

# Beyond the Snapshot: How to Stay on Top of Your Student's Wellbeing Needs -in Real-Time



What are weekly wellbeing check-ins, why are they better than the current approach, and what impact are they having in schools.

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# Introduction

Schools globally recognise that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people **continues to be paramount.**



A survey by the [Ministry of Health](#) revealed that in 2021/2022 nearly one in four (23.6%) young people aged 15–24 years experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress, up from 11% in 2020. With Māori and Pasifika youth groups often more vulnerable.

The challenge for schools across New Zealand is understanding the wellbeing concerns that exist in their students' worlds. They can remain hidden, out of sight, and uncommunicated. We know children and young people may not always feel able or aware of how to seek support when it comes to issues surrounding their own wellbeing, safety, and mental health.

Students whose wellbeing needs go unmet can be left vulnerable to longer-term mental health disorders into adulthood. Poor wellbeing may also leave some students susceptible to serious or harmful behaviours towards themselves and/or others.

In this guide, we look at how schools and wellbeing teams can introduce frequent student check-ins that give wellbeing and pastoral teams a continuous stream of student voice to make the best decisions for and about their learning community.

This guide is a must-read for everyone who wants to create a positive school culture and improve student wellbeing. Use this resource as a starting point to reflect on how you monitor and respond to wellbeing issues and see how real-time data will allow you to improve the overall social and emotional wellbeing and engagement of the students in your school.



# The State of Wellbeing of New Zealand Children and Youth

Headline news and empirical research are placing the spotlight on low student wellbeing for the 4th consecutive year since COVID. **But why?**

Tackling student wellbeing is a very significant and growing challenge for educators. Ample research into children and young people's behaviours, however, indicates that in our post-pandemic world, wellbeing levels aren't where they need to be.

**For today's students, several factors can prevent the wellbeing needs we noted from being met. Some of these factors, not exhaustively, are listed below.**

## Appearance

A student may have low self-esteem about their own body and physical appearance, partly driven by social media content that promotes perceptions on how they think they 'should look'.



A negative body image can lead to shame, anxiety, depression, isolation, and low self-confidence. New Zealand has one of the highest rates of youth (15-19 years) obesity among comparable countries.

## Bullying

Both offline and more frequently online, students can become victims of abuse or aggression from peers both in person or via social or gaming platforms and messaging apps, which can negatively impact mental health and wellbeing.



In New Zealand, approximately 1 in 4 young people will experience cyberbullying every 12 months, and this figure is expected to rise in 2024.

## The State of Wellbeing of New Zealand Children and Youth Cont.

### Exam Stress and School Life

Students can feel overwhelmed by the pressure of living up to perceived expectations relating to exams; this can affect eating or sleeping habits or lead to feelings of depression.



OECD reported that 55% of students felt very anxious for a test even if well prepared.

### Substance Abuse

Students who are upset or angry may turn to drugs or alcohol to help them manage their feelings. Although they think this helps, it can make them feel worse and lead to hopelessness, irritability, and negative thoughts.



A recent ANZ Study reported that over 70% of teachers found an increase in vaping among students, while primary school teachers reported a 27% hike among primary school pupils.

### Cost of Living Crisis

Given the current cost of living crisis, some children and young people feel isolated if they are unable to cope with money worries or can't afford to do things with family or friends. They also absorb the anxiety that their parents experience, which, in turn, can have a negative impact on their wellbeing.



The Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey of secondary school students in New Zealand found that 15% of students reported worrying about having enough food to eat.

### Domestic Abuse/Home Safety

Students who feel unsafe at home due to being victims of or living in fear of domestic abuse can feel lonely, angry, confused, and powerless. This can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-worth.



Up to 60% of high school students are recorded as having been in an emotionally or physically abusive relationship in New Zealand.

### Social Media/Online Gaming Usage

Easy access to digital devices has caused an increase in both social media and online gaming usage, a trend that has continued to rise since lockdown. This can leave students vulnerable to online addiction, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), online grooming, or access to harmful/inappropriate content. This may include content relating to gang violence, self-harm, or suicide ideation.



In New Zealand, 1 in 2 young people have played multiplayer games online with people they have not met in person.

