

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 7	"Wellbeing means being happy."
	"Feeling good and healthy in your body."
	"Staying healthy and feeling positive."
Year 8	"Having a healthy body and mind."
	"Balancing mental and physical health."
	"Wellbeing is about things working well together."
Year 9	"Taking care of yourself."
	"Wellbeing is when your mental health is good."
	"Feeling mentally and physically healthy."

Physical Health

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 7	"Playing sports and eating well."
	"Exercising to stay fit."
	"Being active and healthy."
Year 8	"Staying active and eating nutritious food."
	"Physical activity and sports games."
	"Exercising regularly and eating healthy foods."
Year 9	"Keeping physically and mentally active and healthy."
	"Wellbeing means being physically fit."
	"Maintaining physical health through exercise."

Happiness and Peace

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 7	"Feeling happy and peaceful."
	"Being relaxed with others."
	"Feeling at peace."
Year 8	"Happiness and calmness."
	"Being relaxed and content."
	"Feeling peaceful and happy."
Year 9	"Finding happiness and relaxing through life."
	"Feeling calm when needed."
	"Experiencing happiness and relaxation."

Positive Emotions and Feelings

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 8	"Staying positive and feeling good."
	"Feeling positive and happy."
	"Having helpful emotions."
Year 9	"Choosing to experience positive feelings."
	"Keeping a positive mindset towards goals."
	"Feeling good about life and things."

Taking Care of Self and Others

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 8	"Helping yourself and others."
	"Taking care of yourself and those around you."
	"Wellbeing means caring for others too."
Year 9	"Looking after those closest to you when needed."
	"Being kind to yourself and others."
	"Taking care of your own wellbeing and helping others with theirs."

Mental and Physical Health

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 8	"Balancing health."
	"Having a healthy mind and body."
	"Mental and physical health together."
Year 9	"Keeping both mind and body healthy and happy."
	"Wellbeing is about more than just physical health."
	"Feeling good mentally will make you better physically."

Exploring Personal Interests

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 9	"Finding new hobbies to stay happy."
	"Doing what you love for wellbeing."
	"Exploring interests to boost mood and then to find calm."

Mutual Care for Others

Year Group	Representative Quotes
Year 9	"Helping others improves their wellbeing and mine."
	"Caring for others as part of wellbeing and making sure people can rely on you."
	"Supporting others helps everyone's wellbeing."

Appendix L – Further examples of Staff/Student engagement with PauseUP

Below is a collection of further findings from each school focus group regarding PauseUP and some of the ways they incorporated into the classroom/school.

West School Nurture Group

<i>Source</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Student</i>	Emotional Expression and Support	"PauseUP helps me talk about my feelings without being scared. I feel safe sharing in class."
		"When we do the activities, I feel less worried. It's nice to know others feel the same way."
		"I really like PauseUP because it gives us a chance to talk about how we're feeling and learn new ways to deal with things."
		"It's nice to have something to look forward to."
<i>Student</i>	Routine and Focus	"I know what to expect, and it helps me focus."
		"It's a break where I can relax and think about things differently."
		"It helps me to stay focused and I feel like I'm learning something new."
<i>Student</i>	Learning New Strategies	"I've learned ways to calm down when I'm feeling anxious. The breathing exercises are my favourite."
		"I feel a bit more in control now."
		"The breathing exercises help me when I feel overwhelmed."
		"It's good to know different ways to manage my stress and emotions better."
<i>Teacher/LSA</i>	Improvements in Wellbeing	"Since incorporating PauseUP, I've noticed the students are more open and communicative about their feelings. It's a big step for those who usually keep to themselves."
		"The consistent use of PauseUP has definitely helped with their anxiety. They seem to handle stressful situations

