

The Well-Being Programme Report

Includes a collection of detailed case-studies showcasing the positive impact the Well-Being Programme has on schools



worklife support

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Investing in the School Workforce

Introduction

Since 2001, when Worklife Support was first established by the national charity Teacher Support Network to introduce the Well-Being Programme in schools, the concept of employee wellbeing has grown in both significance and importance across the whole economy.

In 2008, the Government's National Director for Health and Work, published *Working for a healthier tomorrow*. This review examines the health of working age individuals whose health has consequences often far beyond themselves - touching their families and children, workplaces and wider communities. The review calls for a shift in attitudes necessary to ensure that employers and employees recognise not only the importance of preventing ill-health, but also the key role the workplace can play in promoting health and wellbeing. In order to meet this vision the Government's response, *Improving health and work: changing lives* sets out how employers will be supported to ensure workplaces are healthy and safe and can promote the wellbeing of their workers.

This is all part of a growing recognition of the cost of employee ill-health, not just in terms of absence but also the cost of reduced effectiveness as a result of stress and other mental health issues.

According to the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, the total cost to employers of mental health problems among their staff is nearly £26 billion each year. That is equivalent to £1,035 for every employee in the UK workforce. This includes over £8 billion of the cost of sickness absence itself and a further £15 billion in reduced work efficiency, or 'presenteeism', arising as a result of stress or mental health problems. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has also estimated that 175 million working days were lost in 2009 due to sickness absence.

In November 2009, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) produced specific guidance for employers on promoting mental wellbeing through productive and healthy working conditions (NICE public health guidance 22).

Consequently, the Well-Being Programme has never been more relevant for schools, particularly as teachers are amongst the occupational groups that have the highest prevalence rates of self-reported, work-related stress

Background

In the spring of 2003, the Department for Education (formerly the Department of Children, Schools and Families, who commissioned this report) supported Worklife Support to run a pilot Well-Being Programme across 15 London Boroughs, as part of their strategy to attract, motivate and retain excellent staff to London schools. The pilot ran from 2003 to 2006 and introduced the Well-Being Programme to over 350 schools. This was to be an important catalyst in introducing a proactive approach to managing employee health and wellbeing within education.

The following year, in November 2004, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched the Management Standards for Work-Related Stress to help employers meet their duty of care by promoting organisational and individual health and wellbeing and prevent ill-health resulting from stress. The HSE identified Education as one of their 5 priority sectors where the incidence of stress was greatest and partnered with Worklife Support to encourage schools to take practical steps to improve the wellbeing of their staff.

"Participation in the Well-Being Programme from Worklife Support enables schools to demonstrate they have met their duty of care under Health and Safety legislation."

Health & Safety Executive

The Well-Being Programme from Worklife Support incorporates the 6 HSE Management Standards which represent the conditions that, if present in the workplace, reflect a high level of health, wellbeing and organisational performance: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change

Since 2001, over 3,000 schools have participated in the Worklife Support Well-Being Programme. Some of these schools have been on the Programme for over 7 years giving us the opportunity to explore the impacts and benefits of the Programme longitudinally.

The schools' experience

The purpose of this report is to share the stories of schools that have invested in the wellbeing of staff and participated in the Worklife Support Well-Being Programme over a sustained period. We describe the experiences of five very different London schools - what they have done and the impact and benefits that their wellbeing work has brought to their schools. We want to encourage schools across the country to be part of the national campaign to create healthier workplaces.

We have chosen these case studies to provide a range of ideas and possibilities that address the wellbeing themes common to many schools, for example, workload, communication, work-life balance, inclusion of the whole staff team and relationships. We hope these positive examples will encourage other schools and educational organisations to think about what they might do to promote the wellbeing of their staff and to recognise the 'business case' for taking a proactive approach.

"The costs associated with employees' mental health are significant for businesses and other organisations. These costs are associated with loss in productivity because of sickness absence, early retirement, and increased staff turnover, recruitment and training."

NICE public health guidance 22:
Promoting mental well-being through productive and healthy working conditions

Managing staff sickness absence is an important priority for many schools. In this report, Hendon School, a secondary school in Barnet, discuss how their proactive approach to wellbeing led to a 15% fall in sickness absence. Similarly, St Gabriel's Church of England Primary school report how a total of 62.5 sickness days in 2007 fell to just 15 in 2009, which was accompanied by a reduction in staff turnover from 45% to 17%.

Of course, the most important priority for a school is to see a positive impact on its core purpose - teaching and learning. In 2007, Worklife Support worked with Birkbeck college at the University of London to research the links between the wellbeing of school staff and overall school performance. This study, the first of its kind in the UK, found a clear and consistent link between staff wellbeing and SATs and value-added measures.