## Wellbeing in Schools: The current state of play

### How do schools currently 'diagnose' wellbeing health and identify focus areas?

While schools recognise the need to allocate more resources and focus on student wellbeing, there isn't currently a standard approach to how it is identified and addressed. To try and understand how students are feeling, schools may carry out activities such as:

- Annual online or/and paper-based surveys to gain a snapshot of the wellbeing climate of their school.
- Play-based activities or games to encourage students to share their feelings.
- Drop-in sessions with the school's Counsellor, or Head of Year for students to share any concerns.
- Ask parents in the parent-teacher meetings
- Observations.

## Limitations to the current approach

### There are benefits to accumulating annual wellbeing data, and there is certainly a requirement for in-person pastoral care.

However, there are challenges for Wellbeing and Pastoral teams when solely using these current methods. Annual surveys are seldom impactful because they don't cater to basic human behaviour - dynamic emotions. Knowing what interventions are needed and will drive the biggest impact quickly and effectively can prove difficult when you have point-in-time data.



Annual surveys are seldom impactful because **they don't cater to basic human behaviour - dynamic emotions.**"

### Here's why.

#### Wellbeing needs change on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis

Student wellbeing needs are dynamic in nature and change daily, weekly, monthly, or annually. This means that timely intervention is critical. For example, a child not having breakfast because of issues at home needs to be identified immediately, not weeks or months later.

Annual surveys provide a snapshot in time and won't help schools initiate interventions at the right time (i.e. kids are skipping breakfast now) to improve student outcomes and wellbeing.

Solely relying on annual wellbeing tracking can also mean that a child temporarily feels okay when the survey is taken, yet new issues may arise later - often missed. More regular insights are needed to support school wellbeing teams and help them understand the needs students face on a timely basis to prevent other issues from occurring in the future.



## The Iceberg Effect

**One of the biggest challenges when managing and understanding student wellbeing is the; ‘you don’t know, what you don’t know’ conundrum.** There may be visual clues that a student has wellbeing concerns. For example, the student may display injury or bruises or be absent from school.

However, some students may feel embarrassed and unable to verbalise or even recognise wellbeing issues that exist in their world. They may fear the consequences of speaking out and seeking help. If they are victims of bullying, for example, they may not feel comfortable immediately seeking support in person for fear of repercussions. Wellbeing issues may also manifest online, or at home, not necessarily in view of a teacher, making them difficult to detect. We call this the Iceberg effect.

Wellbeing issues may present themselves clearly, at the top of the iceberg where visual clues exist. However, some clues exist below the waterline, where they remain hidden.

Schools need a tool to give them much greater visibility of student wellbeing to prioritise which students need the quickest attention and intervene to bring about positive change.

We’ve identified several obstacles to overcome when it comes to adequately supporting student wellbeing.

**So, how can anyone with a wellbeing responsibility and frontline staff easily and quickly address all these challenges?**

**Offline risks**  
you can see



Changes in behaviour. Injuries/bruises, tip offs from peers, absenteeism.

**Digital risks**  
you can’t see



Online bullying or conversations about drugs/extremism/being harmed, hidden bruises/injuries, unspoken negative feelings and thoughts.





# Linewize Pulse: A Better, More Modern Student 'Survey' Experience

Schools need a more effective tool to help them overcome these challenges. **Linewize Pulse is here to help.**

**Linewize Pulse** is a revolutionary digital wellbeing feedback platform that provides leaders and pastoral teams with actionable data that allows them to understand where their students and schools are thriving and what needs work. It also enables staff to proactively support individual students and identify students who need immediate support.

**How does it work?** Linewize Pulse gathers data from every student in the school and can be completed in less than 60 seconds.

1. Once a week, participants are prompted to answer five questions via an online check-in.
2. Students who need help can use Pulse to reach out to a nominated staff member they trust.

3. Questions rotate from a bank of 120 research-backed questions so different data points can be captured, anonymously, over time.
4. A unique picture of student wellbeing health begins to emerge after a couple of weeks, with a colour-coded 'heatmap' displaying their feedback and areas of concern that require more urgent attention to help you focus your resources.
5. There is also the option for students to show 'gratitude' peer-to-peer or student-to-teacher.



## How frequent check-ins are transforming schools like yours

Schools are increasingly embracing new ways to collect student voice and weave wellbeing into their school culture and curriculum. **Schools turning to weekly wellbeing check-ins are witnessing four key transformations:**

### 1. From reactive to proactive

Anticipate student needs and put in place personalised support to tackle issues before they become more serious.



Linewize Pulse has been a game-changer for our school. It has given us a clear picture of how our students feel and what they need. It has also enabled us to provide timely and targeted support to those who are struggling or at risk. We have seen a significant improvement in student wellbeing, engagement, and achievement.”

