

Designing a staff wellbeing strategy.

An effective staff wellbeing strategy is built upon the specific requirements of your staff, and the feedback gathered from surveying staff knowledge and opinion. This is the case whether your school has an existing staff wellbeing strategy that isn't meeting your needs, or your school is looking to implement one for the first time. The strategy should be all-encompassing and subject to regular review. It should also take into account the needs and thoughts of both teaching and non-teaching staff across the school.

Each of the following areas should be considered during the design phase. The [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust](#) has created a comprehensive template of example policy and guidance documents which you can access for free. These documents are more student than staff-oriented, but are a useful template.

Structural

- How will this strategy be embedded in the ongoing management of the school and who will have responsibility for managing it? Consider appointing individual members of the board, school leadership team and staff to act as points of contact/champions and subject matter experts for staff wellbeing and mental health matters.
- Make wellbeing a regular point of discussion at all staff, leadership and board meetings, as well as one-on-one meetings with staff.
- Review the wellbeing strategy on a regular basis.

Guidelines and policies

- Detailed policies regarding wellbeing and mental health should be developed and all staff should be signposted to them regularly. This includes details of any resources and processes aimed at supporting staff mental health and how to access them.
- These can include a school mission statement on staff wellbeing, expectations from senior leadership regarding wellbeing, professional support services available to staff and how to access them, school policies regarding mental health and stress-related sick leave, etc.

- These should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current practice and made easily available. They must also take into account all staff, not just teachers.
- Contingency planning should be done concerning potential mental health hazards and the school risk register should account for risks to staff mental health and wellbeing.

Information-sharing

- Wellbeing strategy and provision is worthless if staff don't know about them or how they are accessed. Consider how and when staff are informed about and encouraged to take advantage of school wellbeing programmes.
- Different forums provide different opportunities. Some may be more appropriate than others, depending on what information is being shared and how. Ensure full but suitable use is made of websites, newsletters, bulletin boards and staff meetings.
- Ensure wellbeing information is available and accurate for all staff regardless of role, and points of contact are available for more specific queries or concerns.



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- Ensure wellbeing information is available and accurate for all staff regardless of role, and points of contact are available for more specific queries or concerns.
- Ensure staff have adequate break areas and sufficient opportunity to use them, and make efforts to reduce the burden of administrative and pupil performance-monitoring work. This will help ease time constraints and allow space and time to relax.
- Encouraging staff to form or join interest and activity groups helps develop team cohesion. It could also provide an outlet for physical activity and personal expression. Budget-allowing, these groups, from weekly yoga to book clubs, could be funded in some way by the school.
- Regular but simple events and routines to reward or engage staff personally will make the school a much more positive workplace. From providing treats on a Friday afternoon to early finishes, to catch-up phone calls/chats with school leadership, these habits demonstrate to teachers that they are valued and cared for.
- Training in issues related to mental health and wellbeing should not just be pupil-oriented but include the needs of staff. Staff could be offered specific mental health awareness training as part of their career and personal development. Schools Advisory Service, as part of their National Wellbeing Partnership, host an extensive list of various service providers from across the country.

Practical

- Depending on the type of school and make-up of the staff, there are numerous practical routines, events and services that can be introduced to improve staff wellbeing. All staff, including non-teaching roles, should be taken into account and included in an appropriate fashion.
- This is an ideal area where school leadership can seek input from staff members as to what could be done to improve wellbeing in the school.

Cultural

- It's easy for the demands of work to overwhelm or at the least encroach upon staff wellbeing needs. School leadership teams must be vigilant in monitoring this while demonstrating positive behaviours and routines themselves. They should set a positive example and ensure they don't sacrifice their own wellbeing. Not using email after a particular time in the evening or limits on working at weekends are good ways to model the wellbeing policy. If a policy is to be followed, it must be demonstrably endorsed and supported, particularly by leadership.
- Having accessible, up-to-date policies and people in place to inform staff about wellbeing, coupled with a range of routines and behaviours aimed at improving wellbeing in the school, will provide a huge lift in ensuring the school's culture surrounding the topic is positive. There are other behavioural elements that should be looked at to ensure mental health and wellbeing is not thought of as separate from regular school life - but rather integral to it.
- School leadership are key in modelling positive behaviours relating to wellbeing. They can safeguard against staff falling into negative patterns - the Mental Health Foundation provides a useful guide to maintaining positive personal mental health [here](#).
- The school should also be proud of its efforts in this regard and continue to remind staff of the positive steps that have been taken, and all of the resources available to them. Resilience and self-care are crucial to long-term wellbeing and the staff need to engage with this.
- External speakers, events, training, staff meetings and trips can all be used to ensure wellbeing remains an active aspect of the school culture.

External resources

- There are numerous external resources available to help with everything from measuring and analysing staff wellbeing, to supporting staff members in crisis, to delivering training. Many of them will have budgetary implications, and therefore proposals to make use of them should be presented to the board. Governors are encouraged to ring-fence a portion of the budget to specifically support staff mental health and wellbeing. In the longer-term, it will often save the school money in increased productivity and reduced staff churn, as well as improving the working conditions and lives of staff and pupils.
- Thought should be given to what support the school needs in this regard, and what it will require to keep it going when it comes to budgeting and choosing external partners to support the school. Education Support provides a suite of services in this regard, including employee advice and surveying.

Monitoring and evaluation

- It's crucial that surveys and policies are not one-off efforts. Instead, they should form the basis for an embedded culture and support of positive staff wellbeing and mental health. To that end, it's necessary to ensure ongoing monitoring and evaluation of policies and their efficacy takes place.
- Surveys of staff views should be undertaken regularly to gauge any negative trends or reactions to changes in school policy or practice. The results of these surveys, even if only a summary, should be shared with staff, and commentary invited.
- Feedback should be sought in appropriate and varied fashion; anonymously as well as in one-on-one and group meetings. Specific forums should be created to discuss staff wellbeing at school.