		better like going to the school canteen for lunch with all the other year groups."
		"We've seen some improvements in their confidence. It's great to see how some of the activities have supported me and their approach to school life, especially after the lockdowns."
		"Students who used to be very anxious speak a bit more in class."
<i>Teacher/LSA</i>	Classroom Dynamics	"The class feels more connected. The students support each other during PauseUP activities, which has strengthened some of their relationships."
		"The students are more engaged and willing to participate."
		"The activities have fostered a greater sense of community within the class and have given us some great discussion points."
		"PauseUP has encouraged collaboration."
<i>Teacher/LSA</i>	Practical Benefits	"The breathing exercises are fantastic for transitions. It helps the students calm down and get ready for the next lesson."
		"The variety of activities keeps things interesting. The students are always curious about what's next."
		"The practical strategies from PauseUP are easy to integrate into the class here."
		"A useful tool for managing classroom dynamics."
<i>Teacher/LSA</i>	Integration into Curriculum	"I've started using some of the themes for our class projects. It integrates well with the health and wellbeing AoLE and makes the lessons a bit more relevant."
		"PauseUP has become a part of our daily routine, and the students have come to rely on it."
		"The programme's themes fit well with our curriculum goals."
		"Using PauseUP themes in projects has made the learning experience more meaningful."
<i>Collective Feedback</i>	Positive Impact	"PauseUP has made a difference in our class. It's about building a supportive classroom where everyone feels valued."

*Collective
Feedback*

	"The programme's flexibility allows us to use it in ways that best meet our students' needs. It's been a perfect fit for our group."
	"PauseUP has positively influenced student relationships."
	"The programme has equipped students for managing their emotions and stress."
Supportive Environment	"Having a consistent time for PauseUP each day creates a sense of stability for the students. They know they have a safe space."
	"It's empowering for them."
	"The regular inclusion in our schedule has built a supportive environment for students."
	"PauseUP provides a structured time for students to discuss and reflect on their wellbeing."

Some example activity's which this group's teacher facilitated using PauseUP can be found overleaf. They include a savouring photography task (figure one) and a collection of quotes for wellbeing (figure two).



