



RIGHT
TO
SUCCEED

Blackpool

Mental Toughness Baseline Report
March 2016

www.righttosucceed.org.uk

Mental Toughness Report

About this report

This report sets out the baseline Mental Toughness results for both the pupils and staff. It sets out:

- 1) The concept of Mental Toughness
- 2) The methodology behind the measurement
- 3) The baseline results for pupils and staff in Blackpool
- 4) The approaches that can be taken to transform both the mental toughness of pupils and staff and education outcomes

1) Overview of Mental Toughness

Mental Toughness is a personality trait which determines, in some part, how individuals perform when exposed to stressors, pressure and challenge. It is best considered to represent the mindset of the individual. According to two studies conducted in the UK and the Netherlands, 24% of educational outcomes can be attributed to the mental toughness of the pupil, but beyond performance, studies also show that Mental Toughness leads to the adoption of positive behaviours and improved well-being¹. Mental Toughness is composed of the following 4 underlying capabilities:



Scale	What this means
Control	I really believe I <i>can do</i> it
	I can <i>keep my emotions in check</i> when doing it
Commitment	I <i>promise</i> to do it – I'll set a goal
	I'll <i>do what it takes</i> to deliver it (hard work)
Challenge	I am <i>driven</i> to do it – I will take a chance
	<i>Setbacks make me stronger</i>
Confidence	I <i>believe</i> I have the ability to do it
	I can <i>stand my ground</i> if I need to

¹ St Clair-Thompson, H., Bugler, M., Robinson, J., Clough, P. J., McGowen, S., & Perry, J. L. (under review). Mental toughness in education: Exploring relationships with attainment, attendance, behaviour and peer relationships. Educational Psychology (2014) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2014.895294>

It is a plastic personality trait which can change. Although there is evidence for a genetic element in mental toughness, it is now increasingly well understood that an individual's mental toughness is shaped by their experience and what they learn from what is around them.

For a young person the main influences in this regard are likely to be:

- Their community/environment. They will accept as norms the patterns they see around them
- Their parents – similarly parents behaviours and experiences will impact on a young person
- Those engaged in a young person's development – teachers, youth workers etc.

2) Delivery of the Mental Toughness Questionnaire to pupils

Right to Succeed has worked with 7 out of 8 secondary school settings in Blackpool, including the 300 pupil PRU, to deliver AQR's Young Person's Mental Toughness Questionnaire 48 (MTQ48).

It is an online psychometric test that is delivered in over 120 countries, and requires pupils to state how much they agree or disagree with 48 statements about themselves.

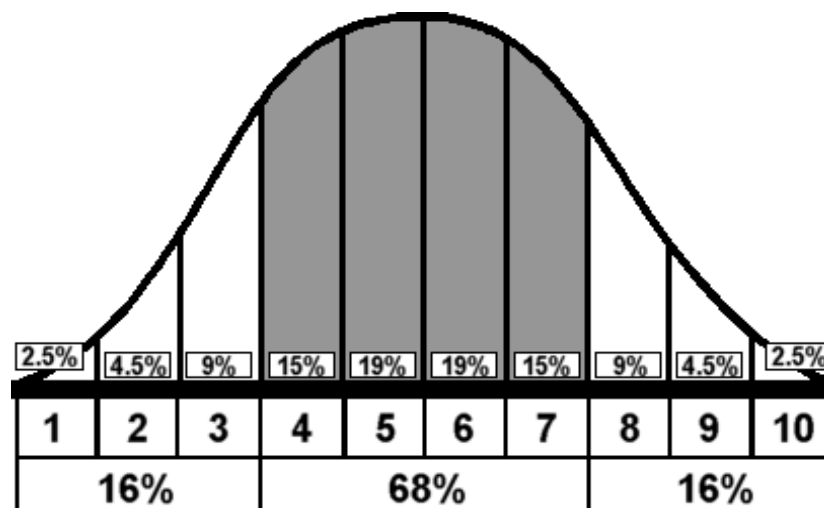
The survey is administered online within classroom conditions, and has a validity score of .90 on the alpha validity score scale (anything over .70 is considered valid).

The survey has currently been completed by 3,207 pupils and 400 staff members to date.

Understanding the results

The answers of each child are analysed to understand the 4 separate traits as well as an overall Mental Toughness score. Control and Confidence are also split into 2 sub-parts; Life Control & Emotional Control, and Confidence in Abilities & Interpersonal Confidence respectively.

Each trait is given a score from 1 to 10 for each child, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. The scores are normed against children of the same age, and follow a normal distribution as shown in the following diagram.



5.5 is always the mean outcome for any trait, so anyone scoring 5 or below is below national average for their age, whilst anyone scoring 6 and above is above national average for their age.

Those who score below 4 are within the lowest 16% of their age-group for Mental Toughness, whilst those who score 8 and above are within the top 16% for their age-group.

3A) The Pupil Results and what they mean

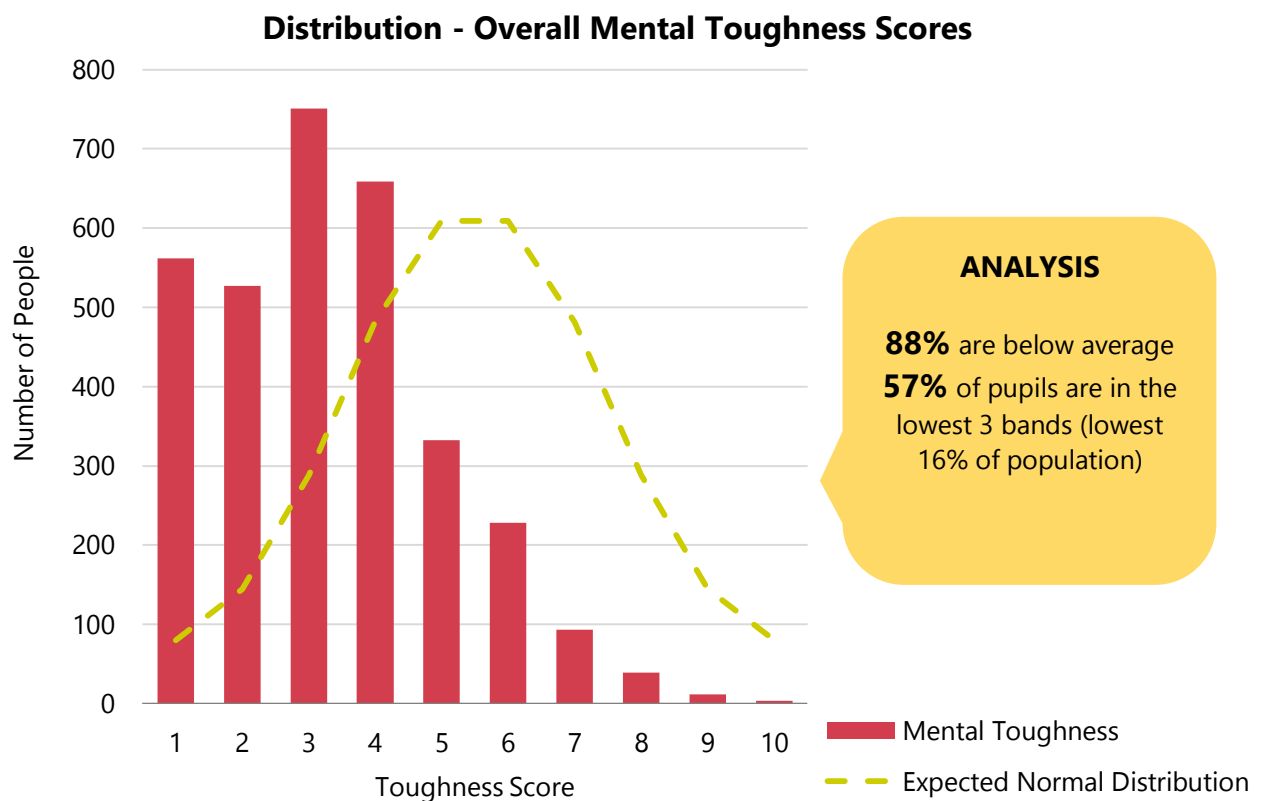
Overall Mental Toughness

The overall mental toughness score is a summary of the commitment, challenge, confidence and control of pupils.

