

MORTAL  
FOOLS



# MELVA

Mental Health and  
Wellbeing Education  
through storytelling

"The programme is engaging  
to all, easy to use, and a  
lovely take on how PSHE  
should be shared in schools."

Primary School Teacher

[www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk)

# Teach your children the MELVA motto...

→ **Brave** isn't how you feel,  
**it's what you do**

"MELVA has been an amazing resource. The training and support for staff has been great. The online resources are fantastic and the children engage so well with them."

Primary School Headteacher



## At a glance Information Pack contents:

- 3 - Introduction to MELVA
- 6 - Why become a MELVA School?
- 7 - What Schools Get Access To
- 8 - Why MELVA Works
- 9 - Overview of Core Programme Areas
- 13 - Recommended Programme of Study
- 14 - Impact Maps

# Introduction to MELVA

MELVA is an award-winning, creative, digital programme, using engaging storytelling, fun characters, and practical activities to improve children and young people's knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing whilst teaching effective self-management techniques.

MELVA provides a user-friendly, early intervention and prevention approach, designed to be used by schools with primary school aged children, and older students in specialist settings.



For more information  
and testimonials visit:  
[www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk)

To book a discovery call,  
email the MELVA team:  
[melva@mortalfools.org.uk](mailto:melva@mortalfools.org.uk)



Trusted by  
hundreds of  
schools and  
thousands of  
children across  
the UK...

**MELVA is facilitated through creative and practical activities, with an emphasis on *learning by doing*. It equips children with *tools for life*, helping to foster resilience and positive relationships.**

The resources and evaluation tools are rooted in ratified and recognised wellbeing research, such as the PERMA™ framework and the NHS 5 steps to wellbeing.

MELVA offers schools a comprehensive, high impact intervention that is:

- Ready-made
- Simple to use
- Aligns with the curriculum
- And, most importantly... is loads of **fun**!



Neuroscience is clear that learning happens more quickly and more effectively when we're having fun.

### What (or who) is MELVA?

The MELVA programme centres around the character of Melva Mapletree: a young girl whose struggles with anxiety, trauma and bereavement (or 'worrits' as she calls them) are keeping her from experiencing life to the fullest.

Through the magic of storytelling, students learn alongside Melva as she works through various trials, tribulations and adventures and, in doing so, discovers how to deal with her worrits.

In MELVA, we use playful stories and characters as a gateway and a structure into having conversations about deep or difficult subjects. By addressing these topics **through the character of Melva** and her adventures, it gives children - and teachers - a non-exposing way to open up about their own worrits.



# Why become a MELVA school?

**There is a children's wellbeing crisis in the UK. We urgently need new, accessible, multi-agency approaches to tackling this crisis.**

MELVA is a proven, fun, and impactful way for teachers to work with **whole classes**, addressing wellbeing issues *before* children reach crisis point and reducing referrals to over-stretched statutory services.

Melva is ideal for **all schools** looking to support their students to develop their emotional literacy and resilience and, as an early intervention and prevention approach, it is designed for all students, not just those who are struggling.

Visit our website

**[www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk)** for up-to-date pricing information and details of available funding to help your school access a MELVA licence for free\*.

\* Subject to a small administration fee

"It helped me to recognise my emotions and understand my feelings. The sessions are fun because there are so many different activities to do. I think all children should get the chance to do MELVA."

Year 6 pupil



## What do Melva schools get access to?

A licence to use the MELVA programme lasts for one academic year and is renewed annually unless cancelled.

This licence gives your school full access to:

- All MELVA programme areas and resources, housed in one easy to access online portal (see pages 9-12 of this booklet for more detail)
- Comprehensive Teacher CPD training and materials to support staff
- Pupil and staff evaluations to evidence impact, including a summary report at the end of the academic year
- Flexible, easy-to-use resources that align with RSE/PSHE curriculum objectives, and can complement wider wellbeing initiatives such as Thrive
- Termly newsletters and opportunities to connect with other MELVA schools
- Ongoing support from the MELVA team, including 1:1 surgery slots and a dedicated MELVA email.

Scan QR code to express an interest in using MELVA in your school...



"The children love Melva. The format is engaging, it's attractive, and it explores topics like anxiety in a relaxed and fun way!"

Deputy Headteacher



# Why MELVA works...

MELVA has helped thousands of children develop better emotional understanding, resilience, and the confidence to talk openly about their feelings. Some of the key features which enable this are:

- **Practical training for staff**, ready-made resources, and opportunities for practice sharing with other MELVA schools help school staff feel supported through the process of tackling mental health topics in school.
- **Child-friendly, shared language** enables open, non-exposing conversations about worries and anxiety.
- **Engaging storytelling with fun and relatable characters** supports young people to self-reflect and develop empathy, as well as increasing children's capacity for learning by making it fun!
- **Practical activities** which focus on early intervention teach children effective self-management techniques to prevent emotional and physical responses from escalating.
- **Built-in evaluation tools** offer measurable insights into children's wellbeing, understanding, and the overall impact of the MELVA programme.

