



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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Summary

The PSP is an evidence-based, teacher led programme that builds psychological resilience, knowledge, competency and an eventual culture of self-perpetuating innovation into the school system.

The programme has been designed by leading academics and researchers in psychology, neuroscience and education and is continuously informed through Positive's established and highly successful work with the corporate sector. As such the PSP progresses in unison with the education, skills and employment sectors, making it the ideal tool to prepare young people for the work place.

It works broadly by developing tolerant teachers who have the skills to protect and advance their own psychological, social and physical health and then transfer these skills and knowledge sets to their student populations. The programme uses the key principles of social learning to reduce risk factors and built upon strengths to form a common language within the organisation, resulting in increased confidence and advanced psychological and academic ability in teachers and learners.

It is a highly versatile programme that can be adapted to suit the needs of wide ranging student populations including those who are academically advanced and those who are significantly disadvantaged.

The PSP empowers staff by providing teachers with the necessary CPD, academic guidance and systems of collaboration and evaluation to undertake key action-research, which subsequently feeds into the advancement of the school culture, and curriculum. Our innovative research and evaluation model can be applied both nationally and internationally linking policymakers to educational governance committees, academics, school leaders, teachers, clinicians and parents through an international working group that transforms educational standards.

The PSP will not only improve the educational attainment and outcomes of Australian schools, but it will prepare the population for a healthier future by

embedding the skills and abilities necessary to stay well, manage pressure and perform to increasing higher standards.

Main submission

Positive Group

Introducing The Positive Schools Programme

1. Teacher-Centred Social and Emotional Learning

Positive Group (Positive) is a specialist, learning provider set up by Doctor of Medicine and Health Psychologist, Brian Marien who is also Medical Adviser on Psychological Health and Wellbeing to NHS Sussex, England.

The Positive programmes have been built on a strong evidence base and wealth of knowledge and expertise through the input of some of the worlds leading academics in neuroscience, medical sciences and psychology.

We have a large network of associates with PhDs in occupational and educational psychology and an Advisory Board, continuously feeding into the development of our programmes, including the following high profile academics:

E Prof Tom Sensky, E Professor of Psychological Medicine, Imperial College London, England

Prof Trudie Chalder, Professor of Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy, Kings College London, England

Prof Paul Brown, Faculty Professor, Organisational Neuroscience, Monarch Business School, Switzerland

Positive translates the relevant principles of psychology and human behaviour into practical, versatile tools and techniques that enable individuals, teams and organisations to manage pressure and adapt to change and uncertainty.

We have worked extensively with leading universities, schools, charities, and corporate and public organisations internationally across multiple sectors, including education, healthcare, law, accountancy, finance and pharmaceuticals. We currently support 60 organisations globally including private businesses, schools, universities and charities and have taken over 40,000 participants through our programmes.

The Positive Schools Programme (PSP) is both informed by and adapting continuously to our work with the corporate sector and universities; we understand the skills sets required to prepare young people for higher education and the workplace and embed these within the PSP.

The PSP has been built on the basis of social learning as the biggest predictor of change, which is actively embedded into the DNA of the organisation. This way, the

organisational culture is adapted through a common language that is shared across school leaders, teaching staff, students and parents.

The PSP is developed with the specific aim of improving and maintaining the psychological health, wellbeing and resilience of teachers and consequently students and parents.

Our approach to achieving significantly improved outcomes for teaching staff, students and overall school performance is based on:

- An integrative process that teaches new skills and supports social and emotional learning with the cognitive model at its core. Grounded in theory and empirical evidence, PSP builds several core protective psychological competencies, which include emotional literacy, self and social awareness and emotional regulation.
- Creating a mindset of action-research for teachers. Through the concept of lifelong learning, teachers continuously develop their professional portfolios through engaging in CPD (see sections 5 and 6).

The PSP works in two stages:

Stage 1 - Develop teacher wellbeing: support teachers to understand and apply the learning themselves.

Stage 2 - Application of knowledge and tools: enable teachers to translate the tools into classroom activities for students, supported by app-based technology.

