

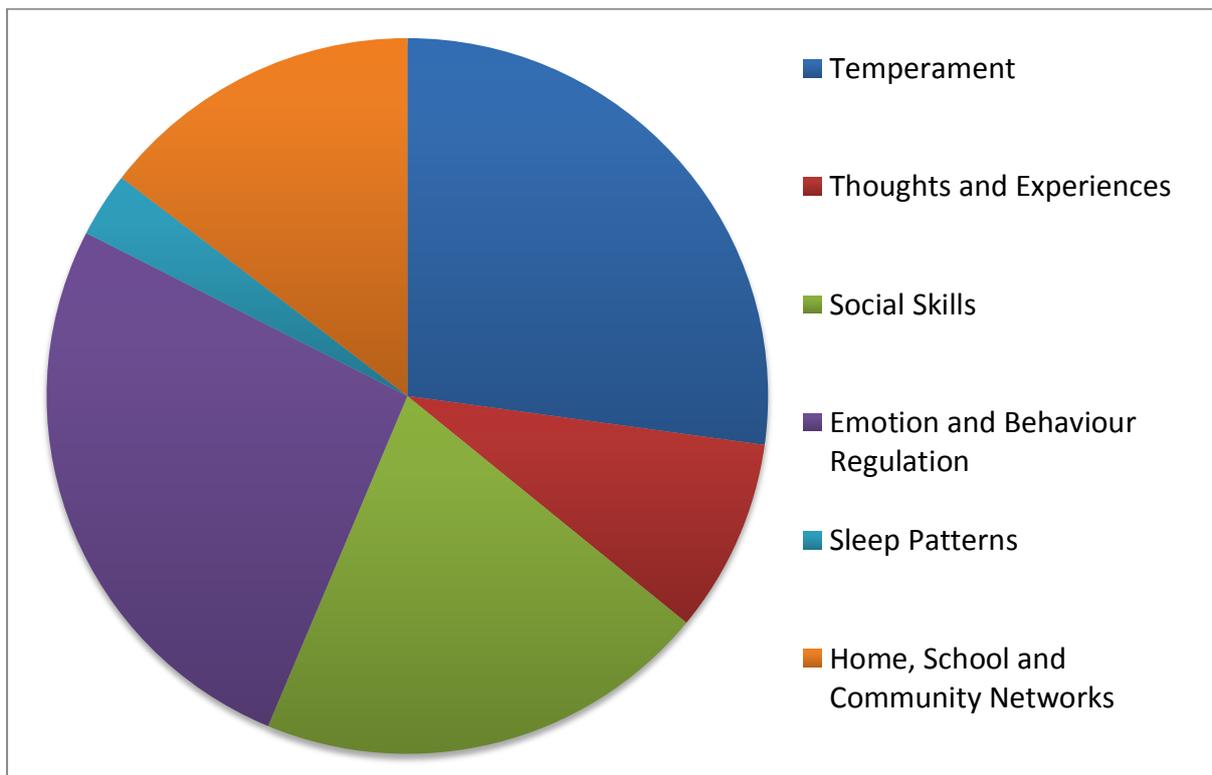
What does the MCS measure?

What type of information was collected within the MCS?

The Middle Childhood Survey (MCS) collected information about children’s mental health and wellbeing. It was designed to measure individual variation in thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences, as well as social skills, sleep patterns, and family and community networks. The results cannot be used to diagnose individuals with any types of illness, and will not be used to “label” children. Instead, the survey questions provide an index of mental health in this NSW population of children aged around 11 years.

The MCS questions have been used in other studies with children of similar ages from many different countries, including Australia, China, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Netherlands, and others. The MCS procedures have been developed with input from the study’s Stakeholder Reference Groups who represent the views of Schools/Teachers and Parents/Communities, as well as the study Scientific Committee, and the Government, Catholic, and Independent education sectors, and Indigenous Australians.

Domains of function assessed by the Middle Childhood Survey



Each domain has between one and six sub-domains. On the following pages, you will find example questions for each sub-domain of function assessed by the MCS. Children were asked to tell us how true or not true the statements were for them.

