

**CHRISTIAN CONCERN FOR OUR NATION
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON SCHOOLS'
ROLE IN PROMOTING PUPIL WELL-BEING DRAFT
GUIDANCE
SEPTEMBER 2008**



*Changing Society to put the
Hope of Christ at its Centre*

**Develop Public Policy: From a Biblical Perspective
Empower Christians: To shape the Law for Christ
Inform Influencers: Parliament, Media & Church
Influence the Law: Train and equip lawyers**

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About Christian Concern for our Nation (CCFON)

CCFON is a policy and legal resource centre which identifies changes in policy and law that will affect Christians. The team of lawyers at CCFON research and prepare for legislation affecting Christian Freedoms. CCFON serves a mailing list of 30,000 supporters.

Response to consultation by 25 September 2008

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Consultation Response

Setting the Legal Context

1. The Consultation asks for responses for the purposes of the draft guidance on pupil wellbeing for maintained schools, primary, secondary, special and Pupil Referral Units. The reasons for the consultation arises as the result of a statutory duty under section 38 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 (EIA 2006) on governing bodies of schools to *promote the well being of pupils* at the school. The duty came into force in September 2007.

2. The draft guidance explains how wellbeing is defined in section 38(1) of the EIA 2006 in terms of matters mentioned in section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004 as:

- (a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being;
- (b) protection from harm and neglect;
- (c) education, training and recreation;
- (d) the contribution made by him to society;
- (e) social and economic well-being.

3. The draft guidance then explains how “...Well-being in these terms translates into the five Every Child Matters outcomes that children should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic well-being, which schools are already inspected against by Ofsted.”¹

4. The Governing body in promoting the wellbeing of the pupil needs to have regard to any relevant Children and Young People’s Plan. and to any views expressed by parents of registered pupils.

5. Points 1 to 4 above provide a brief outline of the legal context and matters to have regard to in this draft guidance.

Promotion of Wellbeing of Pupils-lack of emphasis on the vital importance of spiritual, moral and mental health of pupil’s wellbeing and the important role of Religion for Pupil Wellbeing

6. The draft guidance in point 3.3. states as follows:

“3.3 *The concept of schools contributing to all aspects of pupil well-being is not new. Schools have long recognised the importance of supporting ‘the whole child’ through their pastoral care, ethos, teaching, curriculum and activities beyond the school day, and since 1944 schools have been required to promote the **spiritual, moral, mental,** cultural and physical development of pupils.” (Our emphasis added)*

7. The ongoing and continual need of the vital importance to a pupil’s wellbeing of stressing the spiritual, moral and mental health element to pupil wellbeing cannot be over-emphasised. The draft guidance insufficiently acknowledges the importance to a child’s health and wellbeing of the need for mental and spiritual health and focuses more on the physical or social and emotional development. Consequently, the draft guidance fails to recognise the importance of the spiritual requirement necessary to enhance pupil well being. In fact the statutory definition of wellbeing includes not just *physical* but also *mental health* and emotional well-being.

8. The importance of religion for a person’s spiritual wellbeing is acknowledged in a number of studies. A growing body of multidisciplinary research supports the link between religious involvement and mental health outcomes. Religion may facilitate coping with stress by enhancing social and psychological resources.² Research in Australia found a link between Spirituality and Wellbeing and that religion was good for wellbeing.

The study found that:

"Those with a spiritual orientation tend to score higher on many of the wellbeing measures included in the study. They tend to have a greater sense of purpose in life, a greater openness to personal growth, and more optimism about life"

"Of significance, the research also suggests that those with a spiritual orientation are more likely to contribute to others, whether informally in daily life, giving money to charities or doing

voluntary service with community groups. These results suggest that exploration of spirituality and wellbeing may be important to a healthy society."³

9. Apart from the mention of the spiritual, moral and mental element in point 3.3. The rest of the draft guidance largely ignores the important role of religion to a pupil's spiritual wellbeing.