“I am delighted to see the work being done by Positive to spread practical life skills which can improve psychological wellbeing, build resilience and enable individuals and teams to fulfil their potential.”

(Prof Lord Richard Layard, London School of Economics, UK)

2. The PSP and educational success for Australian students and schools

In order to achieve educational success, students and teachers must be supported by an effective and affordable system that enables them to develop in unison with emerging changes to technology, global communication, cultural shifts, the skills sector, the jobs market and essentially the education system itself.

Positive proposes that the future of education in Australia should focus on raising the resilience and adaptability of their staff and students by empowering them develop core emotional literacy and regulation skills that aid effective learning.

We know that resilient teachers perform better under pressure, have better cognitive function (concentration, memory, decision making, innovation, curiosity and creativity), have a greater tolerance of uncertainty, experience better physical health and are more effective at positively influencing and motivating students. As such, the first step to enabling students to achieve better outcomes is to equip

school governors and teachers with the skills and knowledge to become better leaders.

We believe that educational success for Australian students and their schools can be defined and demonstrated through three main outcomes:

- Confident and competent teaching staff who are supported and empowered to develop the cognitive, psychological and social skills necessary to adapt to the educational and social needs of their student populations.
- Increased cognitive, psychological and social capability in students evidenced through improved psychological functioning and maximised learning outcomes, for all students regardless of their school or background.
- The use of effective and affordable approaches to increasing student and school outcomes that can be replicated across the varying needs of students, including those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and varying cognitive and physical abilities.

3. Preparing Australian students for the future

The development of emotional literacy and regulation can modify a wide range of the brain's activities including our attentional focus, information processing, learning, memory, decision making, innovation and creativity.

Effective social and emotional learning is proven to deliver a range of positive learning outcomes.

Critically, the PSP provides teachers with an in-depth understanding of the cognitive and behavioural 'risk factors' and 'protective factors' that influence our psychological wellbeing, levels of resilience and cognitive flexibility. Sustaining teacher health and wellbeing is vital to student development and achievement. In this way, teaching staff are:

- Less fearful of addressing psychological, social and cognitive difficulties with their colleagues and their students, enabling them to mitigate risk factors and build upon protective factors, reduce stigma and normalise emotional states.
- Better equipped to identify and respond to individual student need, which includes adapting their teaching style and approach to suit the individual learner.
- Confident in understanding their own limitations and knowing at the early stages when to refer students for additional support (psychological, occupational, social).

The PSP introduces knowledge and tools that normalise our response to stress and pressure, increase emotional literacy, self and social awareness and emotional regulation.

Modules include the following:

Module 1:

Awareness = Self-awareness and emotional regulation

Module 2:

Focus = Managing worry and rumination as well as external interruptions

Module 3:

Positivity = Building an adaptive, flexible cognitive and behavioural style

Module 4:

Connection = Understanding how we relate to and impact on others

Unpacking relevant aspects of cognitive and behavioural theory is enhanced with the use of imagery, stories metaphors and data and then by applying the tools with peers, exploring the relevance to individual and team growth and development.

Once teachers have applied the knowledge and tools for themselves they are then supported to translate and share the cognitive, behavioural and social skills that are known to generate and protect good psychological health and better learning outcomes with their students.

Teachers adapt the PSP key messages, creating a common language and skills set for students to use throughout the academic year. They then supply the Positive App to their students, which provides access to tools, the Positive Newsfeed and content that informs, supports and sustains the learning process.

4. Measuring school quality and educational success

In partnership with leading academics Positive continuously evaluates the impact of the PSP. Our evaluation is focused on the below learning outcomes for teachers and students:

The distal outcomes below relate directly to our vision of educational success for Australian students and their schools as outlined in section 2 and as such are the principle factors that should be used to measure school quality and educational success:

Distal outcomes for teachers:

Improved teacher health and wellbeing

Improved work performance

Improved student /colleague relationship

Better morale

Collaborative and cooperative social support

Our recent evaluation found, teachers reported that they were significantly more likely to find their workload manageable after they completed the PSP. 100% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the PSP has the potential to make a vital and positive influence on their lives as teachers.

