# Surge in mental health issues among Scottish schoolchildren raises alarms



Recent data revealing alarming trends in mental health among schoolchildren in Scotland has sparked significant concern about the increasing prevalence of additional support needs (ASN) in educational institutions. Over the past ten years, the number of pupils identified with mental health challenges has risen dramatically, showing a nearly 600 per cent increase, according to reports from the Daily Mail.

Statistics indicate that the proportion of pupils classified as having additional support needs has surged from seven per cent to over 40 per cent during the past decade. If current trends continue, this figure is projected to approach 50 per cent in the near future. Specific categories of support needs have also shown notable increases. For instance, communication support needs have escalated by 303 per cent since 2015. Additionally, the prevalence of dyslexia has more than doubled, while cases of autism spectrum disorder have risen by 240 per cent, and social, emotional, and behavioural issues among students have increased by 150 per cent.

The rising figures raise questions about the underlying causes of this trend. Some experts suggest that improved diagnostic practices may explain the surge, positing that while actual mental health issues may not have increased to this extent, awareness and understanding have advanced significantly since 2015. The diagnostic capabilities of modern education and mental health systems have evolved, allowing for more students to be accurately identified and supported.

However, there is a growing dialogue regarding the implications of such a large number of diagnoses. Critics argue that an over-reliance on labels could lead to an environment where students are perceived to be limited by their diagnoses, potentially reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and discouraging personal accountability. The Daily Mail highlights that children who may have previously been viewed as needing to improve their performance might now be easily attributed their challenges to ASN-related issues.

The Scottish Government has faced scrutiny regarding its handling of these escalating figures. The article reflects confusion over why such a concerning trend has not prompted a more urgent national response. Skeptics express concern that governmental acknowledgment of the issues has amounted to mere acceptance of the data rather than an active pursuit of solutions.

As schools adapt to support a growing number of students with identified needs, the debate surrounding the categorisation and support provision intensifies. Teachers and educational professionals are increasingly tasked with navigating the complexities of diagnosis and management of behavioural challenges that may stem from various mental health conditions.

While those in education understand the significant implications of these diagnoses, concerns linger about the potential long-term consequences for children now labelled with support needs. The emphasis on these diagnoses raises questions about the balance between providing necessary support and fostering resilience and independence among students. The conversation continues as educators, parents, and policymakers grapple with the rapidly evolving landscape of mental health and education in Scotland.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.place2be.org.uk/media/pi1gh55r/place2be-education-briefing.pdf> - This briefing discusses the mental health challenges facing Scottish schools, including behavior issues and the importance of in-school mental health services. It highlights the rise in mental health concerns among students and the need for comprehensive support.
* <https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2023/june/headline_975719_en.html> - This news article focuses on a Scottish study revealing insights into young people's mental health, highlighting significant mental health challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. It underscores the growing need for support and investment in addressing these issues.
* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2023-volume-1-main-report/pages/7/> - The Scottish Health Survey provides data on mental health and wellbeing in Scotland, including indicators of psychiatric disorders and stress levels across different age groups. It offers insights into the broader mental health landscape and the importance of community support.
* <https://www.gov.scot/policies/mental-health/> - This page on the Scottish Government website outlines policies and actions aimed at improving mental health in Scotland, including initiatives that could address rising mental health concerns among schoolchildren.
* <https://www.education.gov.scot/> - The Education Scotland website contains resources and information on supporting children with additional support needs, including strategies for managing behavioral challenges in educational settings.