What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.” But it has taken on a much wider meaning than that, covering how satisfied people are with their lives as a whole. There are many different types of wellbeing, including physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual and economic wellbeing. Maintaining good wellbeing across all these areas is an ongoing process.

School and teaching staff are the most crucial factor in the education system. They simplify the complex, expose children to new and different knowledge and ideas, and inspire them in a way that’s integral to ensuring their future success. Despite this, the wellbeing of school staff can often be overlooked and viewed as a ‘nice to have’ rather than an essential consideration.

With the current added pressures of remote teaching, reopening schools and managing different arrangements to keep students safe, looking after staff wellbeing has never been more important.

Even before the global pandemic struck and turned the education sector on its head, teaching was considered among the most stressful jobs. Previous research has shown that job-related stress is higher among teachers than other professionals, fuelled heavily by rising pupil numbers, shortfalls in the number of trainee teachers and an increasing proportion of teachers leaving the profession which has lead to greater workloads and lower moral.

We must now add to that mix the fact that Covid-19 has changed the way we educate dramatically, be it in the form of e-learning platforms or classrooms that are been forced to adapt to frequently changing circumstances. These new and longer standing issues are undoubtedly having an impact on staff wellbeing, and this, in turn, is having an impact on many areas of a school’s operation. If a staff member is struggling to cope with the demands and pressures they face, they may struggle to provide the quality teaching and learning experience expected of them. This, subsequently, can have a knock-on effect in other areas, including professional development, recruitment and retention and, ultimately, student success.

Over the past year, schools have been using Staff Pulse, our staff wellbeing tool, to carry out extensive surveys with their staff. School staff across the globe have answered over 61,000 questions in order to help their senior leaders gain an understanding of how they’re feeling. Staff Pulse contains 82 questions – designed by a psychologist and tailored to the education sector – across 21 categories.

This report distils the results from aggregated data from Staff Pulse surveys in the past year – with 7,900 questions answered by primary staff, over 26,000 questions answered by secondary staff and 5,600 questions answered by SEN staff in the UK, along with 21,400 questions answered by international staff – to demonstrate the current state of staff wellbeing and how this can impact your school’s operations. We also examine the simple steps you can take to improve your staff’s wellbeing, from creating a culture of feedback and openness among colleagues to ensuring your staff have the resources and emotional support they need to help prevent them from suffering from stress and burnout.

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1 Tes news wellbeing hub
Engagement, motivation, pride and enjoyment

Being happy at work and enjoying what you do is incredibly important. People who love their jobs are more likely to be optimistic, motivated and make fewer mistakes, while those who don’t carry the same sense of fulfillment are likely to feel higher levels of stress, be less engaged and take more time off. A sense of happiness at work is also intrinsically linked to overall employee wellbeing, is a great indicator of positive mental health and can even provide a boost to the immune system.

**65% of staff love working at their school**

Staff Pulse responses show that the majority – almost two-thirds (65%) – of staff love working at their school and most (63%) would recommend it as a place to work to their friends. This happiness is driven largely by the relationships they build with colleagues, the mental stimulation their role provides and the sense of meaningfulness and pride the job offers; 86% of respondents said they are proud of the quality of their work and 70% said their work gives them a feeling of accomplishment.

While these findings are positive, they also show that just over a third of staff don’t love their jobs. What’s more, only 45% of respondents said they found their work fun, with 11% disagreeing with this statement. But even through a sizeable percentage of staff don’t love or find their job fun, 94% feel they pay a lot of attention to their work, 87% said they really throw themselves into their work and 69% said they’re motivated to contribute more than what’s expected of them.

Furthermore, 90% of respondents said they believe they show empathy towards their students and an overwhelming majority value their relationships with pupils; they work to understand students’ personal and social situations, to feel care and concern in response to students’ positive and negative emotions and respond compassionately without losing the focus on student learning. Despite this, only 59% of staff say they feel they are viewed positively by parents, which can also lead to an increase in stress levels and lessen their sense of fulfillment.