"Schools whose staff, on average, report higher levels of feeling valued, greater job satisfaction and lower levels of work overload are also those schools where SATs performance is higher"

Professor Rob Briner and Dr Chris Dewberry, Birkbeck College

The implication of these findings is that if schools want to improve their performance, they need to pay careful attention to the wellbeing of their staff (for further detail on this report, see page 18). You can read how Hendon School's experience bears this out. Since wellbeing has been high on the school's agenda 78% of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs in 2009, compared with just 48% in 2006.

Investing in the School Workforce

Established in 2001 by the national charity Teacher Support Network, Worklife Support specialises in programmes that focus on the wellbeing, motivation and effectiveness of people working in education.

Our overall purpose - and the purpose of the Well-Being Programme - is to help schools secure the wellbeing of their workforce in order to establish the best possible conditions for the development and achievement of children and young people in schools. We aim to do this by:

- Helping schools develop and sustain a healthy, supportive working environment that brings out the best in people
- Enabling individuals to manage proactively their own wellbeing and personal effectiveness
- Developing a solutions-focused culture that engages everyone in positive change
- Facilitating colleagues at vulnerable times to access early and appropriate support
- Providing a means of sharing best practice across schools

Our unique wellbeing approach for schools combines measures that support both the individual and the work environment. For members of staff, the Well-Being Programme provides a comprehensive package of practical and emotional support offering individuals the tools and resources they need to manage and improve their own wellbeing and effectiveness. Organisationally, the Well-Being Programme offers a framework within which schools engage colleagues in identifying and promoting the factors that promote wellbeing in the workplace.

Support for Individuals

The Worklife Support Well-Being Programme specialises in the social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of school staff, offering support on issues from work-life balance and managing workload to bereavement and personal development. An important aspect of the programme is a confidential EAP which is available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The service is available to assist individuals with the positive management of life's day-to-day challenges as well as more significant life events. It aims to improve well-being through developing new perspectives and a 'tool kit' of skills and coping strategies.

Ensuring vulnerable individuals are put in touch with appropriate support at an early stage is crucial in any workplace's wellbeing strategy. We work with schools to raise awareness of the early warning signs and the importance of early intervention.

The Programme provides 24-hour access to immediate telephone counselling and/or referral into local face-to-face counselling through our national network of counsellors. Where appropriate, we offer online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) a method that aims to solve problems through a goal-oriented, systematic approach.

We also recognise that supporting and training managers is key to workplace health. The Worklife Support Programme provides specialist coaching support and guidance to leaders and managers, both for individuals and through training sessions for groups.

“Worklife Support’s EAP is highly valued by our staff. It enables them to manage their lives proactively in areas that cannot be dealt with during normal working hours. It has sent a signal that shows we care.”

Melanie Adams, HR Director,
The Collegiate Academy Trust

The Organisational Process

The Well-Being Programme itself relies on a 'bottom-up' solutions-focused approach in order to create a healthy workplace. The aim is to engage colleagues at every level to take responsibility for resolving problems and bringing about sustainable improvement. Staff not only identify what needs to change in their school, but share responsibility for making it happen. The process diagram opposite describes some of the important aspects of the Well-Being Programme.

The Programme begins by engaging a school's headteacher and leadership team, which is essential for its success. Our experience tells us that a motivated and energised Well-Being team, representing a good cross-section of staff at every level is also critical to sustainability. The team is instrumental in engaging colleagues in the process of positive change, embedding a culture of wellbeing within the schools' policies and procedures and maintaining the momentum of the Programme throughout.

Hendon School

London Borough of Barnet

Headteacher: Kevin McKellar

No of Staff: 190

Type of School: Secondary

No of Pupils: 1,296



Kevin McKellar

“People talk about Well-Being all the time now. It’s part of everything we do.”

Kevin McKellar

Background

Four years ago, wellbeing wasn’t a word heard often around the corridors of Hendon School. The school had recently come out of special measures and staff had worked under four different headteachers in almost as many years. Unsurprisingly, morale was low.

When current headteacher Kevin McKellar joined the school in 2006, he was keen to restore staff confidence and self-esteem, with the ultimate aim of raising pupil attainment. The Well-Being Programme offered a structured approach to achieving that.

The Well-Being Programme

The first Well-Being survey highlighted the working environment, communication and work-life balance as key areas for improvement. A Well-Being team was established, led by assistant headteacher Tom Mann, and a group of colleagues from different departments across the school. The team still meets fortnightly to discuss how the findings of the survey, along with ongoing feedback from staff, can be used to improve wellbeing.