"Children are now more able to discuss their wellbeing and verbalise examples to support the discussions we have had in class. They are using practical strategies such as finger breathing when they need to and will relate what they're thinking to things they have talked about on MELVA. The class really benefited from taking part"

Primary School Teacher



**MELVA's impact is demonstrated by our school testimonials and backed up by evidence:**

- Average +94% improvement in children's understanding of mental health and wellbeing topics\*
- Average +99% improvement in children's knowledge of practical tools and techniques to manage and maintain their mental health and wellbeing\*

\*Evaluation data provided by schools across academic year 2023-24

# Overview of the MELVA programme areas:



## Introducing Melva

Recommended for:  
**Key Stage 1**

A collection of simple, standalone activities featuring characters, themes and settings from the MELVA world, suitable for Key Stage 1 and designed to help develop early stages of emotional literacy.

## Explore Scratchicle Town: Animation Series

Recommended for:  
**Year 3 +**

Suggested # of lessons (1 hour):  
**8**

This programme is designed to give students a basic introduction to the 5 key steps for improving and supporting your mental wellbeing.

These 5 steps are defined by the NHS as:

- Connect with other people
- Be physically active
- Learn new skills
- Give to others
- Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Learning is facilitated through short animations featuring different characters who live in Melva's home town, each representing different elements of the 5 key steps, followed by practical group and individual activities.

**Key Learning Objective(s): Pupils will learn about**

- The 5 ways to wellbeing and how each of them can be applied in their own lives.



## Melva's Mountain Adventure: Digital Theatre Film

Recommended for:  
**Year 4 +\***

Suggested # of  
lessons (1 hour):  
**8**

This programme is designed to delve into more detail about mental health and wellbeing, specifically focusing on worries and anxiety, and self-management techniques.

In role as Mountain Rescue Trainees, pupils will watch the five-part **filmed theatre show** which follows Melva Mapletree as she searches for her Grandpa Pebble on the treacherous Mount Scratchicle. To stay safe on the mountain and help save her Grandpa, Melva must learn practical ways manage and overcome her worrits.

Each lesson includes structured classroom activities that help to consolidate and expand on learning from the show, giving children space to discuss what they've watched, apply it to their own lives, and learn techniques for self-management of their worrits.

### Key Learning Objective(s): Pupils will learn about

- How worries, anxiety and negative self-talk can affect them physically and mentally.
- The practical steps they can take to self-manage these responses

**\*MELVA team recommendation:** This programme covers a lot of fundamental learning and therefore, the first year your school uses MELVA, we recommend delivering 'Melva's Mountain Adventure' with Years 4–6.



"The class teacher noticed that towards the end of Year 5, tricky friendships were less of an issue. Now that those children are in Year 6, they are more able to solve problems within a group themselves."

Primary School Headteacher



## The Quest for Barnabas Boggle: Online Game

Recommended for:  
**Year 5 +**

Suggested # of  
lessons (1 hour):  
**8–10**

This programme focuses on positive decision-making and encourages pupils to explore how their relationships with others can affect their mental wellbeing. Facilitated through a choose-your-own-adventure style digital game, pupils take on the role of Melva's 'niggling voice', guiding her choices and actions throughout the story.

As Melva searches for clues to find her missing friend, Barnabas Boggle, pupils help her navigate challenges by making thoughtful decisions. Practical activities are embedded within the game to reinforce learning, and accompanying lesson plans offer discussion prompts at key decision-making moments.

### Key Learning Objective(s): Pupils will learn about

- Why empathy is important for positive relationships
- How external influences can impact our wellbeing
- The importance of critical thinking skills



# The Melva Book: Illustrated Novel

**Recommended for:**  
**Year 6 +**

**Suggested # of lessons (1 hour):**  
**12 (average 2 chapters per lesson)**

This programme combines RSE/PSHE with literacy, comprehension and oracy, as it is facilitated through an illustrated MELVA **novel**.

This MELVA story focuses on Melva Mapletree’s personal experiences as she approaches her twelfth birthday and faces some new life changes and challenges. The book and accompanying activities support older children through key life transitions, exploring themes of friendship, grief, puberty, and emotional wellbeing with humour and sensitivity.

This programme also touches on the mental health topics of self-harming behaviours and suicidal ideation, and comes with practical support for teachers to sensitively and confidently address these subjects.

**Key Learning Objective(s): Pupils will learn about**

- How to successfully navigate changes in friendships and key relationships
- Ways to understand and work through big emotions such as grief, loss, fear and uncertainty
- How their feelings about themselves (including self-image and identity) can affect their confidence, relationships, and sense of belonging

**Bonus Materials:**

The online MELVA portal also contains a bank of additional resources which can be easily implemented into your daily school routine to support your whole school approach to wellbeing, including:

- Mindfulness and self-regulating techniques
- Themed assemblies
- Classroom display resources
- Communications pack for staff and parents/carers.