That the majority of school staff continue to feel a sense of motivation to perform their roles to a high standard regardless of how much they enjoy them, or feel they are viewed positively by parents, shows a continued resilience. Teaching remains a fulfilling career that attracts dedicated, hard working professionals, highly motivated towards their pupil’s wellbeing.

It’s clear that school staff take pride in their work, and feel a sense of accomplishment seeing the children in their care develop as learners. Any improvements that can be made to give our teaching staff more time to focus on their role as classroom teachers is always a positive.

A school is made up of so many different important people – we should be celebrating all school staff! From support staff to teachers to senior leaders – all play crucial roles in running a school. Leaders should strive to ensure all jobs within schools give staff that positive feeling they deserve.

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At Lichfield Cathedral School, our leadership team are always keen for us to remember that we are ‘Glorious Individuals’. This message runs through everything our school does, from our pastoral communications, and alongside our core teaching. We make it clear that we want everyone in our school community to treat others as they would wish to be treated. Our students are loved for who they are, not what scores they achieve – and all of our staff are valued for the different skills they bring to our school. We have run successful educational conferences from our school, and seeing such esteemed academics and members of the education world come to speak at our school does a great deal to bolster school pride. Staff are motivated by hearing experts speak passionately about education, and this reflective and critical attitude continues to motivate staff long after the event has passed.

Stephen Lane,
Pastoral, Lichfield Cathedral School, UK
Confidence, skill, autonomy and active participation

Confidence is knowing what you’re good at, the value you provide and acting in a way that conveys that to those around you. And as the saying goes, confidence is key; research\(^5\) shows that when people are put in situations where they are expected not to do well, their performance can suffer. However, when they’re expected to do well, they’re generally in a positive headspace and their performance improves considerably as a result. Staff that feel confident are also likely to be more assertive, to push more boundaries and to communicate with others more effectively.

The results from Staff Pulse show that the overwhelming majority (84%) of staff believe they’re good at their jobs, with just 1% of respondents disagreeing. Furthermore, the same amount (84%) believe they’re a skilful worker, 82% feel they have enough ability to face their job’s demands and 81% feel confident performing their role.

84% of staff believe they’re good at their job

Active participation – involving staff in planning decisions and giving them a sense of control – has been shown to influence confidence. Studies\(^6\) show that the many benefits of active participation include higher self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness. While this is something the majority of staff enjoy at their workplace, it’s not universal; 27% of respondents feel they don’t have a say in how things go at their school, 16% feel that they’re not involved in thinking about how to make things better at their school, and just 36% agreed that they can control the things that determine their success, with 16% disagreeing.

Active participation is closely linked to autonomy – the concept that employees should be acting and thinking independently. It’s been shown that higher levels of autonomy tend to result in an increase in job satisfaction and play a big part in an employees’ decision to stay with an organisation or to seek a new role elsewhere. The majority of staff (58%) agreed that they have a lot of freedom in how they do their work, but 10% disagreed. Furthermore, just 43% said they feel they have the autonomy to make decisions, with 15% disagreeing. This suggests some staff may be suffering from a culture of micromanagement, whereby leaders avoid delegation, fail to pass on their skills and knowledge and don’t allow staff to make decisions.

The majority (54%) of staff feel they’re supported when making decisions, with 11% disagreeing, while 72% believe they know what’s expected of them. Ultimately, it’s perhaps communication that’s key, more so than confidence; the latter often being a mindset that’s aided by effective communication and a sense of involvement in the development of the school beyond the classroom.

We know that giving teachers the autonomy to make decisions about their own teaching is massively motivating, and crucial for retention. Both teaching staff and support staff do incredibly skilled jobs, and have to operate with an in-depth understanding of what they do. So it makes sense that staff should be given the opportunity to influence changes at their school.

Once staff have been given the ability to voice their ideas, there can only be positive and supportive outcomes for the senior leadership team as together, as a school, they can grow and flourish.

