

What is staff mental health and wellbeing in a school setting?

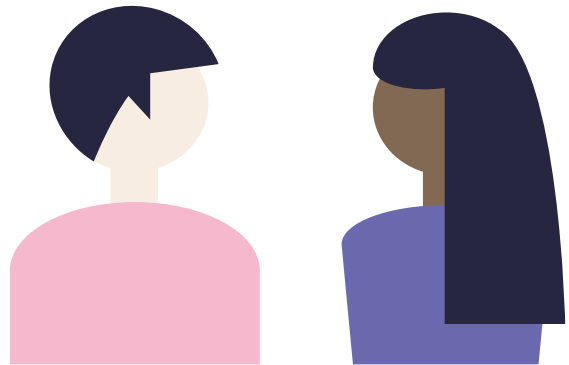
Governors can help transform their schools' approach to staff wellbeing and mental health. But before they can do so, governors need some underlying knowledge and understanding of the terminology and issues involved.

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as

“a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

Bear in mind that this is an active state - mental health isn't just the absence of illness, stress and trauma. For an employer - or in the case of a school - for governors and leadership teams, this entails:

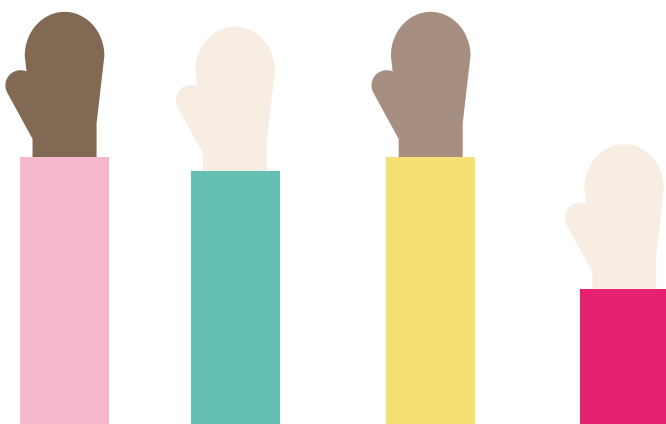
- a positive commitment to preventing unnecessary and avoidable harm
- providing appropriate levels and manners of support
- enabling staff to develop suitable emotional resilience



Like physical health, mental health is a spectrum, ranging from illness to well to flourishing. Governors and school leadership should recognise that staff wellbeing can be impacted at school from both the design of work (workload, level of colleague and management support etc.), as well as individual factors specific to the school and member of staff. Creating a psychologically healthy school environment is therefore a shared and ongoing responsibility.

Although the employer varies depending on the type of school, under Health and Safety legislation, employers have a duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

Educational staff have mental health and wellbeing concerns unique to the setting.



**WELLBEING
GOVERNORS**

GOVERNORS FOR SCHOOLS

Educational staff have mental health and wellbeing concerns unique to the setting. School staff often have little autonomy over how and when they work and are routinely involved in and impacted by challenging pupils and parents. They're also expected to model positive and appropriate behaviour throughout. Developing a culture that mitigates psychosocial risk, is supportive and open regarding mental health, and helps all school staff regardless of job function develop resilience, is incredibly important.

[Read more](#) about why the mental health and wellbeing of staff should be a priority to governors.



For more information about mental health in school settings, and more broadly, please see the following:

Education Support – [Materials and services to support staff mental health](#)

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families – [Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

The Mental Health Foundation – [What is Mental Health? And What are Mental Health Problems?](#)

Education Support – [Materials and services to support staff mental health](#)

The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust – [Information for Employers section](#)

Mind – [Information support](#) and the pamphlet [“Understanding Mental Health Problems”](#)

[MindEd.org.uk](#) – provides a variety of free e-learning on mental health topics