The importance of mental toughness in the school context is underlined by several studies that link good mental toughness to the following behavioural outcomes:

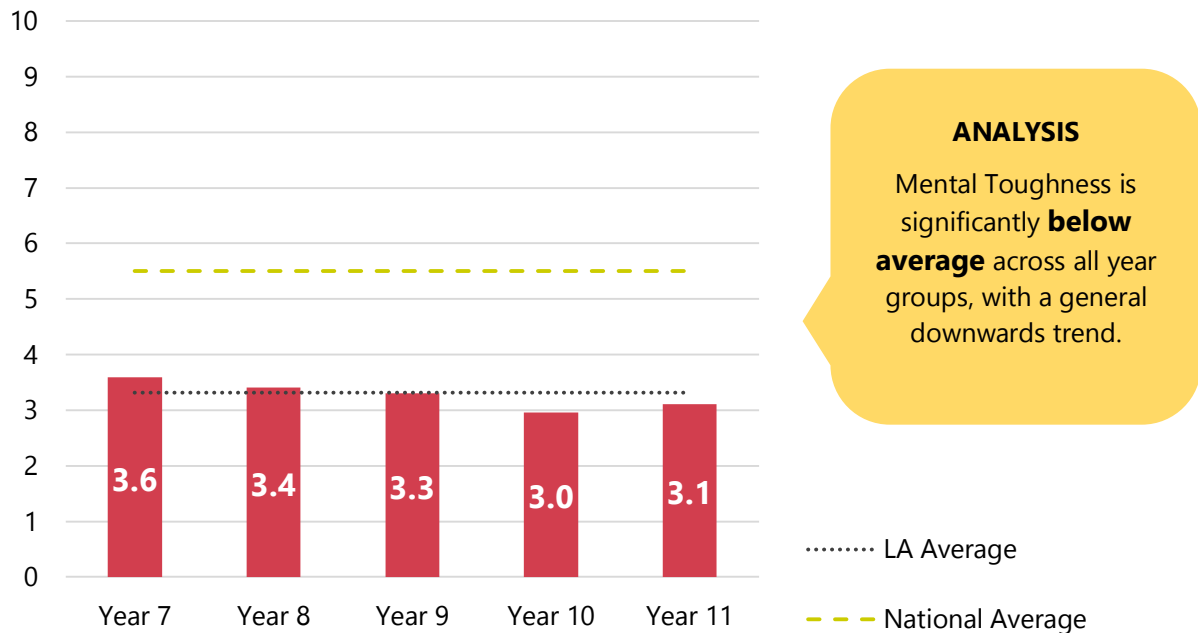
Performance	Behaviour	Well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform better in targeted settings Produce better work Achieve more & cover more Work harder More competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More positive – “can do” Respond more positively to change More likely to engage More likely to accept responsibility Better disciplined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deal better with stress/pressure Mental health issues less likely Can relax more easily Less likely to consciously adopt bullying behaviour
Aspirations & Employment	Transition	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More ambitious Set higher standards More confident Adopt a competitive approach More likely to get a job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deal better with new settings Deal better with new experiences 	

The distribution of mental toughness for this group of pupils can be seen in the charts below, whilst the scores for each individual child can be seen in the excel sheet accompanying this document.



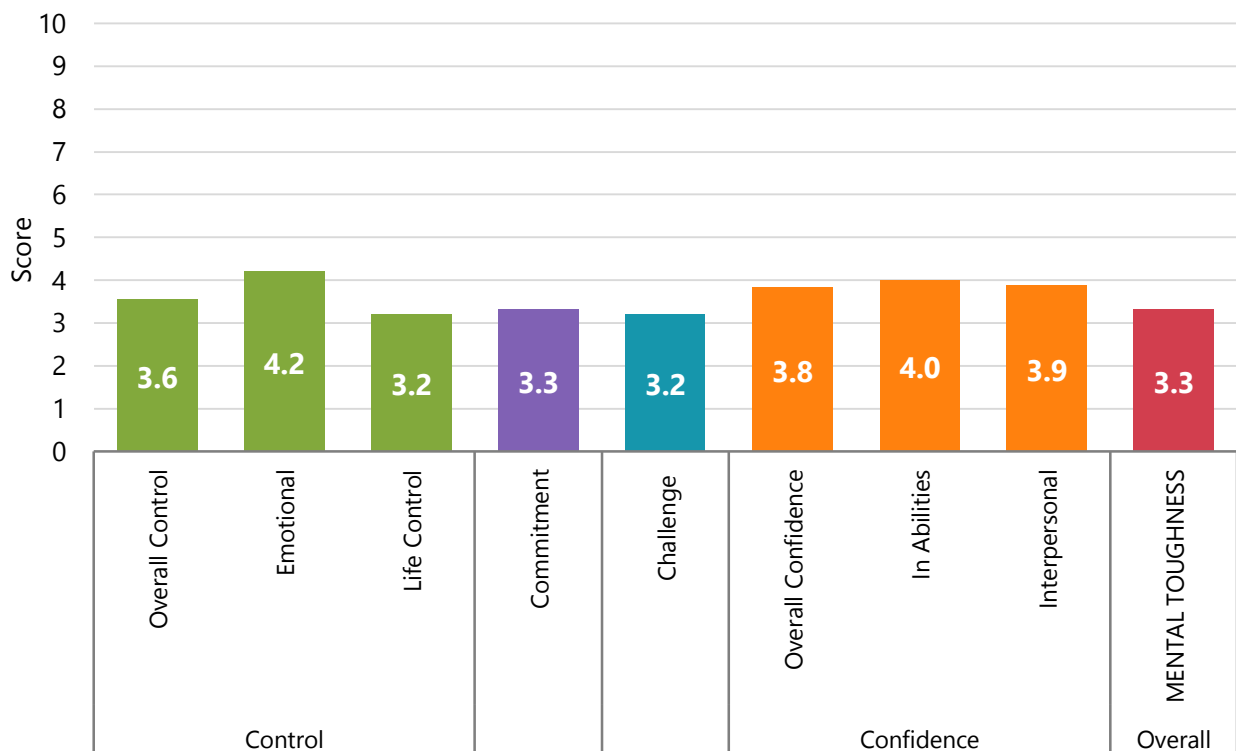
The following chart looks at the variation in mental toughness between year groups.