As a school, we believe that being clear and acting with integrity ensures these ideas become manifested with staff. For example, our approach to CPD encourages active participation because we limit our areas to improve and repeat them until we just become really good at a few things. We also believe in autonomy with greater expertise. Expert teachers can lead projects, coach others, or just teach really brilliant lessons without reams of admin. As a school that is part of a multi academy trust, we provide a clear philosophy in our “The DRET Way” document. Behaviour, curriculum, expectations and teaching are all spelt out clearly. This gives teachers great confidence to know their purpose and actions.

Jude Hunton
Principal, DRET Skegness Grammar, UK


Goals and development

Professional development is of utmost importance in any job. Training and goal-setting can help people to become more organised and better at planning, which in teaching means staff become more efficient and have more time to focus on their students, rather than mounting piles of paperwork. What’s more, a 2008 study found that effective coaching and goal attainment helped increase participants’ self-confidence and personal insight, build management skills and deal with organisational change.

But staff who don’t receive effective training or targets risk their skills becoming stagnant and losing motivation. This doesn’t just impact individual staff members, as it can also create risks for an entire school; staff may also be more prone to making mistakes, which can ultimately result in an unsafe work environment and increased expenses. A lack of professional development is also intrinsically linked to staff retention – a lack of training and development leads to low morale among staff, which in turn results in staff turnover.

In terms of goals, the majority (60%) said they have set targets, and more than two thirds (69%) feel they’re working towards goals that matter to them – with just 5% disagreeing with this statement. More than half (53%) of respondents agree that their manager makes sure they really understand their goals.

The importance of goal-setting shouldn’t be underestimated. Research has found that setting strong goals boosts performance by motivating people to increase their effort, inducing stronger focus and helping them to prioritise. Furthermore, staff need to feel valued; they’ll be more positive, inspired and invested in their job if they understand how their work contributes to the success of their school and to their own personal goals.

What unites everyone who works in a school? They love learning. School staff want to continue to grow, improve and learn new skills which they can implement in their day to day work.

Ensuring your school has a CPD programme in place that is accessible to all is crucial for staff development and retention. In running a successful programme, it communicates a clear message: you understand their goals, care about their futures and want to see them grow and progress at your school.

44% of staff said they’re satisfied with their opportunities for career development

Staff Pulse responses show that 44% of staff are satisfied with their opportunities for career development and 36% feel there are opportunities for them to develop in their position. 22% disagree with the first statement and 26% with the second. 44% felt they receive the training they require in order to develop their career, with 16% of respondents disagreeing.

These findings appear to show how fundamentally training and career development are linked; those that don’t receive sufficient professional coaching feel that they’ll be less likely to advance within their career and that the opportunity to progress isn’t there.

At Ark John Keats we help teacher workload and wellbeing by developing and supporting our people. Through subject networks, teachers at Ark schools across the country come together regularly to share ideas, resources and great practice. Ark also runs a number of development programmes, training teachers in coaching, pedagogy, curriculum development and leadership. In order to facilitate this, as a school we have embraced practices like minimal planning and whole-class feedback, as well as favouring strong and centralised behaviour systems to support our teachers. Not only that, but we also do free tea and toast for teachers on Friday in exchange for them writing postcards to thank teachers who have helped them out that week. Every week we have run out of postcards; we have yet to run out of toast!

Jo Facer
Executive principal, Ark John Keats, East London, UK

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Relationship with staff and communication

The power of effective communication in the workplace shouldn’t be underestimated. Not only does it help to build a sense of trust and maintain strong working relationships between staff, but it’s also key in achieving high levels of productivity. It can help to foster a more capable and talented workforce, establish an environment where staff can think creatively and express their ideas and can help leaders to make more strategic decisions on delegation, staff development and strategic initiatives.

On the other hand, poor communication in the workplace will inevitably lead to unmotivated staff that may begin to question their own confidence. Further, research has shown that poor relationships with colleagues could be potential stressors, leading to low job satisfaction and poor psychological wellbeing.