10. One of the 5 outcomes for Every Child Matters which is linked in this draft guidance on pupil wellbeing, refers to "being healthy" but the draft guidance only stresses the need for physical health and not mental and spiritual health. The Children's Plan in point 4.3. refers to the physical side of health in terms of being overweight but the only mention of the mental health side appears to be in terms of social and emotional development in point 4.4. and working with outside children services on mental health in point 4.5. Instead the spiritual, moral and mental development of a child should be seen as a central framework to this guidance to help develop and enhance pupil wellbeing. In our submission, pupil wellbeing on the spiritual, moral and mental health side could be enhanced in schools by daily collective worship which should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian.⁴

11. The importance on the development of spiritual wellbeing in school pupils is recognised in other Education Acts. For example, the National Curriculum and its associated assessment arrangements were first established by the Education Reform Act 1988. The Act sets out the requirements for a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:

- promotes the ***spiritual, moral, cultural, mental*** and physical development of pupils at school and of society
- prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.⁵ (Our emphasis added).

12. The draft guidance covers school to school collaboration and school to other child services but does not cover school to church liaison and collaboration which is an important element to ensure an input in relation to the development of the pupils spiritual and mental health wellbeing.

13. Point 6.1. of the draft guidance provides an illustration of points which demonstrate what promoting wellbeing looks like. Under *making a positive contribution* as an Every Child Matters outcome, reference is made to helping pupils understand other faiths and cultures while developing a sense of shared identity. Yet apart from RE and citizenship lessons there is no suggested school to church liaison and collaboration. Again in *being healthy* as an outcome in point 6.1. , no reference can be found to any spiritual element only to the physical or social and emotional side of pupil wellbeing.

14. The role of parents and their spiritual views with regard to pupil wellbeing do not appear to have been properly taken into consideration. This is surprising given the fact that Part 2 of the First Protocol of Article 2 of the right to education states that the

State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.⁶

15. The Children's Plan in point 4.2. appears only to have been considered in terms of educational academic achievement wellbeing and not in terms of a broader spiritual or mental wellbeing. This states that:

"The Children's Plan sets out a new goal to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up, reflecting, inter alia the principles and articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child"

And yet, one of the rights which contribute to the pupil's wellbeing is his or her spiritual wellbeing as recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child IN Article 14(2)⁷ which refers to one of the child's rights being that States should respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

16. In terms of the Every Child Matters pupil wellbeing outcome of *making a positive contribution* to the community in respect of volunteering, it is well documented that those people who actively practice a religion are more likely to participate in formal volunteering than those who do not and people who actively practise a religion are more likely to give to charity.⁸ This demonstrates the importance of religion for a pupil's wellbeing as measured by making a positive contribution.

16. In summary, in our submission, the guidance needs to fully consider and include as a central framework the Schools role in promoting Pupil wellbeing by promoting the spiritual and mental health of the child. To ignore that element of a child's wellbeing will result in children's needs not being properly met and even the section 38 definition of wellbeing which includes mental health may not be adequately fulfilled.

¹ See 2.3 of the draft guidance **Schools' Role in Promoting Pupil Well-being - Draft Guidance for Consultation**

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1564>

² See http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/6/4/3/p106431_index.html

³ See <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=4273>

NCLS Occasional Paper 6 - Spirituality and Wellbeing in Australia

<http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=4142&view=summary>

⁴ See sections 375,385 and 386 of the Education Act 1996

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1996/ukpga_19960056_en_23#pt5-ch3-pbl-11g375 –whilst this Act has been amended with exceptions - there is still a statutory duty of collective worship which if promoted would assist in pupil wellbeing from the spiritual, moral and mental health side.

⁵ See <http://old.accac.org.uk/uploads/documents/1507.pdf> ACCAC's Review of the school curriculum and assessment arrangements 5–16: A Report to the Welsh Assembly Government April 2004. See point 2.2 the report deals with a curriculum for the 21st century.

⁶ See http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/ukpga_19980042_en_3#sch1-pt2

⁷ See Article 14 (2) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/589DD6D3A29C929ACB148DB3F13B01E7.pdf>

⁸ See page 4 and 10 2005 Citizenship survey
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452564.pdf>