Overall Mental Toughness Score by Year Group



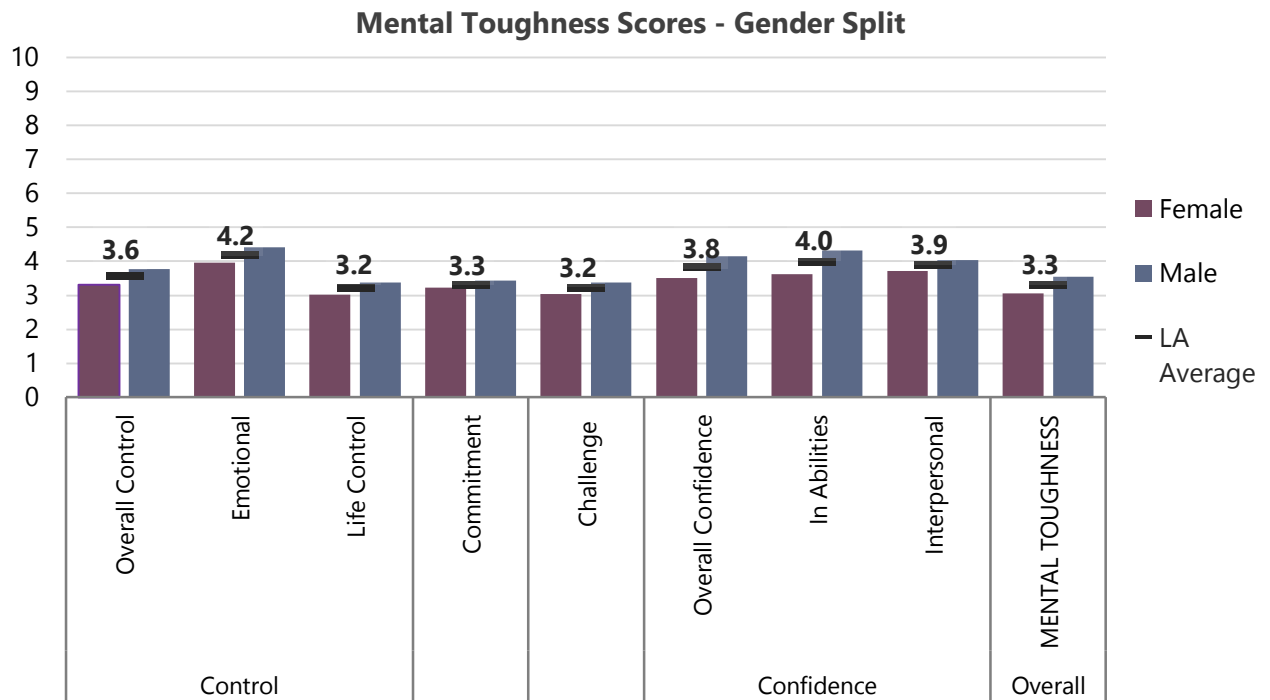
The following chart shows a top line summary of the average scores for each individual component.

Mental Toughness Components Scores



All scores are significantly below the normal mean of 5.5 with **Challenge** and **Commitment** and **Life Control** being the most negatively skewed.

The following charts sets out the variations between boys and girls across the range of mental toughness components. The bars on the right show the overall mental toughness scores.



Males have a **higher** mental toughness score than females across all traits. Both males and females are significantly below average across all traits.

Control

Control focusses on how much pupils feel in control of both their emotions and their ability to affect the direction of their life. Emotional control will have a significant effect upon the behaviour of a pupil, whilst social science is increasingly focusing on life control/locus of control (ie how empowered a pupil feels to effect the direction of their life), as a major influencer of outcomes. Control is split into its 2 component parts; Life Control and Emotional Control.

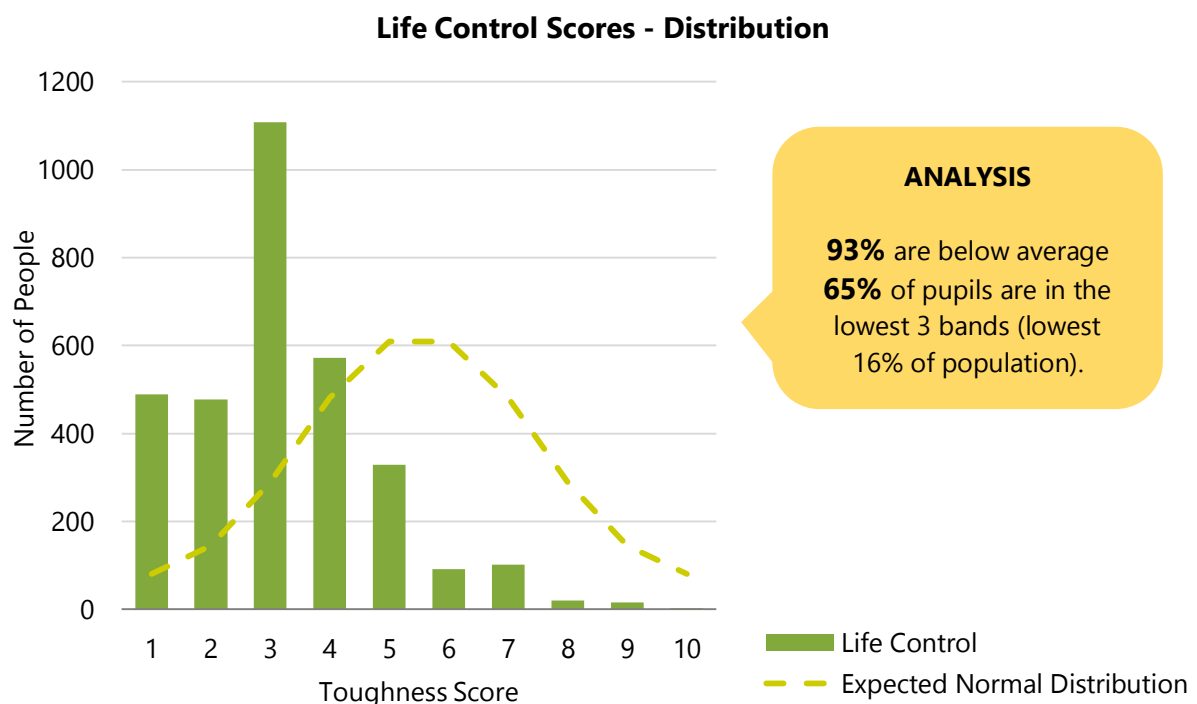
Life Control

Life control looks at how much a child believes that they have the ability to influence the direction and outcomes of their life. Have they got a “can do” attitude or not, and do they feel they can do it without needing to check if it is possible.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with a low life control component versus a child with a high life control component. Whilst having high life control is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of high life control that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Life Control	High Life Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are fatalists – things happen to them Do one thing at a time – panic when overloaded Blame others and circumstances for failures Tend to focus on why things can't be done Cup half empty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believe they make a difference Happily multi-task Good at planning & organisation Cup is half-full. Everything is possible. <i>Works hard</i> to clear blockages Problems exist – they are there to be handled
	Downsides of High Life Control
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take on too much Can be intolerant of those who aren't as positive Can be control freaks & micro manage – take over when others don't step up Can perceived as bullies – “can do” can intimidate Can fail to see own weaknesses

The following chart represents a summary of the overall life control scores for pupils.