Staff Pulse results show that communication in the workplace is an issue experienced by many. Just 35% of respondents said they feel communication between staff is clear and 36% feel this communication is timely; 19% and 20% of respondents, disagreed with these statements, respectively.

46% of staff are kept well-informed about what’s happening at their school

A lack of a clear, timely dialogue between staff can cause confusion and ultimately means employees can become ill-informed of what’s happening at their place of work. 24% of staff feel that information isn’t shared effectively between staff, however 46% said they’re kept well-informed about what’s happening at their school.

While communication is lacking for some, Staff Pulse results show that the majority of respondents feel they have a close, compassionate relationship with their colleagues, something research has shown can improve the mood of staff, making them subsequently more productive. Some 68% of respondents feel that their co-workers care about them, 70% said they connect well with their professional peers and 78% said they enjoy working with their colleagues – with just 2% disagreeing.

78% of staff enjoy working with their colleagues

This empathetic environment also means most respondents (56%) feel they have a supportive culture among staff, with 48% agreeing that they’re able to share their feelings and concerns with co-workers. However, 17% said they didn’t feel they were able to share their feelings. If staff are keeping things to themselves – be it feelings of frustration, anger or disappointment – it can stymie their work and creativity; a study shows that when people don’t feel comfortable about expressing their true emotions, this can lead to anger and unresolved conflicts.

Everything in education comes down to relationships. And just as that teacher-student relationship is the heart of what happens in the classroom, so too teacher relationships are the heart of every team in the staffroom. Building positive working relationships are so important, and we all have a duty to be nice to the people around us. If negativity is contagious – then so is positivity.

As a senior leader you know how hard a day at school can be, and the difference between a team where everyone is rowing very hard – but in different directions – to a team where an end goal is shared by everyone, and you care about all of your teammates crossing the line.

We have always believed that two-way communication between staff and leaders is integral to effective and positive running of a school. It has been more important than ever this year because we need to know that our staff feel safe and happy in the school environment at present. We feel we are constantly re-evaluating our practice to support staff wellbeing, but this is pointless if the impact isn’t felt by the staff.

Alex Pearson
Executive principal, Harriers Academy, Banbury, UK
Feedback, support, reward and recognition

A feedback-rich culture, where staff are comfortable asking for and receiving constructive feedback from their colleagues and senior leaders, can change how a school operates. For staff, it gives them an opportunity to look at themselves in a different light and to reflect on how their behavioural style and ways of working impacts others at their school. For those in leadership positions feedback can provide insights into their managerial skills and into how a staff member is developing at their school. Ultimately, a culture of feedback helps everyone within a school to reach better decisions, improve performance and generally succeed in their role.

But too often feedback is something that happens only once a year, during annual reviews or appraisals. Research has shown that companies that fail to deliver regular feedback tend to have employees who often feel disengaged and unmotivated, while those who engage in regular feedback have lower employee turnover rates.

55% of staff feel supported at work

Staff Pulse responses show that the majority of school staff feel they are given opportunities to know how well they’re doing at work, although 17% disagreed. 45% of respondents said they feel they receive appropriate feedback about how well they’re doing in the job, while 34% said they receive regular feedback about their performance. Just under a quarter (24%) said they don’t receive regular feedback about their performance.

This suggests a link between receiving performance feedback and how valued staff feel as while the majority (55%) of respondents said they felt valued at their place of work, 16% said they don’t feel recognised or appreciated for the work they do.

Feeling appreciated isn’t just about expressions of gratification and recognition – it can also be linked to staff’s salary and benefits. While some 44% of respondents agreed that they were satisfied with their income, a fifth (20%) said they were unhappy with the salary and benefits they receive.

When I joined Cognita one of the first things I noticed was how often people said ‘thank you’, and asked how you were. Initially I thought I’d just been lucky with my immediate team, but soon realised that it was inherent in the organisation. Every meeting begins by checking in with your colleagues – learning just a little more about them, seeing them as people with the same real-life ups and down as you. In his monthly message to his team, Chris Jansen, our CEO, always shows his appreciation for what we are doing – it is specific, informed and targeted thanks and is mirrored within and across schools and the online community.

