

**MORTAL  
FOOLS**

# MELVA

Mental Health Education  
through storytelling

"Melva is simply the best  
drama intervention; I have  
ever seen. The rewards are  
instant and long lasting."

Primary Head Teacher

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



# Welcome to MELVA

This information pack gives you an overview of MELVA, what it is, how it works, why it was created, what settings get access to and the impact it could have on children aged 7–11 years old and settings.



"It's a great resource for helping children identify and understand worries, where they come from and how to address them effectively."

Parent of Melva Participant

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

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

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

# Introduction to MELVA

MELVA is an award-winning creative, web-based programme, designed to improve children and young people's knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing.

The programme centres around the character of Melva Mapletree: a nearly-11-year-old girl whose struggles with anxiety, trauma and bereavement (or 'worrits' as she calls them) are keeping her from doing new things or even wanting to leave the cottage she lives in with her Grandpa.

Through creative storytelling, engaging characters, and practical activities, children learn alongside Melva about how to recognise, understand, talk about and manage their mental wellbeing and deal with their 'worrits'.



## Key features of MELVA:

- **Child-friendly language** enables open conversations about worries and anxiety in a way that doesn't feel daunting or exposing and gives young people and adults a shared language.
- **Engaging storytelling** supports young people to learn through fictional characters and apply this to their own life, helping them to self-reflect and develop empathy.
- **Practical activities** which focus on early intervention teach children effective self-management techniques to be able to manage their physical and emotional responses before they become a significant problem.
- **Repetition and reinforcement** of key learning through different stories and approaches consolidate learning whilst keeping children engaged.
- **Fun and silly characters** make learning fun, which not only supports wellbeing through providing positive social experiences, but also increases children's capacity for learning.
- **Learning opportunities** for teachers, ready-made resources, and chances to connect with other Melva schools help school staff feel supported through the process of tackling mental health topics in school.

# Why Melva and why now?

As of November 2022, it is estimated that at least 1 in 6 children aged 7–16 are likely to have a diagnosable mental health condition<sup>1</sup>.

...That's an average of 5 children per classroom.

It has never been more important for us to find new ways to talk to and teach children about mental wellbeing from an early age.

The MELVA programme focuses on early intervention for children aged 7–11 (Key Stage 2), using recognised and recommended mental health first aid strategies, communicated in a child-friendly and accessible way.

MELVA is for all children, not just those who are struggling. It focuses on teaching children the basic skills and understanding they need to keep themselves well, whatever challenges they might face in the future; supporting them to develop resilience pathways and positive emotional responses and relationships.

## What does your school get access to?

You will receive a unique school login for the full MELVA online portal, where you will be able to access:

- **3 different MELVA programmes** – series of animations, a feature film in 5 episodes and a choose your own adventure game, with wrap around activities and lesson plans. Each programme is designed to be delivered over 8 lessons and adapted for different age groups.
- **A bank of extension activities and themed assemblies**
- **The MELVA Teacher Area**, housing all necessary resources, evaluation documents and admin guides.
- **A simple evaluation report** at the end of the year produced by Mortal Fools (subject to proper and full completion and submission of evaluation requirements).



## Support for school staff:

With statutory services in such high demand, it is falling to schools to support children with their mental health, in place of trained mental health practitioners. We know this can come with its own anxieties and challenges, especially when considered alongside the epidemic of stress and burnout that teachers and school staff are already facing. With this in mind, we have deliberately factored staff support into the programme.

Throughout the year, you will be able to access:

- Introductory sessions to support the implementation of MELVA in your school.
- Teacher CPD Sessions on **Emotional Resilience and Managing Difficult Conversations**.
- Bookable 1:1 surgery slots with the MELVA team.
- Facilitated conversation with other schools using MELVA to discuss your experiences and common issues arising around mental health and wellbeing in schools.

<sup>1</sup> Digital NHS UK - Mental health of children and young people in England, 2022 follow up to the 2017 survey (highlights)





# Overview of the MELVA programme areas:

The 3 main MELVA programmes are each designed to be delivered over the course of 8 x 1-hour lessons, but you can go at your own pace depending on the needs of the young people you are working with.

Using the MELVA programme in school can also be used towards evidence for the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools' School Mental Health Award.

## 1 - Explore Scratchicle Town

### Animation

This programme is designed to give young people in Key Stage 2 a basic introduction to the 5 key steps for improving and supporting your mental wellbeing. These 5 steps are widely recognised by a variety of mental health charities and health organisations, and are defined by the NHS as:

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

Learning is facilitated through short animations featuring different characters who live in Melva's home town - Scratchicle 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.

## 2 - Melva's Mountain Adventure

### Digital Theatre

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 receive a distress call from Melva's Grandpa - Grandpa Pebble. Next, they dive into Melva's world as they watch a digital recording of the MELVA theatre show, which sees Melva take on Mount Scratchicle as she searches for her Grandpa who has 'gone missing'.