Temperament

Children's attitudes and behavioural tendencies play an important role in shaping their view of the world and themselves, and influence their approach to learning. How children see themselves, and express their beliefs and values, may change as they grow up and can be quite different from others' perspectives. Example items include:

Introversion – Extraversion

I am a shy person

I like to talk with others

Disorderliness – Conscientiousness

I am messy

I check my work to make sure it is right

Antagonism – Agreeableness

I am friendly to others in my school

I forgive others when they do something wrong

Emotional Instability – Emotional Stability

I get nervous about many things

I cry a lot

Consistency – Openness

I know many things

I like learning new things

Negative self-esteem – Positive self-esteem

There are lots of things I can do well

Thoughts and Experiences

Children's thoughts and experiences are sometimes expressions of creativity, and it is normal for childhood beliefs to change as a child grows up. Some childhood beliefs that may seem irrational or "make-believe" to an adult can be real for a child. Example items include:

Fantasy – Realism

Have you ever felt that you were under the control of some special power?

Have you ever felt that you had special powers that other people don't have?

Social Skills

Children's ability to interact socially with others influences how easily they can form relationships with other children, teachers and other adults. Children who have advanced social skills and are able to resolve conflicts with others are more likely to maximise their learning potential at school, and are often better able to cope with stressful experiences. Example items include:

Socially disconnected at school – Socially connected at school

My school is a place where other students accept me as I am

My school is a place where I am popular with other students

My school is a place where people can depend on me

Difficulties relating with peers – Positive peer relationships

I would rather be alone than with people of my age

I have one good friend or more

Non-social behaviour – Prosocial behaviour

I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings

I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)

I often feel worried about people that are not as lucky as me, and feel sorry for them

Emotion and Behaviour Regulation

Children's ability to identify, express and manage their feelings and their actions appropriately to their situation has a major impact on the choices they make throughout their lives, how well they cope with and enjoy life, and their capacity to maximise their learning at school. These questions asked children about their feelings (including physical sensations associated with their emotions), their ability to maintain attention and concentration, and to control their physical actions. Example items include:

Fearful, sad – Content, happy

I worry a lot

I am often unhappy, depressed or tearful

Oppositional, defiant – Compliant, even-tempered

I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want

I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere

I usually do as I am told

Distractible, hyperactive – Attentive, applied

I am restless, I cannot stay still for long

I think before I do things

Disinhibited – Self-regulated

When trying to study, I have difficulty tuning out background noise and concentrating
When someone tells me to stop doing something, it is easy for me to stop

Intolerant of frustration or limits – Frustration tolerant

When I am excited, it's hard for me to wait my turn to speak
It's hard for me not to open presents before I'm supposed to
The more I try to stop myself from doing something I shouldn't, the more likely I am to do it

Sleep Patterns

Sleep is important to children's well-being, allowing their body and mind to rest, and enabling healthy growth and development. Poor or inadequate sleep may lead to emotional difficulties (e.g., mood swings), behavioural problems (e.g., hyperactivity), and cognitive problems that impact on children's ability to learn. Example items include:

Sleep deprived – Well rested

I fall asleep or get drowsy during class

Home, School and Community Networks

Children live in different environments, but the support of a family member or another adult from the community can affect the child's well-being and their ability to cope with difficult situations. These items ask about supportive people and places in the child's life. Example items include:

Lack of support at home – Support at home

In my home, there is a parent or another adult who wants me to do my best
In my home, there is a parent or another adult who I can talk to about my problems

Lack of support at school – Support at school

At my school, there is a teacher or another adult who listens to me when I have something to say
At my school, there is a teacher or another adult who tells me when I've done a good job

Lack of support in the community – Support in the community

In my neighbourhood/community (NOT from your school or family), there is an adult who really cares about me
In my neighbourhood/community (NOT from your school or family), there is an adult who believes that I will be a success

Disconnected from nature – Connected to nature

Being in nature makes me feel peaceful