Beth Kerr
Group director of wellbeing, Cognita

1 Nora St-Aubin. Employee feedback demystified: a comprehensive guide for managers.
The importance of leadership in schools has long been documented; good leaders are capable of bringing out the very best in their staff and those with good management skills will demonstrate the ability to inspire confidence in their workforce and to improve morale across their school. A good leader should also be able to communicate their expectations effectively.

Staff Pulse results show that 44% of staff feel that their leaders communicate clearly, while 21% disagree. Similarly, almost half of respondents (48%) said that the leaders at their school do what they say and make changes when necessary, and 49% feel their leadership makes good decisions, with 15% disagreeing.

This suggests that while at many schools there is good communication between leaders and staff, a fifth of schools might not be working as effectively as they could, as a lack of clear communication from leaders can cost time, productivity and work-hours and lead to poor relationships with staff and peers.

A lack of clear communication can have a knock-on effect on trust. Trust is one of the key factors of any successful workplace; an organisation that’s able to create a strong sense of trust among staff is better able to handle conflict and will have a clearer vision of what it stands for. Staff Pulse results show that 55% of respondents trust their leadership team, with 14% disagreeing, while 55% believe that their leadership team is truthful, with 15% disagreeing. This lack of trust experienced by some, be it caused by unclear communication or a lack of openness, means these staff members could be less likely to be engaged and go the extra mile for their leadership team – and some may be looking to move on.

Compassion, too, is another important trait. Compassionate leadership means listening with fascination to staff and taking action to help and support them. Staff Pulse results show that half of respondents feel their leadership team provides them with the support they need, with 17% disagreeing. 47% feel staff and leadership teams care about the same things they care about.

Another must-have trait of any good leader is vision; this provides the rest of the organisation with direction, meaning and a benchmark for decision making, and demonstrates clear strategic ability.

62% of staff feel their leaders have a vision for the future

Staff Pulse results show that the majority (62%) of staff feel their leaders have a vision for the future, 61% feel they’re all working towards the same overall goals at their school and 59% feel their leadership team tries new ideas. This is to the credit of leaders as they navigate the most challenging of circumstances.

Over a third (39%) of respondents said they feel they know how they fit into their school’s future plans, with 22% disagreeing. This suggests that though many leaders have vision and communicate it well, it might not always be communicated as effectively as possible across their school.

Staff need to believe in what their leaders are doing and the direction they’re taking their school. Laying out exactly what your vision is (as well as your plan to get there) will give your staff confidence.

Teachers, administrators and teaching assistants all should understand how they fit into the overall vision. If the school is a machine, each member of staff is a tiny, but vital cog – and they need to see how their efforts fit into the big picture.

We have completely changed our approach towards leadership, away from the legacy, top-down approach familiar in this part of Europe. There is now much more ownership when it comes to senior leadership portfolios and a focus on the development of leadership capacity across all leaders. Clear systems, policies and protocols have helped us move towards equity-based leadership and away from arbitrary decision making, while the work we undertake with parents, staff and students in the summer and the subsequent analysis is key to school priorities. That perception of fairness is crucial for the team and for positive wellbeing.

Robert Ford
Director, Heritage International School, Moldova
Relationship with students and students’ wellbeing

It’s often claimed that students can’t learn effectively from a teacher they don’t like, and this has been demonstrated in numerous studies. These studies show that when a positive relationship exists, students are more motivated to learn, they more actively participate in their learning and the learning is likely to be more effective. One paper demonstrates that students who are unable to form this relationship are less able to open themselves to learning from that teacher.

Thankfully, forming these meaningful relationships with pupils doesn’t appear to be a problem for most. 96% of Staff Pulse respondents said they care about their students’ performance, with 94% caring about their problems. Overall, 83% of respondents feel that, on the whole, the staff at their school have good relationships with the students, with just 2% disagreeing.