Distal outcomes for students:

Improved student health and wellbeing (protective of later student health and wellbeing)

Reduced stigma

Improved academic performance

Reduced incidence of mood disorder and behavioural problems

Improved teacher and peer relationships

Our recent evaluation found 100% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the PSP has the potential to make a vital and positive influence on their student's lives.

5. Ensuring continuous improvements over time

Each school purchases a 'school license' meaning all staff and students can access the PSP app giving them access to the daily PSP news feed, content and tools.

We accredit teachers to become Positive Teachers, giving them access to Positive Online and the Positive App where they can view content, receive a daily, guided feed and access the Positive tool kit. Teachers can also to set up teams and distribute the app to students, view (and share) data from their students (anonymously) and share on the Positive Forum with other Positive Teachers and schools.

Ensuring teachers are engaged in making continuous improvement, each Positive Teacher has an annual license renewed if they have completed the re-accreditation requirements, which includes a level of CPD activity each term. For example teachers participate in collaborative behavioural experiments that test PSP skills and enable them to feed developmental ideas and learning online through the Positive network of teaching staff, school governors, and academics.

This provides teachers with enhanced access to experts in the field and ownership of the programme as participatory contributors to the development of the PSP and applying learning to the ethos, curriculum and culture of the school.

"I'm simply buzzing about kick-starting the research in my school!"

(Olivia Pianet, teacher at Brighton and Hove High School")

6. Improving practice and outcomes through evidence-based methods

PSP teaching staff regularly share their own experiences, findings and data with colleagues via the online Positive Teachers' Forum to inform best practice and to establish psychologically informed environments. Aided by Positive materials and technology, this process enables teachers to collaborate in the translation and delivery of knowledge and tools into the classroom, building teacher capability, ownership and expertise. We are in the process of further developing the Positive Teacher research and experiments that contribute to their CPD points to enhance the body of evidence behind the PSP. Experiments will directly inform PSP developments and enable teachers to benefit from data and case studies of successful application at each year group and across the educational and social needs of students. We are developing off the shelf experiment options at each level as follows:

Level 1: Teachers deliver individual PSP tool application with students over a selected period of time.

Level 2: Teachers collaborate on experiments within and across schools applying the same experiment, potentially with a control group

Level 3: A network of teachers contribute to a large-scale study over a longer period across multiple schools supported and designed by the Positive Academic Team and a partner university.

CPD Points will be attributed to each experiment and levels completed will link to Positive Teacher accreditation.

7. Effective use of funding resources

Most mental health problems start during the period of adolescence, with 75% beginning before the age of 24. Without appropriate intervention, these difficulties can result in chronic underperformance, significant individual and collective suffering and a long-term social and financial burden on the state.

In response, the PSP approach works across the classroom, school and whole system level, protecting teachers and students from social and academic decline and supporting the best learning outcomes. In turn, better outcomes will positively impact on Australia's future economic growth and social inclusion.

Our approach has been shown to be effective across a range student populations and learning needs, within state and private education and high achieving and disadvantaged students. Positive and have recently begun working with The Regard Group, a UK wide social care agency that supports people with learning disabilities, mental health needs and acquired brain injuries, to up-skill their leadership teams to manage pressure and adapt to change more effectively.

The PSP works by supporting education professionals and students to identify highly predictive variables that can be found across all psychological problems. It then

provides the knowledge and tools to moderate these variables and adapt thinking and behaviour from being dysfunctional to functional and constructive to the learning process.

For example, students who are academically advanced often present with risk factors such as perfectionistic thinking, which can lead to poor mental health including depression, anxiety and OCD. Disadvantaged students are often highly competent, but commonly present with risk factors such as a negative belief system, which can lead to depression, self-harm and suicidality. The teacher uses the PSP trans-diagnostic tool and adapts it to fit with the young persons difficulty, taking the trigger, cognitions and behaviours into consideration, and supporting the individual to identify and mitigate risk factors and build upon protective factors.