Emotional Control

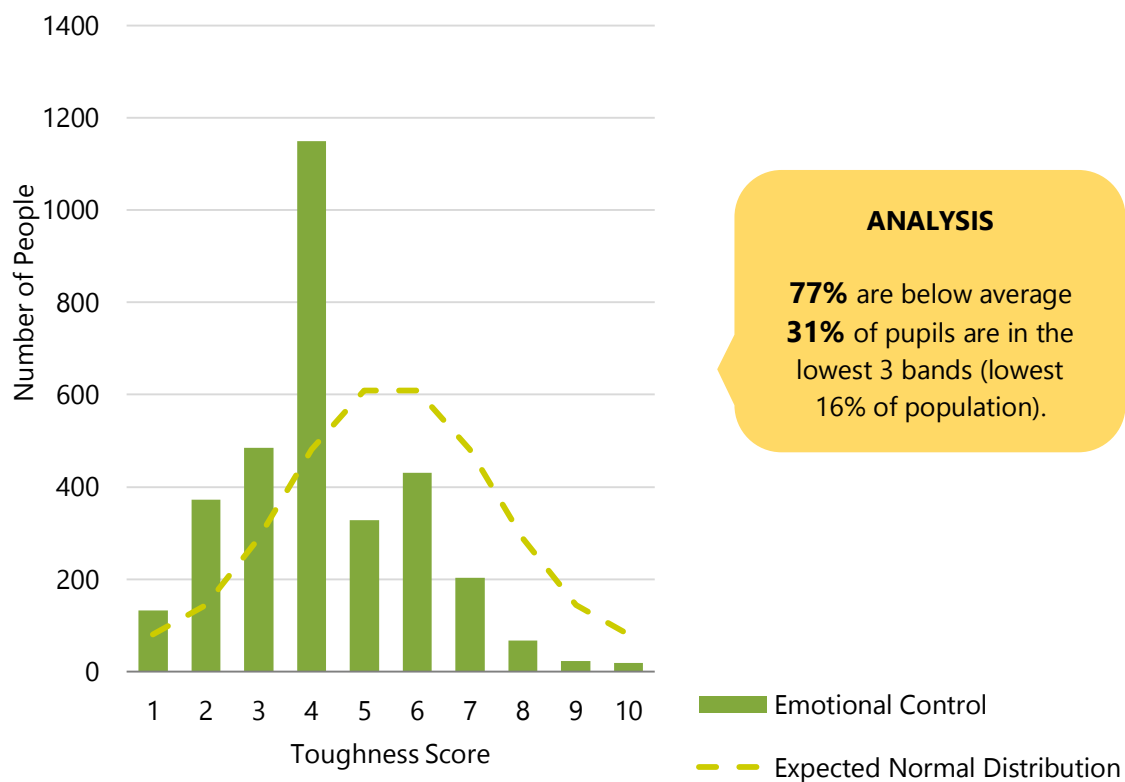
Emotional Control is the child's ability to manage their emotions and impact positively on those around them.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with a low emotional control component versus a child with a high life control component. Whilst having high emotional control is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of high life control that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Emotional Control	High Emotional Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reveal their emotional state to others▪ Negatively affected by the mood of people around them▪ Deal poorly with criticism or negative feedback▪ Feel things happen to them▪ Get down when things go wrong▪ Can lose it when provoked or annoyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Manage their emotional response to situations▪ Manage the mood of people around them - positively▪ Difficult to provoke or annoy▪ Deal well with difficult people▪ Mask anxiety – maintain poise▪ Deal well with bullying behaviour
	Downsides of High Emotional Control <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Difficult to read▪ Can appear insensitive – may show no emotion at all▪ Can stress others with whom they work▪ Can appear impassive or unenthusiastic▪ Can make poor leaders▪ Sometimes have difficulty in communications

The following chart represents a summary of the overall emotional control scores for pupils.

Emotional Control Scores - Distribution



Commitment

Commitment considers the “stick-ability” of pupils to tasks, objectives and goals. To what extent will they “make promises” and keep those promises both to themselves and to others?

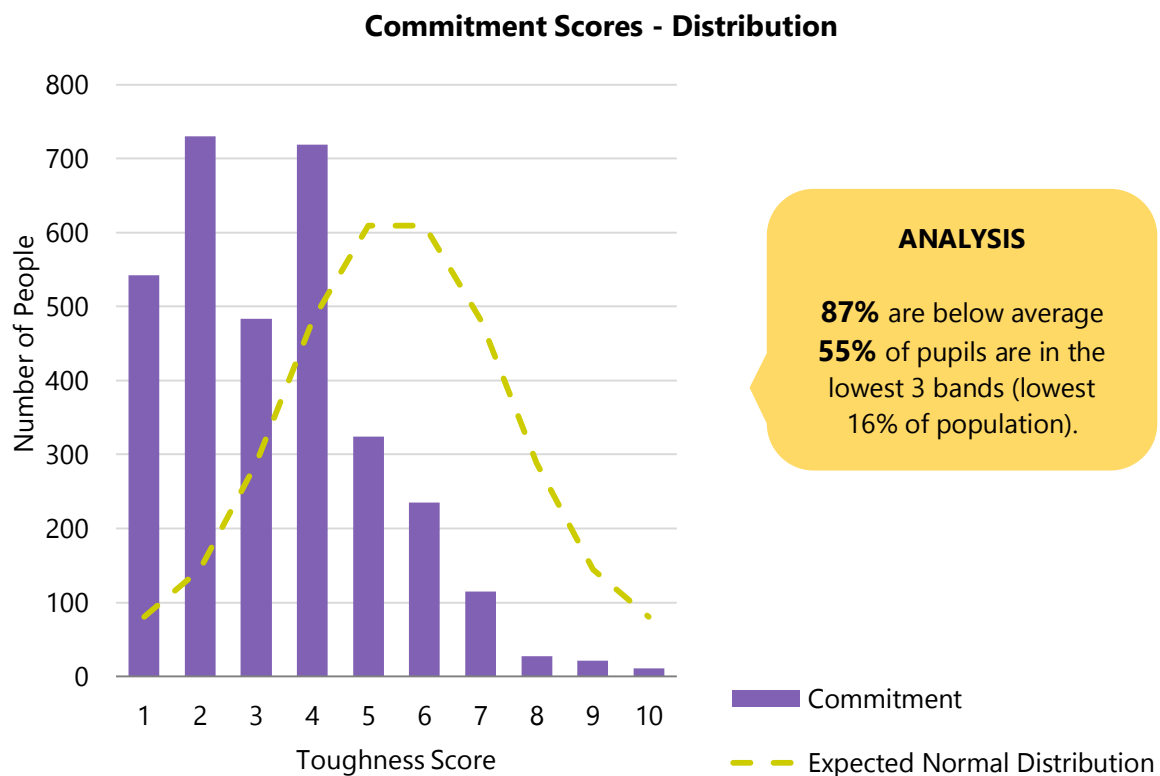
When asked to do something to a target and by a certain time & date, do they instinctively think:

- I’ll go for that and I’ll do what it takes? or
- I’ll never manage that? I’ll look stupid when I fail.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with low commitment versus a child with high commitment. Whilst having high commitment is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of high life control that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Commitment	High Commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will avoid setting goals and targets ▪ Fear that failure will expose them as “failures” ▪ Exams, tests, assignments are intimidating ▪ Give up easily and find a reason for it ▪ Distract attention from the goal – “I would have done it but I did this other thing/ was asked to do something else, etc.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will translate goals and targets into “pictures of success” Will plan for attainment of goals ▪ Exams, tests, assignments are welcomed ▪ Set targets for themselves ▪ Work hard and go for it ▪ Excited by measures, goals and targets
	Downsides of High Commitment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can overcommit ▪ Can fail to see that others aren't motivated in same way ▪ Can have tunnel vision on certain goals and may miss doing things that are equally important or more pressing

The following chart represents a summary of the overall commitment scores for pupils.



Challenge

Challenge focuses on the ability of a child to face up to and overcome challenge. It is also sometimes described as “drive” and tells us about the extent to which a child sees challenges, change, adversity & variety as opportunities or as threats.