94% of staff said they care about their students

While positive relationships are maintained by the majority, a large number of staff don’t feel they are sufficiently equipped to deal with and manage students’ mental health and wellbeing concerns. An extensive study conducted on the topic found that one in five students suffers from a mental health issue, with depression and anxiety topping the list, while separate research shows that full-time students who reported a mental health condition have lower continuation, attainment and progression rates than full-time students overall.

The majority of Staff Pulse respondents feel they’re expected to manage an acceptable level of risk when it comes to safeguarding or student mental health, but only 39% feel fully equipped to manage the mental health concerns of students. These findings are echoed in many studies on the subject, which shows that while staff indicate that it’s within their role to deal with mental health issues, many don’t have the knowledge to do so. One study found that teacher education programmes aren’t providing enough preparation for teachers and, although available, many teachers aren’t aware of resources produced by interest groups.

By providing staff with the time and tools to better support students, schools can make a real impact on stress and workload. With recent lockdown restrictions proven to have had a negative impact on children’s mental health, it’s clear that teachers will need more resources to better support their students over the coming months.

Beyond issues relating to mental health, staff feel better equipped; 74% of respondents said they feel fully equipped to manage safeguarding concerns and 67% feel the work they do is in tune with the concerns of children and their families.

School staff want to support and protect the students in their care – but they need the tools to do it. Schools can help by ensuring staff have the right resources and up-to-date training in these areas.

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When staff understand the systems they’re working with, it will give them the confidence to provide their students the support they need.

We know a culture of wellbeing is also about staff’s relationship with students and ensuring staff are adequately prepared to support student’s mental health and safeguarding needs. We have changed our pastoral system from detention to reflection and included a caveat that teachers would spend a session reflecting with students with the aim of building relationships. We have also streamlined reflections so instead of each faculty running one there is an after-school reflection for the whole school manned by middle leaders and the senior leadership team. In addition we delivered training for all staff on creating safe classrooms which encourage healthy conversations and training for all staff on mental health signs to look out for with students.

Clare Erasmus
Designated mental health lead, Brighton Hill Community School, UK

12 Hawk, Kay & Clayley, Esther & Fel A & Sutherland, Sue (2002). The importance of the teacher/student relationship for Maori and Pasifika students. Set. 3. 10.18296/set.0716.
14 Mental health: Are all students being properly supported? Office for students. 5 November 2019.
Many of the issues explored in this report – be it enjoyment, confidence or professional development – are intrinsically linked to a staff member’s workload and the resources provided by their school. Workload is one of the biggest causes of stress and burnout, and it’s important that staff are provided with the resources required to tackle the growing number of tasks on their to-do lists.

If a workload is balanced effectively and the necessary resources are provided, staff are more likely to feel confident about their work volume and deliver higher quality work at a faster pace. On the contrary, if school staff are overloaded and can’t effectively manage the amount of work required of them, they’re likely to experience a decrease in morale, which in turn can lead to absenteeism and higher turnover rates.

**44% of staff said their work-life balance is sustainable**

44% of Staff Pulse respondents agreed that their workload was manageable, with a fifth (20%) stating that their workload isn’t practical or achievable. Similarly, 35% agreed that they have enough time to do their job effectively (versus 24% who responded that they don’t), and 21% feel their stress levels aren’t sustainable.

A similar number of respondents feel that an inability to manage their time and to-do list is having an impact on their work-life balance; with 44% agreeing that their work-life balance is sustainable, and almost a fifth (19%) disagreeing with this statement. Having a healthy work-life balance means that staff will be happier when they come to work. This, in turn, helps reduce stress and the chances of burnout, two common health issues in the workplace.

This lack of a sustainable work-life balance experienced by some could be a result of the resources and tools they’re provided with. Those that are provided with adequate resources will be able to balance their workload and better develop and achieve goals.

Staff Pulse results show that 55% of staff believe they have enough resources to do their job, with 11% disagreeing, and some 58% of respondents feel they have the tools and training to do their job well, versus 8% who disagree.