Figure 1 – Savouring photography task in Nurture Group

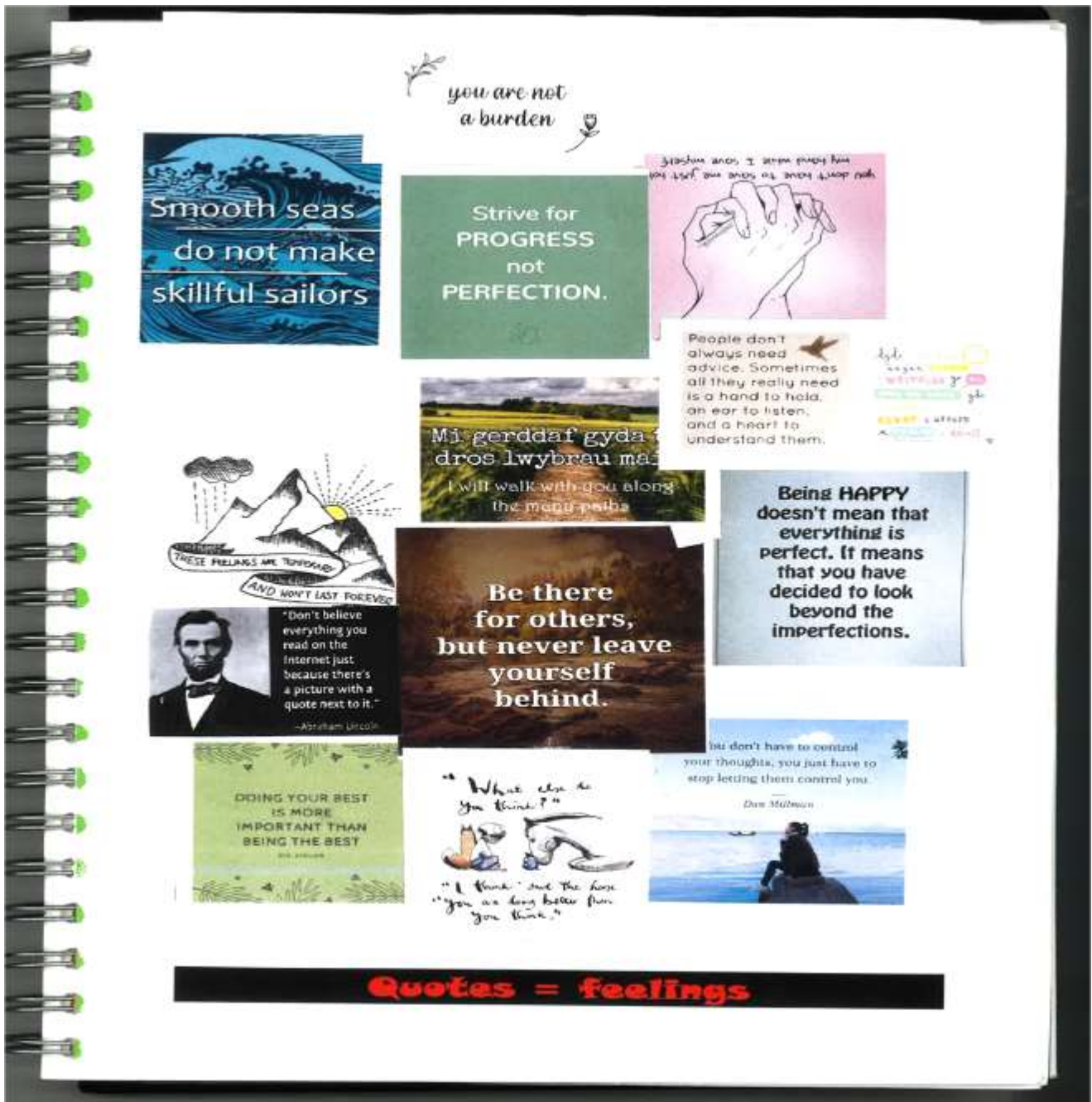


Figure 2 Collection of quotes for wellbeing

North School Year 7's

	<i>Source</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Student</i>		Social Connection	"PauseUP helps me make new friends because we do activities together."
			"When we do PauseUP, I feel more connected with my classmates."
			"The group activities help us get to know each other better."
			"I enjoy the discussions because I learn more about feelings and thoughts."
<i>Student</i>		Stress Management	"The yoga and meditation in the morning make me feel calm and ready for the day."
			"PauseUP helps me relax and focus, especially before a big test."
			"I like the breathing exercises because they help me calm down when I'm stressed."
			"The activities remind us to take care of ourselves."
			"Our form teachers use PauseUP quite often. We do yoga and meditation in the morning to start the day off, in the afternoon, the stories make us focus and talk about wellbeing."
			"We get into a routine of standing up and moving about in class and it helps with the rest of the day's lessons."
<i>Form Teacher</i>		Social Skills and Collaboration	"PauseUP has helped improve students' social skills and their ability to work together."
			"The programme encourages open communication and teamwork with the discussions."
			"I've noticed that students are supportive of each other during some of the PauseUP activities."
			"The activities have created a collaborative classroom environment, its useful to rely on."
<i>Form Teacher</i>		Classroom Dynamics	"Integrating PauseUP into our schedule has been tricky."
			"Students seem less anxious when we start the day with PauseUP."

		"The programme has helped me at times manage classroom behaviour by providing structured activities."
		"PauseUP has become a part of our daily routine in school these last few weeks, promoting a calm atmosphere."
<i>Form Teacher</i>	Practical Benefits	"The yoga and meditation exercises set a positive tone for the day."
		"PauseUP provides strategies that students can use throughout the day."
		"The activities are easy to implement, even in a busy classroom schedule."
		"PauseUP allows us to adapt the activities to fit our classroom needs."
<i>Student Suggestions</i>	Improvements	"It would be better if some of the physical activities were more classroom-friendly."
		"I think we need more space for some of the activities. Maybe we can do them outside sometimes."
		"It would be nice to have more variety in the activities so we don't get bored."
		"I think we should do PauseUP activities at different times of the day to keep things interesting and not put all the pressure on us form teachers, we have so many other things to do."
<i>Form Teacher Suggestions</i>	Integration Challenges	"Fitting the activities into our classroom setting can be challenging."
		"We need better integration with other curriculum-based lessons to make the most of it."
		"Sometimes it's hard to find the time to fit PauseUP in."
		"It would be helpful to have more support and resources for using PauseUP in the regular classes."