Improving the school environment was a key priority for McKellar, who set about making the school “look beautiful.” The peeling white paint in the corridors has been replaced by vibrant pinks and purples and the staffroom refurbished with modern furniture, fixtures and fittings. Eye-catching statues and sculptures now line the main corridor of the school. Outside, a fountain (known as the ‘fountain of life’) has been installed, providing a central focus for the space where pupils gather at break times.

The toilets, which staff had previously complained were unpleasant, have also been given a makeover. Not an easy task in a well-worn Victorian building, but a lick of paint, a few pot plants, good quality soap and hand driers made a big difference to staff.

The reception area and headteacher’s office, previously tucked away in the bowels of the building, have been moved from the basement to the ground floor. The contemporary-looking reception area, dominated by glass and lime green Perspex, could easily belong to a smart City firm. “It shows we mean business,” says McKellar. “Even the smallest of changes to the physical environment can help raise morale and create a more positive atmosphere.”

The decision to relocate the headteacher’s office and reception area was not just about creating a more pleasant working environment. It also sent a powerful message about relationships and communication. McKellar had already introduced an ‘open door’ policy, making it clear that staff were welcome to approach him directly (or indeed any member of the leadership team) to discuss any issues they might have. Having his office at the heart of the school reinforced that message. The Well-Being survey highlighted that staff didn’t always feel listened to, so this was a key area of focus for both the Well-Being and leadership teams.





All members of staff are now invited to weekly briefing meetings, held on Friday mornings and INSET time has been allocated for the discussion of whole-staff issues

Termly meetings have been introduced for faculty members. The headteacher and middle managers from different faculties and different year groups now also meet on a regular basis.

To minimise the impact of workload, the school now closes early on Friday afternoons, giving staff the opportunity to meet with colleagues and take part in training activities. In response to staff feedback, an online reporting system has been introduced, dramatically reducing the time teachers' spend on assessment and reporting.

Before the Well-Being Programme was introduced, staff were, in McKellar's words, 'very fragmented, very angry and not working together at all,' so the team has worked hard to encourage staff in different roles and departments, to mix with one other.

"Even the smallest of changes to the physical environment can help raise morale and create a positive atmosphere."

Kevin McKellar

On INSET days, staff are encouraged to socialise, as well as collaborate professionally. Past highlights include performances from fringe comedians and wine and chocolate tasting. The Well-Being team has organised dinner dances, barbecues, rounders competitions and introduced a 'buddy scheme' linking staff from different departments.

To encourage healthy and active lifestyles and reduce stress, the school now runs a range of sport and exercise activities for staff on Friday afternoons. Activities, delivered by sixth formers who have gained sports leaders' awards, include aerobics, netball, yoga and badminton. A member of the cleaning staff, who is also a trained masseuse is available to provide massage sessions.

The follow-on survey

Hendon School's commitment to wellbeing has clearly paid off. The follow-on survey, showed staff felt far more positive in many of the areas covered by the survey, with notable improvements in the school culture. Staff now feel more positive about the way change is managed at the school, with ratings rising well above the national average. "The leadership team is much more proactive now," says head of PE Donna Sheehan. "It's very clear what everyone's roles are, which makes for better communication. You really do feel listened to."

This is reflected in sickness and absence rates, which have fallen since the school joined the Well-Being Programme. Between the first and follow-on survey, during which time the school introduced a comprehensive 'return to work policy,' sickness rates fell by 15%. Staff retention has also improved. "Four years ago, it wasn't uncommon to lose 15 or 20 staff at the end of each year. Now it's more like two or three," says Mann. Having a healthier, happier staff has had a positive impact on pupils, just as McKellar hoped. This year, 78% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs with A* to C grades, compared with just 48% in 2006.

For McKellar, Worklife Support *for you*, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which provides professional resources and support from trained counsellors and advisors, has been the "biggest success" of the Well-Being Programme. Several staff have called the EAP for advice on work-related and personal issues. Others have made use of the face-to-face counselling sessions available to programme members, including McKellar himself.

The future

What has been achieved so far is only "green shoots," says McKellar. The Well-Being team is currently considering an early closing day of 5pm once a week, to remind staff of the need to maintain a healthy work-life balance, vital for sustaining creativity and performance. The group is also looking at communication, particularly how email is used by staff in the school and how it affects workload. There are also plans to review the school marking policy, to see if any changes could be made to ease the pressure on teachers.

What is clear is that Well-Being is now firmly embedded in the school. As Sheehan explains: "People talk about wellbeing all the time now. It's part of everything we do."