It’s important to remember that these resources not only include sufficient training and classroom equipment, but the environment staff work in as well. Research has shown that a comfortable workspace can have a significant impact on employee performance and productivity levels; a comfortable physical space helps to create a more positive atmosphere, which, in turn, leads to improved motivation and a greater will to produce good results. More than half (54%) of respondents said they feel the rooms they use are physically comfortable, with 12% disagreeing.

With ever increasing workloads being a large area of concern to school staff it’s important to look at how this area can be supported. It isn’t realistic to suggest workload can just disappear – instead a system needs to exist where workload is monitored.

Before a new request of time is made of your staff, is someone asking what needs to be taken away to allow them time to do this?

Successful schools ensure there are measures in place to help support the wellbeing of staff, and are mindful of the impact every initiative will have upon staff workload.

**Staff questionnaires have identified where we are succeeding with supporting wellbeing and areas where we need to improve. This is something that continually sits on the whole school agenda. Work-life balance is a priority whereby staff are not expected to work or be in school during the evening and there are no emails at weekends. Weekly planning and preparation time is allocated where staff work together to plan giving them the opportunity to share ideas and concerns, reducing isolation. Those staff with greater responsibility in school have time out of class to fulfil their role each week. We also ensure that resources that support mental health and wellbeing are continually updated on the staff shared drive.**

Jo Quarie
Principal, Ocean Academy Poole, Bournemouth, UK
It’s long been a commonly-held belief that those working in the education sector are at an increased risk of experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing compared to people in other, less stressful jobs. Staff Pulse responses show that while many staff feel positive and show great resilience, staff wellbeing remains and is now, more than ever, an unmistakable issue.

While school staff tend to enjoy their jobs, are compassionate about the students they teach and enjoy working with their colleagues, in some cases a lack of communication and constructive feedback from leaders, insufficient freedom and autonomy, and mounting workloads are having an impact on overall wellbeing.

This, in turn, can have a noticeable impact on other areas of a school’s operation. Staff who feel they’re lacking effective communication and active participation in the running of their school, for example, may suffer from low self-esteem and self-confidence, which can lead to lower levels of staff performance and retention. Similarly, where staff feel they’re having to tackle mounting workloads and tasks they don’t feel prepared for, schools could experience a decrease in morale, and subsequently increasing absenteeism and higher turnover rates.

Ultimately, the problems that arise as a result of poor staff wellbeing can impact the quality of staff-pupil relationships, student wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Thankfully, staff wellbeing is something that can be improved. As this report shows, there are some great positives that can come from asking staff how they feel and what more can be done to support their wellbeing. An air of positivity and gestures of gratitude will likely have an impact for those who feel overlooked and unheard, while investing in staff training, development and goal-setting will have an impact on each staff member’s self-confidence and personal insight, which means they’re not only likely to develop their own skills but also to stay in their job for longer.

Ultimately, clear, two-way ongoing communication is key, and this has never been more important. A good leader is one that can communicate effectively, motivate staff in a forward direction and openly celebrate their strengths, skills and achievements; and a leader that can also show a sense of caring and compassion towards staff is likely to enjoy a healthier, happier and better-performing workforce.

The first step can simply be to ask your staff how they’re doing and start from there.
Understand and manage staff wellbeing

Through anonymous surveys, Staff Pulse gives your staff a voice.

Now, more than ever, it’s important to ensure your staff feel supported and valued. Collect feedback, build an action plan and measure results to improve your school’s performance, retention and ethos.

Learn more: tes.com/staff-pulse-report

Our school has been through a period of rapid change. In order to help us formulate an action plan, and measure its progress, we wanted a way of hearing staff voice from all corners of the staff room – local and expatriate, newly arrived and long-term colleagues alike. Staff Pulse provided an easy to use, confidential way for all teaching team members to have a voice. They can highlight areas where attention is needed, and comment on specific points that we can then address quickly. The tracking feature enables us to see our progress over time, and the conversation feature allows us to respond to individual commenters, without affecting their anonymity.

Tom Wilde
Head of school, Kazakhstan International School