North school created a page for PauseUP in their end of term newsletter to parents and the wider community as shown overleaf.

PAUSE UP!

A pilot in partnership with Cardiff University



PHYSICAL WELLBEING

**PREPARING THE BODY AND THE MIND
FOR THE DAY AHEAD**

"The physical activities help me to wake up in the morning, and it gives me energy for the day ahead"

5 minutes in the morning, 3 times a week

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

**PROMOTING RESILIENCE, AWARENESS
AND REGULATING WORRIES**

"I like the emotional part because it helps me to relax and to clear my mind before the first lesson"

5 minutes in the morning, 3 times a week



SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

**ENCOURAGING TO CHALLENGE,
CONSIDER & REFLECT**

Gratitude, Meaning, Optimism, Empathy, Kindness

"I like this aspect the most because we have time to discuss, to think, and to express our opinions on different topics"

10 minutes in the afternoon, 3 times a week



SAIB A SYLWI!

Peilot partneriaeth gyda Phrifysgol Caerdydd



LLES CORFFOROL

CYNHESUR CORFF A'R MEDDWL
AM Y DIWENOD I DDOD

*"Mae'r weithgaredd gorfforol yn fy helpu
i ddihuno lan yn y bore, ac mae'n rhoi
egni i fi am y dydd"*

5 munud yn y bore, 3 gwaith yr wythnos

LLES EMOSIYNOL

HYRWYDDO GWYTNWCH, YMWYBYDDIAETH,
A RHEOLEIDDIO PRYDERON

*"Dwi'n hoffi'r rhan emosiynol achos
mae'n helpu fi i ymlacio a chlirio'r
meddwl cyn dechrau'r wers gynta!"*

5 munud yn y bore, 3 gwaith yr wythnos



LLES YSBRYDOL

ANNOG I HERIO, CNOI CUL A MYFYRIO
Diolch, Ystyr, Optimistiaeth, Sawru,
Empathi, Caredigrwydd

*"Dyma rwy'n hoffi fwyaf achos rydym yn
cael amser i drofod, i feddiel, ac i fynegi
barn ar destunau grahanol"*

10 munud yn y prynhawn, 3 gwaith yr wythnos

Central School Progression Step 4 Students (Year 7-9)

	<i>Source</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Student</i>		Emotional Expression	"PauseUP helps me talk about my feelings and understand my emotions better."
			"I like how PauseUP gives us a chance to express ourselves in class."
			"Discussing our feelings in class has made me more comfortable."
			"It feels good to know that others are going through similar things, and we can talk about it."
			"PauseUP has taught me that it's okay to ask for help."
<i>Student</i>		Mental Health Awareness	"The breathing exercises and mindfulness activities help me."
			"I've learned new ways to cope."
			"Some of the activities have made me more aware of my mental health and how to take care of it."
			"Practicing relaxation techniques has improved my wellbeing."
			"I think the breathing exercises and music meditations might work best around exam time and could be used then during classes or even to prepare us for the exam."
			"Some of my classmates felt a bit self-conscious doing the activities that involved moving around. I prefer to do things on my own or with friends outside of school."
<i>Student Suggestions</i>		Improvements	"PauseUP could include more activities that we can do on our own or in small groups."
			"It would be helpful to have more stress-relief techniques, especially during exam periods."
			"I'd like to see more variety in the activities to keep things interesting."
			"PauseUP should have more options for quiet activities for those who feel self-conscious, its difficult moving about in class."
<i>Wellbeing Coordinator</i>		Varied Responses	"We've seen different reactions to PauseUP across year groups, but overall, students have become more emotionally stable and aware."