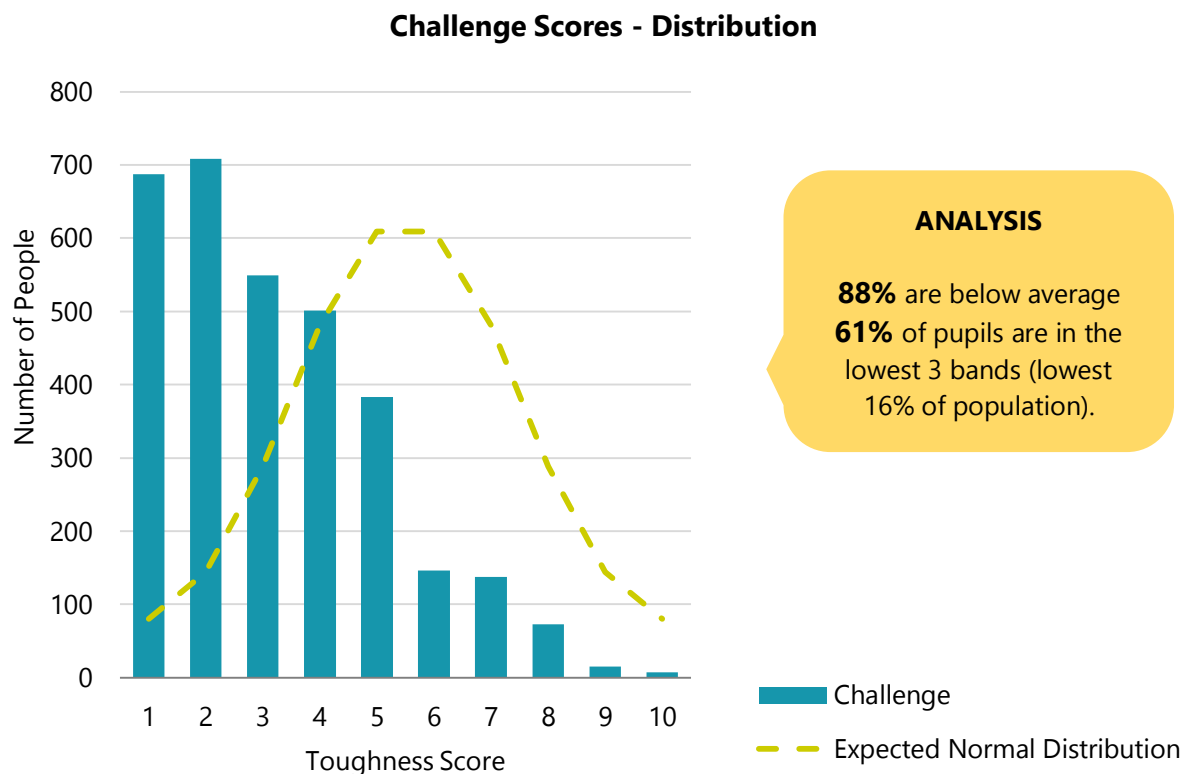
When asked to do something significant or challenging is their immediate response to say:

- That’s great – I look forward to whatever emerges or
- Oh no! I like things the way they are – I’m scared by what might happen.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with a low challenge component versus a child with a high challenge component. Whilst having a high challenge component is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of challenge that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Challenge	High Challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dislike change and variety of any sort ▪ Don’t like shocks & surprises ▪ Dislike new places; people; subjects, etc. ▪ Respond poorly to competitive types ▪ Are risk averse ▪ Avoid effort and anything which attracts attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Like challenge ▪ Like problem solving ▪ Work hard & smart ▪ Risk orientated ▪ Readily volunteer
	Downsides of High Challenge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can take on too much ▪ Will take on too much risk – can sometimes fail ▪ May not assess risk and opportunity well enough ▪ Easily bored – will often create too much change ▪ As managers will often create initiative overload

The following chart represents a summary of the overall challenge scores for pupils.



Confidence

The confidence component of a child can also be considered to be their “Self-Belief”, which describes to what extent the child believes they have the ability to deal with challenge and the inner strength to stand their ground when needed. It is split into their Confidence in their Abilities (efficacy), and their Interpersonal Confidence. Confidence is split into its 2 component parts; Confidence in Abilities and Interpersonal Confidence.

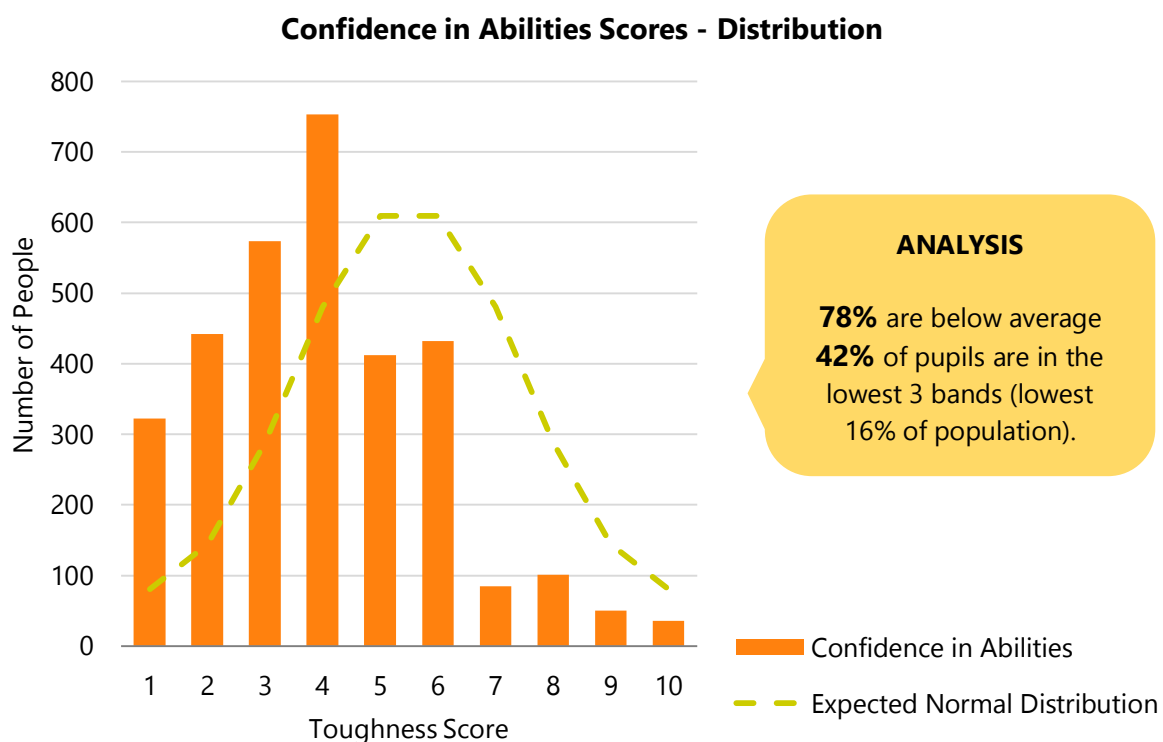
Confidence in abilities

Confidence in abilities describes how confident a pupil feels in getting on with things, and how much support they feel they need and how likely their confidence is to belie their ability.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with low confidence in abilities versus a child with high confidence in abilities. Whilst having high confidence in abilities is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of high life control that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Confidence in Abilities	High Confidence in Abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be reluctant to express a view in a discussion Low self-belief Not confident that they know subject matter even when they do Inner belief missing – need others to build that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't need others to tell them they can do it Happy to engage in discussion Little or no need for external validation Work hard to use their abilities to the full
	Downsides of High Confidence in Abilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take on too much Can be intolerant of those who aren't as able Potentially arrogant Can be perceived as bullies Can fail to see own weaknesses Can believe they are right, even when they are wrong

The following chart represents a summary of the overall confidence in ability scores for pupils.