“The children really look forward to the session each week. The children have developed their emotional resilience and now understand a range of strategies to help them to understand and manage their emotions.”

Primary School Head Teacher

# Recommended Programme of Study



The MELVA programme is most effective when used year after year. The shared language, characters, and stories will become part of your whole school approach to wellbeing, learning will be richer and more long-lasting through ongoing participation, and students will become more accomplished at self-management techniques the more they practice them.

Whilst the different MELVA programmes have been designed with recommended year groups in mind, the content is suitable for all and can be adapted for your school’s needs, meaning new MELVA schools can decide how and when to introduce the programme to their students.

For example, 5 years of ongoing delivery with your current students could look something like this:

School Year	Year Group A	Year Group B	Year Group C	Year Group D	Year Group E
2025 –2026	Year 2: Introducing MELVA	Year 3: Explore Scratchicle Town	Year 4: MELVA’s Mountain Adventure	Year 5: MELVA’s Mountain Adventure	Year 6: MELVA’s Mountain Adventure
2026 –2027	Year 3: Explore Scratchicle Town	Year 4: MELVA’s Mountain Adventure	Year 5: The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	Year 6: The Quest for Barnabas Boggle OR The MELVA Book	Move on to KS3*
2027 –2028	Year 4: MELVA’s Mountain Adventure	Year 5: The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	Year 6: The MELVA Book	Move on to KS3*	
2028 –2029	Year 5: The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	Year 6: The MELVA Book	Move on to KS3*		
2029 –2030	Year 6: The MELVA Book	Move on to KS3*			

\*MELVA is also available for Middle Schools and Secondary Schools who may want to use the MELVA book with their KS3 students.

# MELVA's Impact

## Impact map for children

### Long Term Outcomes

Reduced pupil absences from school

Reduced referrals of children to statutory services e.g. CAMHS

Reduction in the number of permanent exclusions

Improved educational attainment

### Activities

Animation Series

Digital Theatre Film

Interactive Game

Illustrated Novel

KS1 Introductory Activities

Practising Individual Self-Management Strategies

Facilitated group work and discussions

### Second Level Outcomes

Improved feelings of safety, support and security in school

Reduced instances of challenging behaviour, including bullying

Improved quality of friendships and social skills

Improved emotional resilience and feelings of hope, capability and confidence

Improved resilience through change e.g. transition

### First Level Outcomes

Improved...

Engagement in general learning

Participation in group activities

Understanding and knowledge of mental wellbeing

Increased ability to...

Identity and understand big emotions

Regulate their own emotional state

Express themselves and their needs

Implement non-harmful self-management strategies



### Activities

Expert led Staff CPD Training in...

Managing their personal resilience and mental wellbeing

Managing challenging behaviour and sensitive conversations

Recognising symptoms and supporting children at risk of self-harm or suicidal ideation

And...

Access to creative materials which support a whole school delivery approach

Facilitated peer-to-peer practice sharing with other MELVA users

Practical training sessions on using the programme resources & ongoing helpline support



## Impact map for teachers/practitioners

### Initial Outcomes

Increased awareness and understanding of their personal mental wellbeing needs

Increased awareness and understanding of the mental wellbeing needs of children

Increased ability and confidence in responding to wide scope of children's wellbeing needs

Learned new terminology to support structured and safe conversations about challenging topics

Learned successful approaches from other programme users and new practice-sharing relationships established

Increased confidence in utilising creative activities as tools to support children's mental wellbeing

### Long Term Outcomes

Reduced time spent dealing with challenging behaviour

Reduced stress of staff, less sick leave and less cover required

Reduced referrals of children to statutory services e.g. CAMHS

Improved relationships and cohesion across school community

Established regional community of practitioners who are proficient in supporting children with their mental health



Teach your children  
the MELVA motto...

**Brave** isn't how you feel,  
**it's what you do**

## About Mortal Fools

Mortal Fools are a theatre, drama and creative learning company supporting children and young people (aged 7–25) across high impact creative interventions, projects and regular youth theatre groups.

All our work focuses on engaging, enabling and empowering young people, enhancing wellbeing, and cultivating employability and emotional development. We work with a wide variety of children and young people – many with intersectional needs – in schools, youth settings and communities like Ashington in Northumberland, where we are based.

We also deliver communications and leadership training via our CONNECT training programme to businesses, third sector organisations, teams, and individuals. All income earned through this goes back into our work with children and young people.

### Next steps...

To find out more about the MELVA programme visit our website:  
[www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk)

To book a discovery call,  
email the MELVA team:  
[melva@mortalfools.org.uk](mailto:melva@mortalfools.org.uk)



Scan QR code  
to find out more  
about Mortal  
Fools...



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**NE** North East  
Combined  
Authority



Our profits go to charity



[www.mortalfools.org.uk](http://www.mortalfools.org.uk)