Spa School

London Borough of Southwark

Headteacher: Simon Eccles

No of Staff: 58

Type of School: Special

No of Pupils: 91



Simon Eccles & Eileen Oilleuz

“The majority of our budget is spent on staff, so we have to value that resource highly and use it to its best effect.”

Eileen Oilleuz

Background

When headteacher Simon Eccles joined Spa School, a special school for young people with Autism or Aspergers Syndrome, he found a fragmented workforce. The leadership team seemed very separate from the rest of the staff, many of whom were struggling to keep pace with change, having worked under three different headteachers in quick succession with teaching assistants (TAs) often feeling ‘second best’ to teachers.

The staffroom was a converted classroom, located on a noisy corridor, too small to accommodate the whole staff at one time, making it difficult for staff to form relationships with one another. Children wandered in and out, giving staff little opportunity to take a break during the school day.

Stress levels were high. While this is not uncommon in staff working with young people with complex needs, the school had little in the way of formal policies or procedures, so many staff were simply ‘firefighting’ on a daily basis. Teachers often had to change classes to manage difficult situations relating to pupil behaviour. Staff felt they were not given enough notice for parents’ evenings or meetings, making it difficult to manage their workloads. An Ofsted

report in early 2007, deemed the school to be satisfactory, but identified a number of areas where teaching and learning could be improved.

Eccles and deputy head Eileen Oilleuz, who was also new to the school, recognised that if they wanted the school to improve, they needed to ensure staff were happy at work. The package offered by the Well-Being Programme seemed like a step in the right direction.

The Well-Being Programme

We realised that if we made sure our staff were looked after, they would be much better placed to look after the complex needs of the children,” says deputy head Oilleuz. “The majority of our budget is spent on staff, so we have to value that resource highly and use it to its best effect.”

Being part of the Well-Being Programme since 2004 has meant the school has been able to track its progress over a number of years, through the online surveys. Staff also received individual advice and support through Worklife Support *for you*, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which provides professional resources and support from trained counsellors and advisors.

There have been many changes at the school, including a new staffroom, which has had a big impact on the school. Kitted out with stylish IKEA furniture, cheerful fixtures and fittings and a well-equipped kitchen area, it is big enough to accommodate everyone. It is now separate from the rest of the school, meaning staff can relax and recharge their batteries. There is also dedicated space with IT facilities, for work and a quiet room for staff who feel they need time out after a particularly stressful incident.

“The challenging nature of some of the young people we work with means it is not uncommon for staff to be physically hurt or experience emotional wear and tear,” says Oilleuz. “In the past, many staff felt they just had to carry on.”





Barbara Nowak & Christine Mann

Now, staff are encouraged to take time out of the classroom if they need it. If a member of staff is hurt and has to go home, they receive a phone call and flowers. On their return to school, a member of the leadership team is on hand to offer support and a listening ear if needed.

“I’ve never worked anywhere where you have these nice little touches. It all makes for a much happier working life.”

Teacher

With more opportunities for staff to mix, working relationships have strengthened. Optional training sessions are attended by more than 50% of staff. Film nights, held every half term and often based around the theme of autism are also well-attended. Staff have also had the opportunity to take part in a variety of activities, ranging from pottery to Pilates.

Termly meetings are held to give staff the opportunity to discuss wellbeing. Many of the ideas put forward at Well-Being team meetings have been incorporated into the new staffroom. There is a strong commitment to making staff feel valued at The Spa School, particularly TAs who, in Oilleuz’s words “are often at the front line and do a very difficult job.”

INSET days have begun with a breakfast cooked by the headteacher and there are chocolates in the staffroom on Fridays as a ‘thank you.’ “None of us are in it for the salary,” says Oilleuz. “So those little things - biscuits, supplying milk for tea and coffee, and social events - really do matter.” But she is all-too-aware that valuing people goes far beyond chocolates and flowers and a number of changes have been introduced to help staff manage their day-to-day workload.

Calendars are now issued at the start of each school year and term, outlining key dates, such as parents evenings and deadlines, meaning staff can plan ahead more effectively. Teachers also benefit from more time away from the classroom for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). All teachers are now paid for undertaking a specific area of responsibility, such as a subject specialism.

Annual Reviews (where parents meet with teachers and other professionals working with their child) typically require hours of teacher preparation, so these have now been spread across the year.

The school has also invested in training and six out of 14 teachers are currently involved in leadership or middle management training. “What we wanted was, distributed management, a school where everyone was a leader,” says Oilleuz.

The follow-on survey

Results from the follow-on survey show the changes are making an impact, particularly in relation to communication, with ratings showing a rise of 22%. There have also been improvements in the way the organisation manages change, where ratings have climbed by 34%. One of the most significant changes to have taken place is that staff feel valued and supported by their managers, as this rose 46%.