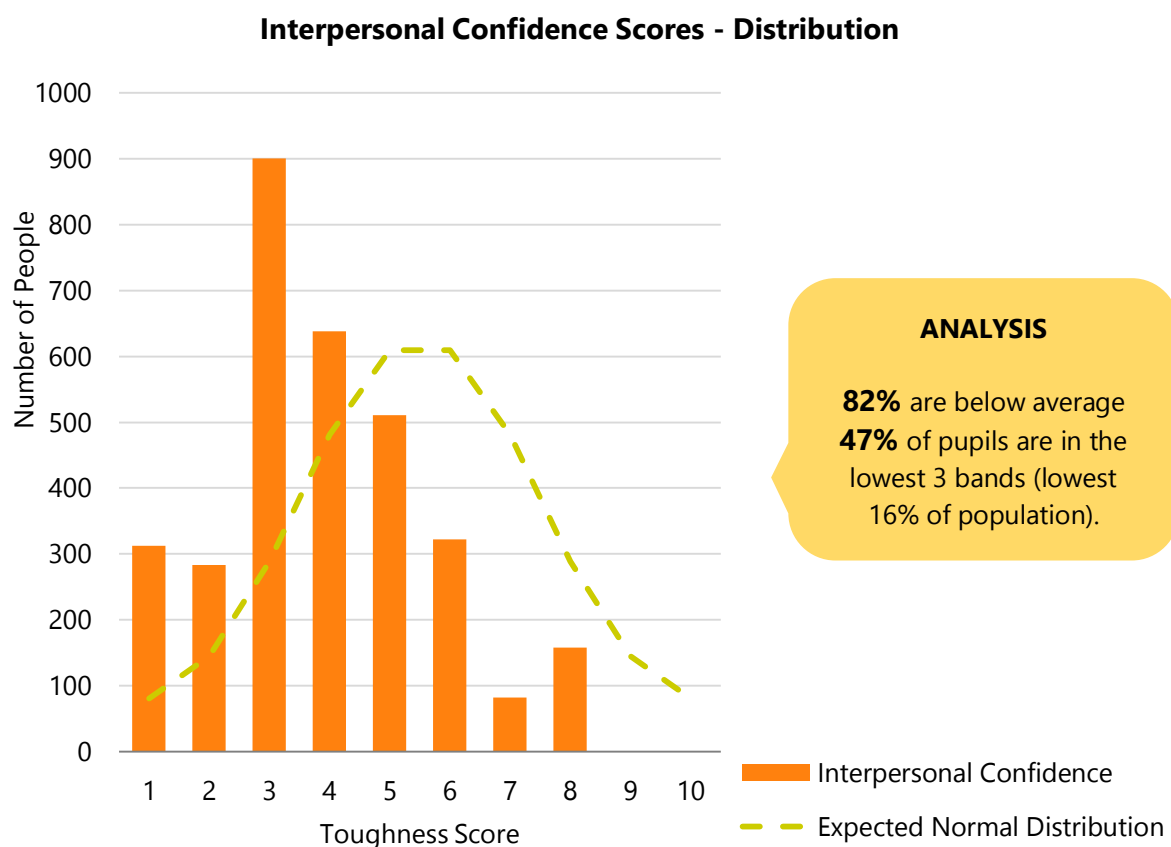
Interpersonal Confidence

Interpersonal confidence describes the ability of a pupil to interact with others and stand their ground when challenged.

The following table sets out what can be expected from a child with a low interpersonal confidence versus a child with interpersonal confidence. Whilst having high interpersonal confidence is clearly desirable, the table also sets out the downsides of high life control that need to be managed with a child possessing such traits.

Low Interpersonal Confidence	High Interpersonal Confidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Back down quickly when challenged ▪ Will allow others to dominate debates even when they are more knowledgeable and more expert ▪ Have difficulty dealing with assertive people ▪ Won't ask questions in group settings ▪ Will accept criticism even when it's not deserved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will argue their corner ▪ Will get their own way ▪ Won't allow others to orally dominate ▪ Will have a "go" and enter a conversation ▪ Will usually provide a full response to questions
	Downsides of High Interpersonal Confidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will get one's own way – even when others may have a better case or are right ▪ Won't allow others to orally dominate ▪ Can rely on the "gift of the gab" ▪ Will interrupt a great deal ▪ Poor at listening ▪ Can be seen as "aggressive" & as "verbal bullies"

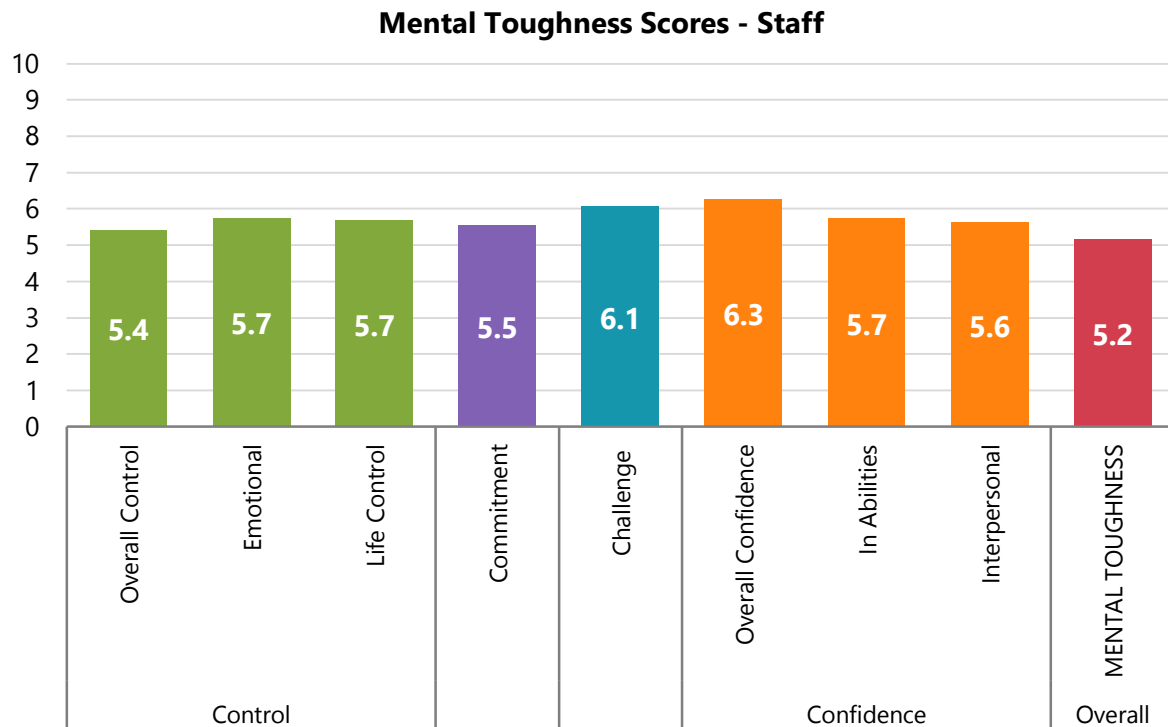
The following chart represents a summary of the overall interpersonal confidence for pupils.