The theatre show is split into 5 episodes and incorporated into lesson plans, alongside wraparound activities to help consolidate and expand on the learning from the show. Children have space to discuss what they've watched, apply it to their own lives, and learn techniques for self-management of their worries.

#### 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.

## 3 - The Quest for Barnabas Boggle

### Online Game

This programme focuses on positive decision-making, how young people can recognise mental health struggles in others and support their peers, and how external influences can impact our mental health both positively and negatively.

It is facilitated through a choose-your-own-adventure style game, where children are in the driving seat of making decisions for Melva as she searches for her friend who has gone missing.

Taking on the role of Melva's 'niggling voice', they must work through the levels of the game together to find Barnabas - searching for clues in Scratchicle Town, making the right decisions for Melva, and taking part in practical activities facilitated through the game.

#### 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

**Note:** Whilst the game has been designed to be facilitated as a group, schools also have the option to provide all children with individual logins, so they can access the game at home with parents/carers should you wish.

### Extension Activities

As well as the 3 main MELVA programmes, you will also get access to a collection of optional activities which can be easily implemented into your daily school routine to support your whole school approach to wellbeing, including:

- a bank of mindfulness and self-regulating techniques
- themed assemblies
- suggestions for applying Melva in other contexts e.g. literacy

These have been included with Year 6 in mind, but you can use them in whatever way you see fit in 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





# Recommended programme of study for KS2 School

MELVA is designed to be used year after year, so that the shared language, characters, and stories become part of your whole school approach to wellbeing.

Whilst each MELVA programme can work as a standalone resource, learning will be richer and more and more long-lasting through ongoing participation, and young people will become more accomplished at self-management techniques the more they practice them!

The 3 MELVA programmes have been designed with different KS2 year groups in mind however the content is suitable for all and can be adapted for your school's needs:

- Year 3:** Explore Scratchicle Town
- Year 4:** Melva's Mountain Adventure
- Year 5:** The Quest for Barnabas Boggle
- Year 6:** Complete extension activities

If this is the first year your school is using the MELVA programme, our recommendation is to deliver MELVA's Mountain Adventure with Years 4–6, to ensure all pupils are able to experience this programme in full.

For example, 4 years of delivery for your current pupils may look like this:

School Year	Year Group A	Year Group B	Year Group C	Year Group D
2023–2024	<b>Year 3:</b> Explore Scratchicle Town	<b>Year 4:</b> Melva's Mountain Adventure	<b>Year 5:</b> Melva's Mountain Adventure	<b>Year 6:</b> Melva's Mountain Adventure
2024–2025	<b>Year 4:</b> Melva's Mountain Adventure	<b>Year 5:</b> The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	<b>Year 6:</b> The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	N/A - KS3
2025–2026	<b>Year 5:</b> The Quest for Barnabas Boggle	<b>Year 6:</b> Extension Activities	N/A - KS3	
2026–2027	<b>Year 6:</b> Extension Activities	N/A - KS3		

**Note:** In the Teacher Area of the online platform, you are also able to access the digital theatre show, Melva's Mountain Adventure, in full, so you always have the option to re-watch the MELVA film with different year groups at any time throughout the year, without needing to repeat the full 8-lesson programme.





# Example MELVA Delivery Timeline 1 x School Year

We recommend delivering the MELVA programmes during the Spring Term.

The reason we recommend this is because it gives school staff the opportunity to get familiar with the content during the Autumn Term, and it ties in with Children's Mental Health Week in February.

## Autumn Term 2023

## Meet Melva

This term is the time to start getting familiar with the resources, meet other schools who are using MELVA, and take part in your first Teacher CPD session.

- SEP** 13th September - 10:00 – 12:00: Onboarding session  
Introduction to the Melva programme and team.
- OCT** 10th October: World Mental Health Day
- NOV** 13th November: World Kindness Day  
15th November - 15:30 – 17:30: Teacher CPD Session  
29th November - all day: Drop-in surgery  
Book in up to 25 mins of 1:1 time with the Melva team.
- DEC** ---



"I learnt that being afraid of something doesn't mean you can't do it."  
Melva participant

## Spring Term 2024

## Suggested Delivery Window

With Children's Mental Health Week in February, this is the perfect time to deliver the MELVA programme in your school and take advantage of the support and learning opportunities available.