The survey results highlight significant improvements in relationships between managers and staff, the support provided by managers, opportunities for training and development and their role in the decision-making process. And while the leadership team has only just started to formally track staff recruitment and retention rates, the school is losing fewer staff each year. Those who do move on, often do so in order to further their career, says Oilleuz.

She believes improved staff wellbeing contributed to the school’s recent success in gaining an Autism Accreditation Award (which recognises excellence working with children with autism) after a challenging five-day inspection.

The future

With an Ofsted inspection likely in the none-too-distant future, the school is preparing its self-evaluation form (SEF) which will include details of the Well-Being Programme and how it is helping to transform the organisation.

Three years on, it is clear that having wellbeing at the heart of everything the school does has proved very motivating for staff. As one teacher explains: “Everything Simon and Eileen do is has about making people feel like they are valued. I’ve never worked anywhere where you have these nice little touches. It all makes for a much happier working life.”

Mayplace Primary School

London Borough of Bexley

Headteacher: Judith Pemberton

No of Staff: 58

Type of School: Primary

No of Pupils: 451



The Well-Being team

“The opportunity to share ideas with other schools is invaluable.”

Kirsty Meekings

The Well-Being Programme

At Mayplace Primary School, staff wellbeing has always been a priority. Nevertheless, when the school joined the Well-Being Programme in 2004, the online survey highlighted both communication and workload as areas for development.

A Well-Being team was established, made up of representatives from the leadership team, teachers and support staff. The group now meets every half-term for a working lunch, to set priorities and explore ways of improving staff wellbeing amongst staff and in the organisation.

Representatives from the school’s Well-Being team attend termly meetings with other schools in the borough who are on the Well-Being Programme, facilitated by Worklife Support. “The opportunity to share ideas with other schools is invaluable,” says year 6 teacher Kirsty Meekings. “It has also provided reassurance about some of the things we are already doing well. After attending our first regional meeting, we came back and made a list of the all the positive things we had in place in relation to communication such as our tannoy system and installing phones in every classroom. It felt like a really good starting point.”

Building upon the existing good relationships between staff - not always easy in a busy school environment - has been a priority for the Well-Being team. Well-Being breakfasts, held three times a year, encourage staff to come to school a bit earlier and socialise with colleagues over a healthy breakfast.

Last term, the team organised a Think Pink day, where everyone wore a pink item of clothing to school in exchange for a donation to a breast cancer awareness charity. This also acted as a reminder to staff to think about their own health and wellbeing.

Ensuring everyone has a voice is another key area of focus. In response to feedback from staff, weekly bulletin meetings for teaching assistants (TAs), have recently been introduced. “As well as circulating relevant information, it is also an opportunity for us to raise any issues which specifically affect TAs,” says TA Sandra Rust.

In addition to a dedicated noticeboard, where the team posts news of upcoming events, the staffroom now has a suggestion box where staff can post questions or concerns. The Well-Being team recently carried out an anonymous survey to gather opinions on furniture, fixtures and fittings required for the new staffroom, due to be completed later this year.

The school has also taken a number of steps to ensure teachers’ workloads are more manageable. Headteacher Judith Pemberton takes a strategic approach to change and staff are now encouraged to prioritise the aims and objectives set out in the School Improvement Plan (SIP),



rather than try to implement every new education initiative immediately. “By concentrating each term or year on a particular subject you’re far more likely to make an impact,” says deputy headteacher Sheena Hamilton. “This year it’s maths and we’re already beginning to see improvements.”

Every effort is made to ensure teachers who take on additional responsibilities are given time during the school day to do the job effectively. In addition to the afternoon a week given to all teachers for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA), NQT mentors are given a 10% timetable reduction (which equates to another afternoon a week). There is also a rota for teachers with additional responsibilities, who get a couple of mornings or afternoons every half term to carry out some of the extra work.

“They [teachers] are more likely to be effective practitioners, if they don’t feel overloaded.”

Sheena Hamilton

On alternate weeks, School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings are held during school time, so staff do not have to stay behind after school. “Obviously, it is a delicate balance between giving teachers the time they need to get the work completed and not negatively impacting on the children’s progress, and we’re very mindful of that,” says Hamilton. “But they are more likely to be effective practitioners if they don’t feel overloaded.”

In addition to organisational change, since joining the Well-Being Programme, the school has introduced a number of changes aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles. The school hired a fitness instructor from a local sports centre to run weekly Pilates sessions for staff. Classes were subsidised by the school, meaning staff paid just £2.00 per session. Now staff meet after school once a week and work out together to a fitness DVD.