**Wayne Whitney, Principal, Hikutaia School**

### 2. From measuring to monitoring

Consistently keep an eye on student wellbeing to provide timely help and specific support as needed.



After the very first check-in of Pulse it became apparent to me the capabilities that this had. There were two children that immediately came up in red “I need some help”, and these weren’t children that I had been previously working with or I had any kind of evidence to suggest that they would otherwise be needing some help.”

**Brook Hill, Principal, Netherton School**

### 3. From passive to engaged

Make use of weekly student voice to guide decision-making and foster greater engagement.



What's been very important for me is those 60 seconds that I get to think about how I actually feel. I think it's really important for me to be truthful to myself as well as the school about how I'm feeling."

**St. Mary's Student**

### 4. From treatment to nurturing

When wellbeing check-ins are integrated into a school's weekly routine, it shifts from fixing issues to nurturing overall wellbeing and fostering deeper student connections.



We can take the Pulse data and the feedback that we are getting to see if there are any trends and work out what needs to be worked on collectively."

**Wayne Whitney Tumuaki, Hikutaia School**

# Helping Schools to Meet National Wellbeing Guidelines

**Linewize Pulse also helps schools to demonstrate that they are working in line with government wellbeing guiding principles by:**

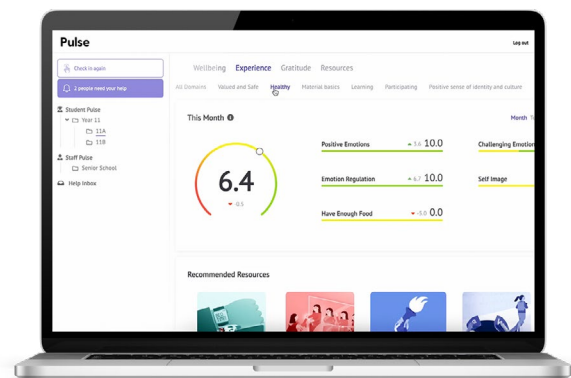
- Demonstrating that they are taking seriously the important role schools play in supporting student wellbeing.
- Allowing students to share, have a voice, and actively participate in decision-making at school on things that shape their educational experiences.

- Providing a communication channel for students who may not feel comfortable vocalising to staff in person that their wellbeing needs aren't being met.
- Evidencing that staff are attempting to build trusted relationships with children and young people, which deepens connection and, in turn, learning.
- Gaining visibility of indicators of a change in student wellbeing that may indicate a child is at risk or struggling.

## School Cluster Collaboration with Pulse

In addition to meeting National Wellbeing Guidelines with Pulse, clusters of schools can collaborate and use the data that Pulse provides to help address their achievement challenges.

Wellbeing data and insights can be shared across schools and clusters and work as a collective to put wellbeing initiatives and interventions in place. Clusters can then engage parents, whanau, and external agencies community-wide in supporting student wellbeing, which builds and strengthens relationships and trust within and between schools and communities.



## What does this mean for schools?

The reason why schools are getting so much value out of weekly check-ins is because they can do things they couldn't before.

Within a couple of weeks, Pulse delivers robust insight into how your school is tracking on every domain that makes up the wellbeing of the whole child. With a "measurement system" that is always available, you don't have to wait until next year's annual wellbeing assessment to see if you have shifted the dial when it comes to wellbeing at your school, and you can regularly steer your interventions to have a greater impact.

### **Wellbeing check-ins will truly transform your whole school culture into one that is:**

- Proactively supporting the wellbeing of your students and staff.
- Constantly monitoring feelings and experiences.
- Actively engaged in wellbeing of themselves and others.
- Continually evolving their practice from crisis management to supporting the whole child.

Lastly, wellbeing check-ins alone are not enough. It is imperative to make wellbeing a part of the school structure, framework and programs to really unravel the power of positive student mental and physical health. Wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

## Whats next?

We hope this document has helped you to understand more about how weekly check-ins can improve the wellbeing and mental health across your school.

If you would like a short informal walkthrough of Linewize Pulse please contact us at [enquiries@linewize.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@linewize.co.nz)

We're ready to help.





Linewize is a unique response to the challenge of today's connected learning environments, supporting the integration of technology, education and engagement to create cyber safe communities where students thrive.

**Web:** [www.linewize.co.nz](http://www.linewize.co.nz)

**Email:** [enquiries@linewize.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@linewize.co.nz)



Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more  
[www.qoria.com](http://www.qoria.com)