**Wellbeing
Coordinator**

	"Initially, there was some hesitation about introducing another initiative, but the benefits have become clearer over time."
	"The programme has helped students develop better regulation skills."
	"PauseUP has provided a structured way for students to focus on their mental health."
	"There has been noticeable improvement in students' ability to manage stress and anxiety."
Long-term Integration	"We are interested in continuing PauseUP as part of our ongoing wellbeing strategy."
	"Integrating PauseUP into the school's routine has shown potential for supporting student wellbeing."
	"The programme fits well with our goal of promoting mental health awareness."
	"PauseUP has become a tool for us and the teachers in our approach to student wellbeing."

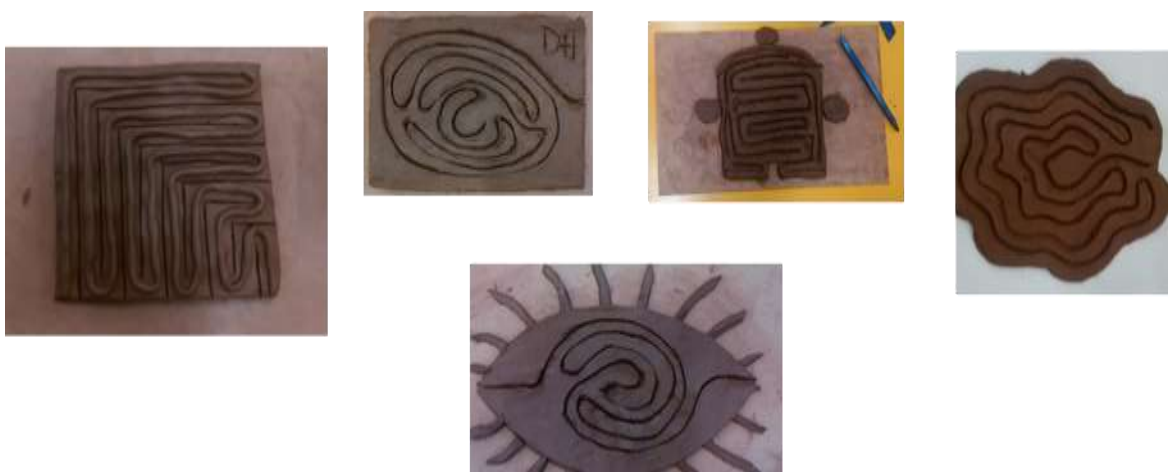


Figure 3 Clay labyrinths made by students during Central school focus groups to explore the concept of wellbeing and its complexity.

East School Year 8 and 9 Students

<i>Source</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Student</i>	Social Connection	"PauseUP helps us understand each other a bit better through group discussions."
		"I enjoy sharing my thoughts with classmates."
		"Talking about wellbeing with others helps me feel more connected to my friends."
		"Group discussions make me feel heard and understood."
		"It was interesting to hear about other people and them telling us more about wellbeing. It made me realise that it is actually a useful thing to teach in schools."
<i>Student</i>	Relaxation	"The music and mindfulness activities help me relax."
		"I like the quiet time we get during PauseUP. It helps me think clearly."
		"The relaxation exercises are great for times when I'm feeling a little stressed."
		"Having time to relax during school helps me manage my day."
		"It was nice to have the music playing in the morning sometimes and just giving us a space to talk while it played in the background."
<i>Student</i>	Empathy and Kindness	"Learning about empathy has helped me be more understanding towards others."
		"The activities about kindness made me think about how I treat my friends and what I can do to help others."
		"PauseUP teaches us the importance of being empathetic."
		"Discussing kindness in class makes me more aware of my actions."
<i>Student Suggestions</i>	Improvements	"I think PauseUP could be improved by having more group discussions and activities that allow us to share our ideas."
		"It would be better if we had more interactive sessions."