For the past two years, Well-Being coordinator Barbara Parker has arranged for the corporate nurse, based at the civic centre, to visit the school. She administers flu jabs for staff, the cost of which is funded by the school. Staff who are absent for the nurse’s visit are invited to make an appointment at the civic centre, to have the injection. This year, fifty percent of staff took up this opportunity. Parker has also negotiated staff discounts for complementary therapies such as reflexology and she regularly posts updates on offers.



Barbara Parker

In addition, the school has invested in staff development. TAs are now released for training (on and off-site) every month, for one afternoon, with topics including behaviour management, special needs and First Aid.

All subject coordinators are now ‘shadowed’ by a less experienced member of staff, meaning they are ready to step into a more senior role, should an opportunity arise.

Their efforts are clearly making an impact. Since Mayplace joined the Well-Being Programme, the follow-on survey shows significant improvements, particularly in relation to work-life balance.

In the follow up survey, staff rated their own well being 18% higher than it was in the first year. Responses to statements about workload show that staff are less likely to feel overwhelmed, with ratings rising by 38.7%.

The future

Details of the Well-Being Programme have been included in the school’s self-evaluation form (SEF) for Ofsted, as evidence of the overall culture of the school and the way it invests in its staff.

At an organisational level, the focus has now shifted to reducing teachers’ workload in relation to reporting and assessment. A new online reporting system, should help spread the work more evenly throughout the year, by allowing teachers to build records of pupils throughout the school year.

Work on the new staffroom is now underway, reflecting the staff ‘wish list’ of comfy chairs, a dining table and work benches with computers. Taking pride of place will be a new water cooler, installed last summer, at the request of staff. Meekings explains: “We only get 15 minute breaks, and we can’t take hot drinks into the classroom for health and safety reasons, so having access to good quality drinking water is really important. It’s a small change, but staff really appreciate it.”

Branfil Primary School

London Borough of Havering

Headteacher: Andrew Kelly

No of Staff: 78

Type of School: Primary

No of Pupils: 432



Andrew Kelly

“If staff are happy, children are happy. If children are happy, they’ll succeed.”

Andrew Kelly

Background

Until September 2008, despite being ‘next door neighbours’, Branfil Infant and Branfil Junior schools were two separate organisations. The local authority’s decision to amalgamate the two, under the leadership of Andy Kelly, formerly head of the infant school, presented many challenges. There were noticeable differences in the way the two organisations were run, particularly in relation to communication, management and culture.

One of the schools had not fully embraced new technology, such as email, shared networks and interactive whiteboards, so communication between staff was often done on an informal basis. While one school had established year teams, comprising teachers and support staff, at the other school teachers often worked more independently.

At one school, there was a marked division between management and the rest of the workforce, and between teachers and support staff. Teaching assistants (TAs) were not always involved in staff meetings and training, which meant some didn’t feel their views were represented.

The Well-Being Programme

Having been involved with the Well-Being programme for four years at the infant school, Kelly recognised that looking after his staff, who would inevitably have to adapt to change, was crucial in the amalgamation process. He says: “If staff are happy, children are happy. If children are happy, they’ll succeed.”

Top of the agenda was addressing differences in pay between the two schools. While TAs at one school were paid for an extra half an hour at the end of the school day and for additional meetings or training, others were not. All TAs are now paid the same and the school now also pays midday supervisors for additional training. “Paying for an extra half an hour doesn’t break the bank, but does make staff feel more valued,” says Kelly.

Improving communication across the school was another key priority. Staff meetings and training sessions are now open to all, meaning support staff feel they have more of a ‘voice’ in the school. Briefing meetings, held on Friday mornings are well attended by both teachers and support staff.

Weekly bulletins have been introduced, which are distributed to all staff (online and in print format), highlighting key dates, deadlines, visits and cover arrangements. This was warmly welcomed by TAs, who had previously found it difficult to plan ahead: “Before, we never had anything on paper. Not knowing what you’re supposed to be doing can drive up your stress levels,” says Year 6 TA, Kim Smith.



Lynn Smith & Kim Smith



Mel Ditmore

Schemes of work, policy documents and other relevant data, have been uploaded to a shared online area, which staff can access at work or at home. All staff now have their own secure school email account and an interactive whiteboard has been installed in every classroom in the school. This has helped staff work more collaboratively, encouraging them to share information and resources. “Now, at the beginning of the week, our year leader emails the week’s plans to teachers and TAs working in the year group. If you know what’s coming up, you’re much better placed to support the children,” says Smith.

“If you know what’s coming up, you’re much better placed to support the children.”