3B) The Staff Results

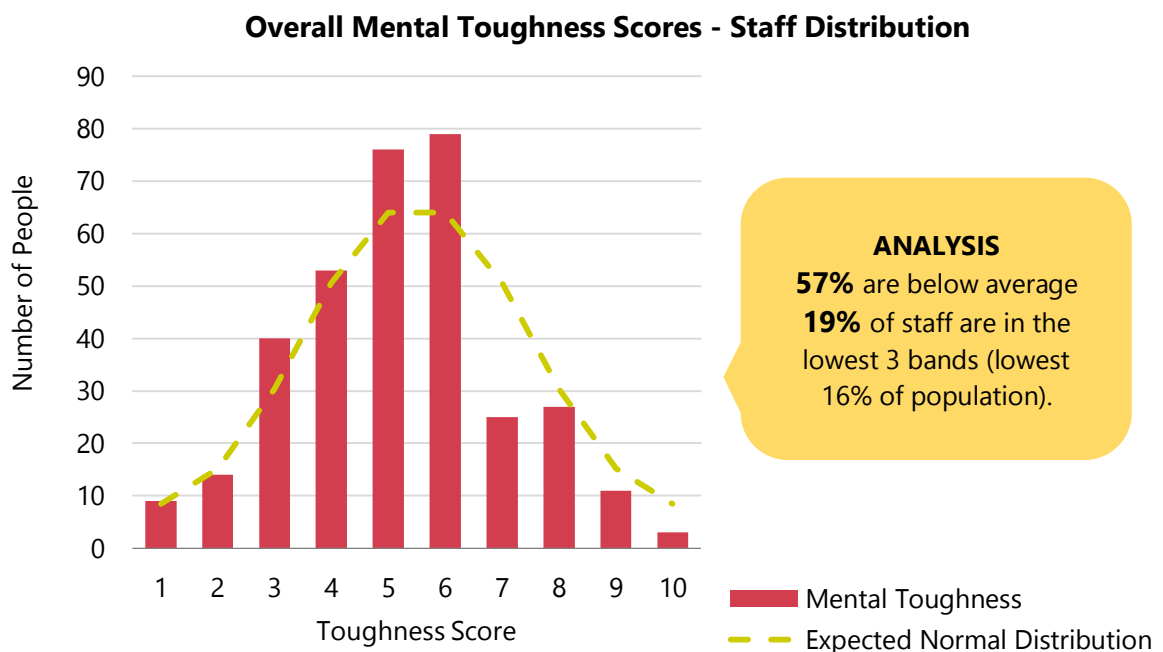
The results of the staff are important as their role in promoting Mental Toughness in other staff and pupils will be driven by them modelling the positive behaviours of mental toughness and being able to identify and positively reinforce those behaviours in the pupils and staff around them.

The following sets out the headline results for staff, starting with a view of all of the capabilities.

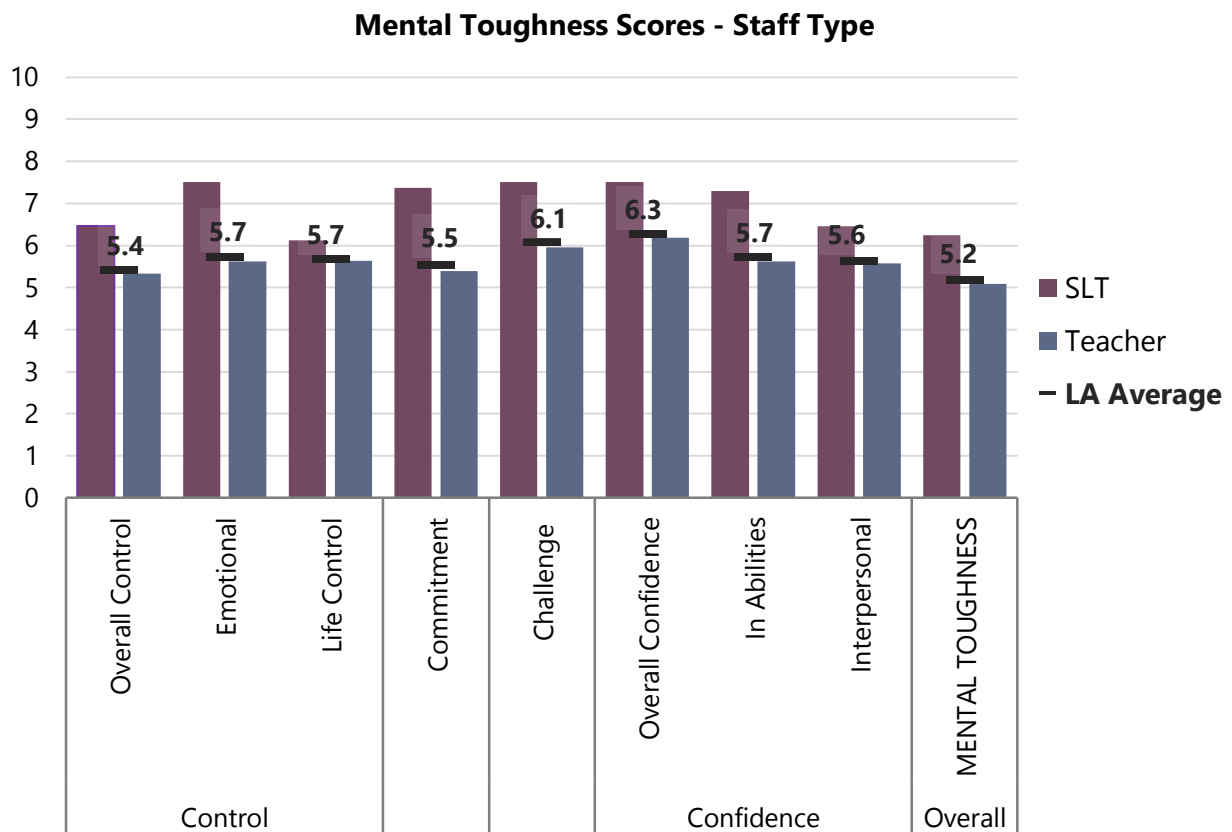


Staff are above average in most areas of mental toughness with the most positive results being in the areas of **Challenge** and **Confidence**

The chart sets out the distribution of mental toughness scores for all staff.



The following chart shows the comparison of senior management staff compared to teaching staff.



SLT are above other teachers in all areas of mental toughness with the biggest differences in the areas of **Commitment** and **Emotional Control**.

4) Reacting to the Results

First Priority - Child Protection

The first priority for a school in responding to the results is to consider the child protection implications. The tool has been particularly effective at identifying young people whose social and emotional development is below expectation, but who have not disclosed issues to the school nor have behaved in such a way that the school might have investigated potential child protection concerns.

Right to Succeed provides pupil level feedback that is rag rated and order by level of concern, whilst the school also has access to development reports for each child.

The charity asks that, upon receipt of the data, that the school's pastoral team and child protection officer consider whether those with weak mental toughness scores might have a welfare-related factor in their lives that is affecting their emotional and social development. For the pastoral team to consider:

- 1) Are there any pupils with scores of 4 or below that surprise you?
- 2) Do these pupils have known welfare issues/development issues that might affect their social & emotional development?
- 3) Is their score likely to be valid? Do they behave in the ways described in the behaviour descriptors for pupils with low scores?

If so, the child protection officer should consider whether to investigate if there is a previously unknown issue affecting the pupil's social and emotional development.

