

Supporting staff wellbeing: At The Valley Community School



Supporting staff wellbeing

At the Valley Community School, from an organisational perspective, employee wellbeing is an important factor in quality, performance and productivity. Wellbeing is strongly related to work stress, a key player in employee absence. Demotivated staff are often disengaged, do not enjoy their jobs and eventually leave.

We believe it has never been more important to focus on and ensure the wellbeing of teaching staff. As well as greater staff retention levels, less sick leave, and lower supply staff costs, research has shown that a staff's happiness levels has a knock on effect for students.

It would therefore seem likely that higher levels of staff health and wellbeing would result in improved student educational outcomes. A staff member with high job satisfaction, positive morale and who is healthy should be more likely to teach lessons which are creative, challenging and effective, leading to students doing better in exams.

Why does staff wellbeing matter?

Staff members with low health and wellbeing, experiencing high levels of stress or who is ill at work, will not perform to the best of their ability.

This could be as a result of different factors. For example, a colleague with low health and wellbeing may lack the energy required to deliver a lesson which effectively pushes children to succeed.

A colleague who is ill but at work may find it more difficult to manage poor pupil behaviour, leading to higher levels of disruption for the rest of the class. Additionally, a colleague who is struggling to cope with stress is more likely to be absent from work.

How colleagues present at work is one of the many factors that may be associated with a student's educational attainment. Other factors are the student's home and family life, the school as a whole, their peers and the classes they are placed in.

What has an impact on wellbeing?

Research has identified six aspects of work which, if managed poorly, could create stress in the workplace:

- Demands – such as workload and work environment
- Control – a person's own influence over how their job is carried out
- Support – from colleagues, line-manager and organisation
- Relationships – to reduce conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour
- Role – understanding of the job content and expectations
- Change – how change is managed in the organisation

Evidence has shown that being in good quality work is good for your physical and mental health, resulting in better self-esteem and quality of life. The main factors influencing good quality of work are:

- Leaders who support employees and see where they fit into the bigger organisational picture
- Effective line managers who respect, develop and reward their staff
- Consultation that values the voice of employees and listens to their views
- Concerns and relationships based on trust and shared values

Measuring staff wellbeing

Our staff surveys help staff to answer questions anonymously and without fear of reprisals.

We explain to staff the purpose of the survey and seek their support for the process. We are clear that you are happy to make necessary changes, depending on what the results show.

Examples of questions we ask:

- Do you feel stressed at work?
- Do you feel adequately supported at work?
- Do you feel equipped to manage your workload?
- Where/who do you turn to if there is something wrong?
- Would you like the opportunity to have counselling?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- What do you not like?

Presenting findings & making changes

The results of the survey are shared with staff and the governors. Anonymity must be maintained, but staff should be consulted on the findings and given the chance to suggest improvements to the school culture and environment.

REFER to our consultation survey

Workload

When workload has been highlighted as an issue we consider:

- Measuring our pinch points across the school calendar
- Rescheduling activities, such as report writing, to times that are not already busy
- Staff suggestions on reducing or extending deadline dates **that are none essential**

Support

If staff have expressed that they do not feel supported, it may we ask:

- Is there a better way that good work and effort can be acknowledged by the management team?
- How can the practice of lesson observation be improved so it is a positive process?
- Is there more administrative or technical support that can be offered?
- Is there an effective induction schedule in place for new and supply staff?
- Are there any flexible working arrangements that can be put in place, e.g. do staff know how to ask for time off when it is needed?
- Are staff aware of the health and welfare support that is available?

Control

All staff should be satisfied that they have some say in the way that they work.
We Consider:

- Do staff feel that they have autonomy, or do they feel micromanaged?
- Do they have control over their own lesson plans?
- Are staff encouraged and have opportunities to go on training courses to develop subject knowledge and professional development?
- Can they access mentoring and coaching?

Relationships

Creating a positive workplace means that professional relationships and conflict management need to be addressed:

- The school behaviour policy should be robust and enforced. Are there any concerns?
- Are staff satisfied that where bullying or harassment is taking place, management takes steps to stop the behaviour?
- Are complaints taken seriously and investigated?

Change

If there are changes happening at the school, management need to engage staff during this period. Is/are there:

- An opportunity to consult with staff before any organisational change occurs?
- Training and equipment provided to deal with new systems?
- Suitable resources to support the change?
- Reflection on how this will affect work-life balance?

It is essential that the effort of the staff to complete the survey and give feedback is not wasted.

Concrete action to reduce stress, support employees and provide ongoing opportunities for reflection and further suggestions is essential



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