

Questions for Governors to introduce the topic of staff wellbeing and mental health.

Schools have differing requirements in ensuring they become - and remain - mentally healthy. Schools are also at different points in the implementation of cultures and practices that support the mental health and wellbeing of their staff.

It is useful for any governor or board wanting to address staff wellbeing to understand how to go about determining the current approach in an appropriate, informed fashion. It is not the governors' role to involve themselves operationally, but rather address the issue from their strategic position to support school leadership. While distinct from pupil wellbeing it is also most effective when pupil and staff strategies can align and create a whole school culture.

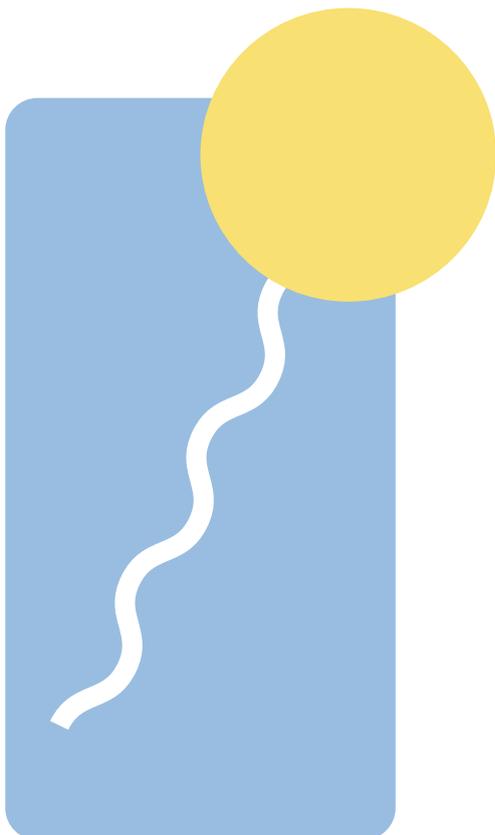
The following questions are a suggestion of what governors can bring up in discussion with senior leadership at their school. By asking these questions, they can begin to understand what the school is doing now and potential areas for improvement:

Policy and Structure

- Is there a current strategy for addressing mental health and wellbeing amongst staff at the school? If so, how was it developed, how often is it updated and what informs it?
- Is there currently a mental health lead either among staff or on the board?
- How does the vision and strategy set by the GB support and nurture a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing?
- How do we know what the current wellbeing of staff is like? How might we measure it?

Culture and Practice

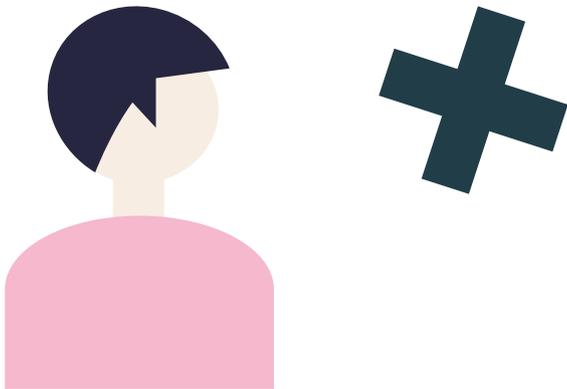
- What support is given to staff concerning their wellbeing? Is information readily available for staff and advice and guidance available for senior leadership? What training is provided?
- What do we do now to help staff to look after their own wellbeing?
- How do we praise and recognise staff performance?
- Do staff members communicate around wellbeing issues?
- What else could we be doing to make staff wellbeing part of the culture?



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SLT

- How are the school leadership team ensuring they themselves have adequate support and are maintaining their own wellbeing at work? How can governors support this?
- Do senior leadership model positive working practices?
- Do SLT have dedicated and sufficient release time, to support with the necessary reasoning and planning required?



This list is by no means exhaustive, but by asking questions appropriate to their school, governors can develop a clear sense of the current approach and what might need to be implemented or improved. It's crucial to bear in mind that school leadership and their staff are already under immense pressure. Concerned boards eager to improve staff wellbeing can exacerbate matters if they do not approach the issue sympathetically and without making additional demands of school leadership.

It's also important not to lose sight of the fact that school leadership team members are at high risk of ignoring their wellbeing for the sake of their staff. Governors should make it a point to ensure the leadership team's needs are addressed.

COVID-19

- What staff wellbeing problems have been caused or exacerbated by the pandemic?
- How have policies and procedures been adapted to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic?



In the coming months, and in conjunction with several partner organisations, Governors for Schools will be releasing various materials to support governors in measuring staff wellbeing. The resources will also help governors design effective wellbeing strategies and policies, develop positive school culture regarding mental health, and ensure these approaches are maintained, reviewed and improved going forward.

Thanks to [Education Support](#), the [National Association of Head Teachers](#) and [Welbee](#) for their contributions to this article.