Kim Smith

Investment in training has also helped staff feel more valued. Key Stage 2 (KS2) TAs have all pursued further training, with some progressing from NVQ Level 1 to Level 3 or 4 (‘A’ level equivalent) in the space of a year. Four now have Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status (HTLA).

A new tier of management has been introduced, and across the infant and junior departments, five staff are currently doing middle management training through the National College of School Leadership and Children’s Services (NCSL).

The school secretary Sue Randlesome has also been trained through NCSL and has the new title of ‘School Business Manager’, which has had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the organisation. Kelly explains: “Instead of number crunching or poring over figures, I can spend time with staff. It frees me up to concentrate on the business of learning and teaching.”

The follow-on survey

With the school emerging from a period of dramatic change, there is still work to be done, says Kelly. Early indicators from the survey suggest that staff are responding well to change. Overall, ratings for personal wellbeing have improved and the follow-on survey shows there have been noticeable improvements in some of the most challenging issues, such as communication.

With Key Stage 1 (KS1) and KS2 staff based on separate sites, from a practical point of view, it is difficult to get the whole staff together. A shared staffroom would go a long way to addressing this, but with limited funding, this is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, he hopes to establish more regular meetings for TAs across KS1 and KS2, so they can share information and ideas.

Staff at Branfil are already aware of Worklife Support *for you*, the Employee Assistance Programme, which provides resources and support from trained counsellors and advisors. “I know some staff have used the service for information on pensions and other financial issues,” says a KS1 teacher. “I know of at least one person who has taken advantage of the free counselling service to discuss personal issues.” Having the service available 24/7 has been a real comfort to staff as they have found it difficult to access CAB style services during the day.

A Well-Being team was established, led by KS2 TA Kim Smith and KS1 TA Lynn Smith with the aim of addressing staff concerns ‘on the ground.’ “Often it’s little things that get people down, like no soap in the toilet. It sounds silly, but fixing something like that can actually make a difference to how staff are feeling and to how they perform.”

The future

Kelly has recently appointed a new deputy headteacher with a background in the creative curriculum, which he hopes will “refresh and reinvigorate” learning and teaching, and ultimately, raise standards across the school. A working party, with representatives from across the staff, has been established to get this up and running.



Laura Muir

St. Gabriel's C of E Primary School

London Borough of Westminster

Headteacher: Sue McMahon

No of Staff: 24

Type of School: Primary

No of Pupils: 210



The Well-Being team

"I feel really appreciated now. It's my workplace and I love being here."

Shelley Corrigan

The Well-Being Programme

When staff at St. Gabriel's Church of England Primary School took part in their first Well-Being survey, communication and workload were highlighted as areas for improvement. The survey also showed that teaching assistants (TAs) felt they were not always involved in the decision making process.

To explore the findings in more detail and discuss possible solutions, headteacher Sue McMahon met with teaching staff whilst office administrator and Well-Being coordinator Ana Jimenez met with support staff. Teachers said they felt overloaded by the Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) preparation, so the school has recruited a number of part-time staff to run booster classes and classroom cover, easing some of the pressure on teachers' workload. The Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) now works with small groups to boost literacy and numeracy.

Staff also wanted the option of staying later at work, to catch up with planning and preparation, so McMahon has arranged for the school to close half an hour later, at 6.30pm, one evening a week.

The school has outsourced many of its out-of-school clubs to external providers. "Teachers want to run after-school clubs because they benefit children tremendously, but it does add to the workload," says Year 6 teacher Laura Triggs. "Now teachers still run clubs if they want, but there is no pressure to do so." Teachers also said they would like to be more involved in decision making on school-related matters. Now the school leadership team (SLT) aims to ensure there are 'open forum' opportunities on Inset days, where staff can listen to each other and contribute their ideas.

TAs said they would like to be involved in whole-school meetings and have access to training opportunities. They were keen to have more First Aid training, particularly those TAs who also work as midday supervisors. Now TAs are invited to all meetings and a number have completed essential First Aid training.

The SENCO now line manages TAs and midday supervisors which has given them more of a 'voice' in the school and means their training needs are met more efficiently. Monthly morning meetings have been introduced for midday supervisors and TAs, which has been welcomed by staff. "As a midday supervisor, out on the playground, you often pick up problems before teachers do, so it's really important to have that contact," says TA and midday supervisor Shelley Corrigan.

"It makes you feel more valued, part of the team. When I first started at the school, three years ago, I felt I was the TA and the teacher was the 'boss.' TAs were invited to meetings, but we weren't sure if we were really wanted there. Now TAs and teachers are on more of an equal footing and we feel really welcome at meetings."