It is important to bear in mind that although the mental toughness questionnaire is a highly validated measure, like every psychometric measure it is not perfect and the results should not be treated as gospel.

Appendix 1 shows a framework that we recommend to pastoral teams to help discuss potential areas of concern with pupils.

Considering Intervention – qualitative understanding

The data contained in this report is just quantitative data. For a school to fully understand the themes and trends seen within, it is best to consult pupils by feeding back what the data shows, getting their thoughts on what it means and agreeing how to do something about it.

A constructive use of the data can be to feedback whole school composites of the data to the school's student council for their thoughts, and/or to feedback form by form composites of the data to each form group to enable a discussion about what the results mean and how the school and pupils can react to promote greater mental toughness.

Right to Succeed can also recommend a team who support young people to carry out qualitative research on behalf of the school. They have recently worked in Belfast to enable young people to carry out qualitative research with their peers in the community to understand how they might improve the lives of young people. This could be a useful research function more broadly for the school's management team to have at its disposal.

What works in promoting Mental Toughness in an education setting?

The mental toughness results for pupils across Blackpool are truly shocking. There is clearly a culture in the town that is leading young people towards having a negative mindset that will affect their development and ability to achieve in school and beyond. In order to significantly improve pupil outcomes, the mindset of pupils has to be changed. It is clear that schools will have to work to change the culture, constantly promoting a different mindset and positively reinforcing that mindset at all opportunities.

The following section sets out a framework for considering how the mindset of pupils can be improved. With the support of our partners, Right to Succeed has brought together the evidence of what works in promoting mental toughness and resilience, and what works in transforming educational outcomes. The framework considers what this might mean for school culture, staff development, pastoral support, classroom practice, extra-curricular provision and for parental engagement.

Mental Health Concerns	Support staff to recognise mental health issues in themselves, their colleagues and their pupils.
	Support designated staff to make effective referrals to the right service and ensure that the referral is followed through.

Understanding great practice and replicating it

We ask schools to consider the framework by asking what aspects do they already do and also how well they do them.

The second question is challenging, as it needs to reflect whether the practice is embedded across the whole school and how it compares to best practice. Right to Succeed offers to help the school consider how their practice benchmarks against the best practice available.

However, replicating great practice is an incredibly challenging task and its complexity is very often underestimated, with the education evidence landscape strewn with well-meaning projects that were poorly replicated and failed. Building on the learning from where it has worked, we would recommend that schools always take the following approach.

1) **Be focused**

Take on as few interventions as you can and carry them out to the highest possible quality. If you would like to take on several interventions, set out a programme prioritising what interventions you will take on and when.

2) **Select the right partner to support delivery**

Work with a partner who has experience of running the intervention successfully in several contexts. That might involve them training/supporting your staff or co-delivering the intervention. Avoid trying to replicate from user manuals alone as it has a very poor track record of success.

3) **Pilot**

Pilot the intervention, ensuring that you are working at a scale where it is meaningful but also manageable. Focus upon learning how to make the intervention work in your context. Avoid rolling out across the whole school from day one.

4) **Choose the right Champions**

Choose the champions from within your staff who can successfully run the pilot but can also be responsible for its roll out. They should be chosen for their passion for the intervention and their ability to work with staff in rolling it out further down the line.

5) **Monitor and improve**

Monitor the intervention, making sure that it works. Investigate what the data means with staff and pupils, make improvements and then monitor again. Be passionate about understanding how to make it work better through evidence-led practice.

Conclusion

Transforming the mindset of pupils is no easy task, and requires the school to challenge and overcome the culture in which the pupils have been born and raised. There are however many examples of schools who have successfully overcome such challenges.

What is clear is the need for a strong vision and values of the culture that the school aims to create that starts to define the way forwards for the school and helps to make clear the interventions and approach that would be best suited for the school.

Right to Succeed will work with the schools and help support the resource they require to work towards transforming the mindset of its pupils and therefore their ability to achieve the outcomes we all strive for. Mental Toughness will be measured on an annual basis across all schools, whilst time-limited interventions focused on developing mental toughness will be measured more frequently.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, any of the interventions listed or Right to Succeed in general, please contact:

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Appendix 1

Resilience Framework for Children and Young People²

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2012 – adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas 2007									
SPECIFIC APPROACHES					NOBLE TRUTHS				
BASICS		BELONGING		LEARNING	COPING		CORE SELF		
Good enough housing		Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong		Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them		Instil a sense of hope		
	Enough money to live	Help child/YP understand their place in the world			Being brave		Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings		
Being safe		Tap into good influences		Engage mentors for children/YP	Solving problems				
		Keep relationships going							
Access & transport		The more healthy relationships the better		Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses		Help the child/YP to know her/himself		
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope			Fostering their interests				
Healthy diet		Get together people the child/YP can count on		Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Calming down & self-soothing		Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself		
		Responsibilities & obligations							
Exercise and fresh air		Focus on good times and places		Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day		Foster their talents		
	Enough sleep	Make sense of where child/YP has come from			Lean on others when necessary				
Play & leisure		Predict a good experience of someone or something new		Develop life skills	Have a laugh		There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them		
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs							
ACCEPTING		CONSERVING		COMMITMENT		ENLISTING			

² <http://www.boingboing.org.uk/index.php/resources/category/9-resilience-frameworks?download=81:rf-cyp>

Appendix 2

Resilience Framework for Adults³

Resilience Framework (Adults) – Copyright Hart, Blincow & Cameron (adapted from original) www.boingboing.org.uk						
SPECIFIC APPROACHES						
BASICS		BELONGING		LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
Good enough housing	Find somewhere to belong		Make work & learning as successful as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope	
	Help understand place in the world, & that others may face similar situations					
Enough money to live	Tap into good influences (eg peer support)		Engage mentors	Being brave	Promote understanding of others	
Being safe	Keep relationships going (eg educator /support partners/carers/family)					
Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better		Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses (reframing/reappraising)	Help the person to know her/himself	
	Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope					
Healthy diet	Get together people the person can count on		Help self-organisation	Calming down & self-soothing (support reflection, not feeling overwhelmed by illness)	Help the person take responsibility for her/himself (self-advocacy)	
Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations					
	Focus on good times and places		Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster talents	
Enough sleep	Make sense of where the person has come from					
Leisure & work occupations	Predict a good experience of someone or something new		Develop life skills	Lean on others when necessary	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them	
	Make friends and mix					
NOBLE TRUTHS						
ACCEPTING	CONSERVING		COMMITMENT	ENLISTING		
Interpersonal skills, empathy	Interpersonal skills, trust		Ongoing support issues	Self (eg not passive), family, friends, mental health professionals, GP		

Appendix 3 – Further Reading

Vision and Values in Coastal Schools

http://www.future-leaders.org.uk/documents/187/Combatting_Coastal_Isolation_-_Future_Leaders_Trust.pdf

https://www.cornwall.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Coastal%20Academies%20Report_2015_final_2%20Tanya%20Ovenden-Hope%20and%20Rowena%20Passy.pdf

Promoting Character, Resilience and Mental Toughness

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Classroom Practice

General Practice

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Raising Student Expectations

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Feedback and formative assessment

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Meta-cognition/Learning to Learn

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Peer Tutoring/Peer Learning

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring/>
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Social and Emotional Learning Programmes

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning/>
<http://www.casel.org/middle-and-high-school-edition-casel-guide>
<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/culture/according-experts/culture-and-early-socio-emotional-development>

Parental involvement

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/parental-involvement/>
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf
http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/236258/engaging_with_families.pdf