

Practical changes to improve staff wellbeing.

Once policies have been created and wellbeing roles have been filled, there are many changes that schools can make that will have an impact on staff wellbeing.

On their own, these actions may not seem particularly impactful, but combined, these small changes will demonstrate to staff that their wellbeing and mental health is being taken seriously.

Wherever possible, efforts toward improving the wellbeing culture should not be additional to the norm. Instead, they should be re-allocated from areas agreed to be less important. This demonstrates commitment and helps ensure long-term viability, as mental health and wellbeing is not viewed as a new burden.

Whilst many of these changes are impossible or unnecessary to enact given the ongoing pandemic, this time can be used to plan what changes should be made. You could also consider ways to support staff remotely.

The following are just some of the powerful, yet low-cost ways schools can transform the workplace for staff:

Training and support

Provision of training in mental health and wellbeing will [teach and encourage staff to prioritise self-care](#) and support each other. Promote mental health being spoken about openly and regularly, and explore options around coaching and supervision to ensure staff receive comprehensive support and guidance.

Regular staff events

Summer barbecues, pancake breakfasts, coffee and cake – these can be of varying levels of simplicity but allow for staff to socialise informally and celebrate each other. A staff working group could be created to plan these, empowering their involvement in school life and their own wellbeing needs. Many of these are impractical or even impossible during the pandemic but some may feasibly be achieved virtually/remotely. Planning ahead for post-lockdown events can begin now, ensuring no time is wasted and staff feel suitably integrated and welcomed back to school.

Staff social/sport groups

Depending on the type of activity and number of attendees it can be very low-cost to facilitate staff activities such as Pilates/yoga classes or walking clubs. These not only increase cohesion, but encourage physical activity. Similarly, book, chess, bridge or music clubs might all be of interest to your staff and easy to arrange. Many of these can be created/maintained virtually.

Recognise staff efforts/achievements

This can be done in numerous ways, from a 'shout out board' in a newsletter, to prizes awarded in a meeting. The important thing is to continually remind staff members they are valued. Be sure to include teaching assistants and non-teaching staff within any recognition programme.



Changes to work patterns

Explore ways to cut down on aspects of staff workloads, be it the amount of marking, administrative and reporting requirements, and out of hours availability – [read guidance from the DfE](#) in this area. Ensure staff are able to take regular, quality breaks during the work day and consider changing email culture to prevent work encroaching on personal lives. Continually monitor and review this in staff meetings.

Quality of life improvements

These can include improving staff breakroom facilities, provision of fresh fruit, allowing staff online shopping deliveries to the school office – ask staff for ideas that might make their lives a little easier. This assures them their welfare is a priority and will often generate worthwhile proposals. This list is by no means comprehensive.

This list is by no means comprehensive. What is required or effective will vary dramatically from school to school depending on the staff in question and the school's current circumstances. The changes suggested are an ideal opportunity to include staff feedback, as well as involving them in leading/organising/researching wellbeing change opportunities. This encourages further buy-in and can be a significant part of their career development. Remember the KISS (Keep, Improve, Start, Stop) acronym when it comes to reviewing wellbeing change.

For more inspiration, the [Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families](#) has included a variety of case studies of changes schools have made in their [10 Steps towards School Staff Wellbeing](#) publication. [What Works Wellbeing](#) provide an excellent blueprint with their [Guidance for better workplace wellbeing](#) and [Welbee](#) has put together 14 Proven Ways to Transform Staff Wellbeing at Your School” based on advice from school leaders. Access the [Health and Safety Executive's guide to reducing stress](#).