		"I'd like more opportunities to participate in group activities."
		"PauseUP could include more hands-on activities."
<i>Lead for Expressive Arts</i>	Incorporating Arts and Wellbeing	"PauseUP aligns well with our expressive arts curriculum, allowing students to explore their emotions through creative activities."
		"Using arts for wellbeing has helped students express themselves more freely."
		"The use of music and drama or role play sessions has been particularly effective in engaging students."
		"Students have shown increased enthusiasm."
<i>Lead for Welsh Language</i>	Promoting Bilingual Wellbeing	"PauseUP provides excellent opportunities to promote wellbeing in both Welsh and English, supporting our bilingual approach."
		"Using Welsh language activities has helped reinforce the importance of cultural identity and language in wellbeing."
		"I think the students appreciate the bilingual resources, which make the programme more inclusive and especially relevant to our school."
		"Integrating Welsh language helps put pride in our cultural heritage."
<i>PE Coordinator</i>	Physical Activity and Wellbeing	"PauseUP's physical activities complement some of our PE curriculum by providing additional opportunities for movement."
		"Students have told me they enjoy the physical components of PauseUP, which help them release energy. I've used a few of them to warm up for our games lessons"
		"The breathing from PauseUP has been useful in teaching students about the connection between physical activity, the breath and mental health."
		"Incorporating it into some PE lessons has provided a more holistic approach to student wellbeing, combining physical and mental health strategies which we are trying to do more of in our school."

The goal setting worksheet the school supplied for the students in this group as a result of PauseUP activity of the theme can be found overleaf.

My Goals by _____

Goal # 1 is:

This goal is important because:

Steps I'll take to reach this goal are: _____

Goal # 2 is: _____

This goal is important because: _____

Steps I'll take to reach this goal are:

Appendix M – Refined Initial Programme theories for PauseUP

Programme Theory Theme	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Integration (Supportive Leadership and Environment)	The integration of PauseUP is set against the backdrop of school environments where supportive leadership, a strong existing culture of wellbeing, teacher development, and open communication are evident. Schools' inclination to adopt and embed new wellbeing initiatives is influenced by their internal dynamics, structural characteristics, and the benefits derived from inter-school collaborations.	The driving mechanisms behind PauseUP's integration involve ongoing teacher training, support, and endorsement by school leadership, and leveraging collective learnings and experiences across classrooms. These elements cultivate a receptive school atmosphere, encouraging acceptance to PauseUP, thereby facilitating its implementation.	The result of these efforts is the smooth introduction and integration of PauseUP into classroom practices and school routines, signifying its successful implementation. This may lead to observable improvements in student wellbeing and the enrichment of wellbeing practices across classrooms using the programme.
Targeted Stress and Mental Health Support	The introduction of PauseUP was set against the backdrop of increasing student stress and mental health concerns, intensified by the pandemic. Schools' commitment to proactively tackle these issues created a context for implementing PauseUP's intervention support strategies.	PauseUP's change mechanism was anchored in its ability to tailor activities to students' mental health needs. This was achieved through research and the programme's flexible development and design. Schools' various engagement strategies and adaptability provided direct, targeted support in specific conducive contexts to alleviate students' emotional stressors.	Implementing PauseUP interventions led to observable increases in students' subjective emotional wellbeing. Staff reports and observations indicated decreased stress levels and improved emotional regulation among some students. These outcomes can be attributed to the strategic and consistent application of PauseUP activities.
Adaptable School	Implementation occurred within various school and classroom	The mechanisms facilitating PauseUP's integration included	The use of adaptable strategies led to varied outcomes. Schools

<p>Wellbeing Strategies</p>	<p>contexts, each with distinct challenges, including fluctuating academic schedules, diverse technical infrastructures, and a wide spectrum of student needs. Schools' readiness and approach to use PauseUP was influenced by these contextual factors, leading to varied implementation strategies from targeted interventions to whole-school approaches.</p>	<p>user-friendly interfaces, flexible content delivery methods, and real-time feedback adaptations. The variation in implementation strategies—ranging from focused efforts addressing specific student needs to whole-school initiatives—reflected the need for adaptability to each school's different requirements.</p>	<p>employing targeted approaches reported specific improvements in the wellbeing of student groups directly engaged with the programme. Schools that adopted a broader approach noted mixed engagement and challenges. Across all contexts, the programme's ability to adjust to changing school conditions resulted in involvement from multiple schools and classrooms, facilitating a more impactful evaluation and delivery of wellbeing support during a unique timeframe.</p>
<p>Overcoming Resistance</p>	<p>Initial resistance encountered during PauseUP's implementation was marked by scepticism from students and teachers due to pre-existing perceptions, the programme's novelty, and varied openness among different age groups.</p>	<p>Mechanisms for overcoming resistance included targeted engagement of specific student demographics, customisation of programme activities, and phased introductions based on previous familiarity with other wellbeing programmes and PauseUP. These approaches directly addressed resistance to change, making the programme more appealing and accessible.</p>	<p>Implementing targeted and adaptive strategies led to increased programme engagement and acceptance. Schools observed a marked growth in participation in PauseUP activities, indicating that these strategies countered initial resistance and fostered a more inclusive and receptive environment for the wellbeing programme.</p>