Positive offers an affordable, evidence-based, preventative solution that arms learning environments with emotionally literate educationalists who have the ability to holistically support students of all capabilities and backgrounds.

8. Adapting to the needs of different stakeholders

The PSP is a highly adaptable programme that is responsive to a wide range of stakeholders within the education system and their specific circumstances as follows:

Schools: Schools perform best when governed by strong leadership that provides staff with high quality CPD, guidance and a level of autonomy that promotes innovation. The PSP embeds these principles within educational establishments through the cross sharing of knowledge, ideas and research.

Teachers: Teachers are ideally placed, with their professional expertise and their intuitive understanding of what helps children learn, to translate the social and emotional learning into the classroom as well as the wider curriculum and culture.

Students: Adolescents are experiencing some of the most difficult and significant biological and emotional changes they will face in their lives, where a critical part of their development is focused on their relationships with peers and teachers. By developing their ability to manage their emotions we significantly improve both their psychological and educational wellbeing.

Parents: Parents can have a significant impact on educational attainment, when they are better engaged with their children's education. The Positive Parent Programme will launch in the 2018 spring term, and replicates the PSP. It is designed to support parents to build their knowledge and apply PSP tools through an App delivering guided content, daily actions and insights from teachers on how the tools are being used at school.

Policy makers: Policy makers require a platform that promotes collaboration and the sharing of best practice, innovation and research to form a strong evidence base in

order to justify and enable socially and economically advantageous action. The PSP fully enables this platform and is continuing to develop ways to improve it.

9. Institutional governance arrangements

With PSP, the culture of Australian education will be positively adapted through embedding a strong governance structure that is continuously informed through a national and international platform, that actively develops social and emotional learning within the leadership, teacher and student population. With reference to section 7, we are developing a system that enables teachers to collaborate on action research by coordinating elements of the PSP tool application so it can be evaluated in line with research departments and leading academics. This will be translated into evidence-based best practice guidance shared online through the PSP network to sustain improved student outcomes over time. We already work within the Positive schools to select Positive Research Leads who have responsibility for coordinating the Positive Teachers and agreeing on the collaborative experiments each term.

This model can be applied both nationally and internationally linking policymakers to educational governance committees, academics, school leaders, teachers, clinicians and parents to form an international working group that sits behind the schools programme.

10. System enablers to help drive educational achievement and support effective monitoring, reporting and application of investment

We collect data in a number of ways in order to influence and improve key system enablers that drive educational achievement, such as accreditation, school standards, ethos and policy and curriculum targets.

Data is collected via the PSP App, at teacher, student and parent level and through our Resilience Framework Assessments (with validated questions), the Warwick and Edinburgh Inventory and the Emotional Barometer.

We will be able to link PSP data to educational achievement in specific subjects. This way, our measures become a powerful influence and guide for both curriculum and teacher training and accreditation, informing the overall quality assurance process for teaching across various subjects in the curriculum.

11. New and emerging areas for action

We have developed a number of emerging advancements to the PSP that will significantly contribute to teacher competency and confidence. These will need ongoing testing in line with our existing and emerging evaluation methodologies, as follows:

Development of the Positive Teacher research leads as per section 7.

The Positive Parent App will launch in the 2018 as per section 8.

We are developing a 3 tier programme for teachers

- Positive Teacher Plus (Accredited) – 3 day live (face to face) programme – Active in 30 Schools in the UK
- Positive Teacher Essentials (Accredited) – 6 x 2 hour live virtual modules – Launches Q2 2018
- Positive Teacher P.I.E – App and online programme that guides teachers and parents through the Positive Programme – launches Q1 2018

We are putting in a request to the Education Endowment Foundation for an evaluation of the PSP and we are currently in discussions with the National Foundation for Educational Research, London School of Economics and Political Science and University College London about further evaluation of the programme.

Overcoming barriers: Example: When developing the Positive Parent App we knew that we had to create something scalable and dynamic enough to maintain the attention of busy parents. In response, we have used bite size learning, where each exercise only takes between 2-3 minutes to complete. Programme content is taught in interesting and creative ways, such as playing podcasts and using emojis to demonstrate emotional states.