

CHECK AND CONNECT

A STRUCTURED ADULT MENTORING INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS

ONE GOOD ADULT

Current literature shows that having at least one supportive adult in a young person's life can act as a buffer against stress and lead to positive psychological functioning (Bogard, 2005; Dooley & Fitzpatrick, 2012; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003; Herrera et al., 2013).

The My World Survey (Dooley & Fitzpatrick, 2012) collated the views of 14,306 young people living in Ireland aged 12-25 years and highlighted the positive influence that *One Good Adult* can have in the lives of young people. Young people who had the support of *One Good Adult* were more connected to others, more self-confident, future looking and better able to cope with difficulties than those young people who reported that they did not have the support of *One Good Adult*. Young people who do not feel connected to those around them were more vulnerable in experiencing mental health difficulties.

The findings highlight that every young person needs at least one supportive adult in their lives. This *One Good Adult* could be someone in the young person's family, such as their mother or an older brother, or someone outside the family, such as a relative, a teacher or a close friend. The My World Survey draws attention to the importance of having at least *One Good Adult* in a young person's life to promote their mental health and wellbeing.

CHECK AND CONNECT MENTORING INTERVENTION

Check and Connect is an evidence-based structured adult mentoring programme that aims to promote student engagement at school and with learning. It is implemented by an adult who is a combination of mentor and advocate.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service works with schools on the planning, implementation and mentor training needed for this intervention. In partner schools teachers volunteer to become Check and Connect mentors and work to:

1. Build a positive relationship with a young person, including his/her family and the school
2. Encourage a student's regular school participation in academic, social and emotional learning
3. Keep school progress a relevant issue for the student and their parents.

Each mentor links with one student, checking in weekly to discuss how he/she is doing and offering support in a number of ways. For example:

- Providing ongoing, consistent and timely monitoring of a student's behaviour for signs of withdrawal and disengagement: lates, absences, failing tests, conduct sheets, detentions, suspensions, lack of interest in school, resistance to learning, social isolation, etc.
- Implementing timely interventions or supports to ensure student achievement and wellbeing, when appropriate.
- Working with other teachers, management and other support staff to help the student be successful.
- Problem solving with the student when difficulties arise.

Check and Connect is intended to complement existing support systems within the school.