Appendix N – Engagement with the wider research community and education groups

This KESS scholarship led to a range of opportunities to discuss and present areas related to and as a direct result of this study. Below are a few examples of these.

The Lightbringer's project

A wellbeing and literary scheme organised and introduced to one of the Local Authorities involved in this research. A link to this involvement can be found below:

[Reflection on The Lightbringers \(youtube.com\)](#)

Blueprints for Tomorrow Podcast

A podcast that was created with the Welsh School of Architecture to exchange knowledge and discover more about the learning space with a focus on its role in wellbeing. A link to which can be found below.

[Podcasts – Future Learning Environments](#)

Tom the lion Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT) resources for schools and accompanying literary scheme

A focus on digital tools for wellbeing led to the creation of additional resources and a short documentary made about assistive technology for young people. Alongside this another literary scheme for wellbeing was developed. More information can be found in the links below:

[Gwylan UK: Developing a stress & anxiety management system for classrooms \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Sleeping Lions - Raven Technologies Ltd](#)

[Screen Savers: Assistive Media Tech for Kids! \(Perspective On - CMC 2021\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

KESS 2 involvement

As part of the research journey a KESS chronicle was made in relating research journeys within the Covid-19 timeframe.

[Croniclau Covid KESS 2 Covid Chronicles : Simon Johns \(youtube.com\)](#)

The opportunity to attain a Postgraduate Skills Development Award (PSDA) was given and completed during the course of the study as shown below:

TYSTYSGRIF CWBLHAU CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

DYFERNIR Y DYSTYSGRIF HON I · THIS CERTIFICATE IS HEREBY AWARDED TO

Simon Johns

am gwblhau Gwobr Datblygu Sgiliau Ôl-raddedig (PSDA) KESS 2 yn llwyddiannus
for successfully completing the KESS 2 Postgraduate Skills Development Award (PSDA)



PENNY DOWDNEY

Rheolwr KESS 2 Cymru KESS 2 Wales Manager

11.07.2023

**DYDDIAD CWBLHAU
DATE OF COMPLETION**



Festival of Social Science

Towards the end of the evaluation opportunities to share and discuss with other researchers and schools in Wales presented themselves, summarised overleaf.



Health and Wellbeing in Schools: Actionable Insights 16/11/23



Venue: Bridge Innovation Centre, Pembrokeshire
Science and Technology Park
Event leads: Simon Johns and John Likeman
Academic School: Social Sciences (SOCSI)



24 Attendees 46 Registered



Quotes from attendees

"Thank you very much - it has been a fantastic day. Very informative and interesting"

"Extremely informative, interesting and a great opportunity to network and work together to support wellbeing"

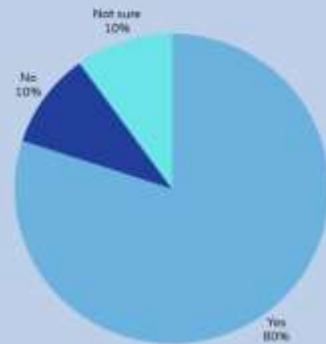
'As a result of attending the event, I plan to share what I've learned with others'

95%

of participants said that they were **glad they attended** the event.

90%

of participants said that they **learnt something new**.



THE 2023 FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
21 October - 17 November

Non-academic collaborator: Lily - M&P Group



Economic and Social Research Council