- JAN** 10th January - 15:30 – 17:30: Kick Off Session  
Practical demonstration of the platform and an opportunity to ask questions.
- FEB** 5th - 11th February: Children's Mental Health Week  
5th February - 16:00 – 18:00: Teacher CPD Session  
Managing Difficult Conversations  
6th & 8th February - all day: Drop-in surgery  
Book in up to 25 mins of 1:1 time with the Melva team.
- MAR** 25th March - 15:30 – 17:30: MELVA check in point  
Facilitated conversation with all schools to discuss their experience using MELVA and common issues around mental health and wellbeing in schools.
- APR** ---

## Summer Term 2024

## Reflect & Evaluate

Summer term is your time to reflect, evaluate and plan for the next year ahead.

- MAY** 16th May - 10:00 – 11:30: Digital Showcase  
For current, new and prospective schools, we'll demonstrate the programme and talk through any changes and updates to the platform.
- JUN** 5th June - 15:30 – 17:30: Summer check in point  
Facilitated conversation with all schools to discuss their experience using MELVA and common issues around mental health and wellbeing in schools.  
24th – 28th June: World Wellbeing Week
- JUL** ---

# MELVA and the curriculum

## RSHE curriculum links: Primary



### Legislation: Physical Health and Wellbeing

#### Topic: Mental Wellbeing

##### Covered in MELVA: “By the end of Primary school, pupils should know...”

- ✓ that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health.
- ✓ that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations.
- ✓ how to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others’ feelings.
- ✓ how to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate.
- ✓ the benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness.
- ✓ simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests.
- ✓ isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support.
- ✓ that bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing.
- ✓ where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else’s mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online).
- ✓ it is common for people to experience mental ill health. For many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough.

#### Topic: Physical Health and Fitness

##### Covered in MELVA: “By the end of Primary school, pupils should know...”

- ✓ the mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.
- ✓ the importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, vigorous exercise.

### Legislation: Relationships Education

#### Topic: Families and People Who Care For Me

##### Covered in MELVA: “By the end of Primary school, pupils should know...”

- ✓ that families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability.
- ✓ that others’ families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children’s families are also characterised by love and care.

#### Topic: Caring Friendships

##### Covered in MELVA: “By the end of Primary school, pupils should know...”

- ✓ how important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure.
- ✓ that healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded.
- ✓ how to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed.

#### Other Primary Curriculum links:

MELVA is story-based and creative by nature, which means it can also help you tackle other areas of the curriculum which don’t directly link to RSHE, such as **comprehension**, **writing composition** and **spoken language**.

##### Listening to, watching, and engaging with the MELVA materials encourages students to:

- Draw inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives.
- Make predictions about what might happen next in the stories.
- Participate in group discussions about the stories, challenge each other’s views and justify their own.
- Consider how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning.
- Engage with different writing styles, techniques, and conventions such as stories, plays, poetry, word play etc.
- Speak and perform aloud, considering intonation, tone, volume and action.

Our extension activities and suggestions also provide lots of different ways that you could incorporate the MELVA content into your literacy work. For example, by using extracts from MELVA to highlight examples of particular punctuation or grammar rules, creating your own MELVA poem, or experimenting with diary entries or newspaper reports relating to the characters or events in the story.

## Impact map for children



## Melva's Impact

### Impact map for teachers/practitioners





# What's the cost?



## 1 x year long MELVA licence

£750

## Discounted cost on renewal

£600

MELVA licences are valid for 1 x academic year (September - August), and is renewed and invoiced for annually, unless cancelled.

Schools receive a renewal discount after the first year of using MELVA, and all subsequent years are charged at this discounted price.

We also offer discounts for Trusts or organisations purchasing multiple licences.

We have also worked with commissioners (e.g. Children North East, North of Tyne Combined Authority and North East and North Cumbria Child Health and Wellbeing Network.) on larger multi-scale purchases and open to those conversations.

## Next steps...

- If you're a school/education setting/ Trust interested in using MELVA you can book a chat with Team MELVA by email via: [melva@mortalfools.org.uk](mailto:melva@mortalfools.org.uk)
- If you're a commissioning organisation interested in using MELVA as part of a project/intervention or multi-school purchase, email us via: [Rachel.Horton@mortalfools.org.uk](mailto:Rachel.Horton@mortalfools.org.uk)
- For more information on MELVA visit: [www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk)
- Settings can also express an interest in buying the programme to use via: [www.melva.org.uk/get-melva/](http://www.melva.org.uk/get-melva/)

## About the creators of MELVA...

Mortal Fools is a multi-award-winning theatre, drama and creative learning charity using creative interventions and co-creation as a practice to support children and young people aged 7-25 years old to make sense of the contemporary world, to develop youth leadership skills, enhance employability and to support mental health and wellbeing.

Find out more about Mortal Fools' projects and programmes via: [mortalfools.org.uk](http://mortalfools.org.uk)



Bye for now!

Read more about MELVA on the dedicated website: [www.melva.org.uk](http://www.melva.org.uk) - there you will find testimonials, research and themes information and you can watch our information videos.