In addition to organisational change, the school has taken a number of steps to improve the personal wellbeing of its staff.

"Now TAs and teachers are on more of an equal footing and we [TAs] feel really welcome at meetings."

Shelley Corrigan



Jimenez has spruced up the staffroom with brightly coloured cushions and flowers and ensures there is always a good selection of magazines and books on hand. The staff toilets have been cheered up with a selection of perfumes and hand creams. Details of Worklife Support *for you*, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and exercises to reduce tension are also on display. There has also been a good take up for the after-school Pilates and yoga classes organised by Jimenez.

Showing appreciation has always been part of the school culture, and the headteacher's support means that any staff concerns are addressed quickly. She also gives thoughtful treats on parents' evening to give a sugar boost, and staff will often receive thank you cards.

Jimenez feels that staff participation and team involvement are important for maintaining good staff morale. She took this a step further on World Kindness Day, last November, when she stuck cards up on the Well-Being notice board in the staffroom, each suggesting a kind act staff could do for a colleague, and invited everyone to take one. "People brought flowers and chocolates, some made cakes and cushions for the staffroom - it was a really nice day," she recalls.

Since the school joined the programme, three years ago, staff retention rates have improved, with the number of staff leaving the school falling from 45% to 17%. Similarly, sickness rates have fallen, from an average of 62.5 days in 2007 (across the whole staff), to just 15 in the 2009 academic year.

The follow-on survey shows that staff feel happier with the support they are receiving in terms of their own personal wellbeing. Staff are now able to cope better with workloads as they have the support from management and colleagues.

The survey asks staff to respond to a range of statements about their working life (including communication, demands, workload and personal wellbeing). In the follow-on survey, average ratings on workload rose 18.2%. The survey also showed that staff felt more valued, with a rise of 10.1%.

The future

To maintain the momentum of the Programme, Jimenez has devised her own follow-on surveys which delve a little deeper into the issues highlighted by the school's Well-Being survey.

She has also produced a Well-Being booklet for staff, which is a concise version of the Well-Being Data Profile (the Data Profile is a booklet containing all of the data arising from a school's Well-Being survey). It summarises the results of the Well-Being Survey in an easy to read format. As well as listing the school's top survey categories, the booklet also highlights areas for development and sets out priorities. Both the top and bottom 10 statements from the survey are also included, which provides a useful 'snapshot' of where the school is now and what could be improved.

The changes have clearly had a positive effect on staff: "I feel really appreciated now," says Corrigan. "It's my work place and I love being here."



Ana Jimenez

Staff wellbeing and pupil performance

In 2007, in the first UK study of its kind, Professor Briner and Dr Dewberry of Birkbeck College at the University of London, conducted a research study into the links between the wellbeing of school staff and overall school performance.

Introduction

It is widely assumed that employees' feelings at work - expressed through satisfaction, stress and attitudes towards their job - are related to employees' performance. While hard evidence for such links is less common than most people seem to believe, there is no doubt that there is a relationship between how people feel and how they behave, and that these relationships are likely to have implications for performance. Research conducted on a group or collective level (i.e. on the level of teams, work units and organisations) reveals stronger links between wellbeing and performance i.e. work units that on average have higher levels of wellbeing tend to also have higher levels of work-unit performance.

Birkbeck's research project was designed to explore the links between the wellbeing of school staff (as measured by ratings from the Worklife Support Well-Being survey) and school performance (as measured by GCSE results, SATs and value-added measures) and we outline below some of the key findings.

Key findings

When scores of wellbeing in primary schools are aggregated and the average wellbeing of staff in each school examined in relation to the SATs results for that school, *a statistically significant positive association between staff wellbeing and SATs results is apparent.* As an indication of the strength of this relationship, the average wellbeing of teaching staff accounted for 8% of the variance in SATs results.

While the clear majority (92%) of the variation in SATs scores is explained by other factors, 8% of this variation is accounted for by teacher wellbeing. Though this may appear relatively small, it is statistically significant and may be practically important because teacher wellbeing may be more amenable to intervention and change than other factors known to strongly affect SATs scores (such as social class).

For secondary schools, after controlling for the effects of relevant variables (for example, percentage of pupils absent or with Special Educational Needs), there is *a significant and positive association between the wellbeing variables and measures of school performance* such as percentage achieving 5+ grades A to C at GCSE

and the value-added measure based on progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.

This finding demonstrates that secondary schools saw very similar results to primary schools: average levels of teacher wellbeing were found to be associated with a range of measures of pupil performance.

In addition, increases in job stimulation and enjoyment had a small but statistically significant positive association with the measure of 'value-added'. This means that increases in the average levels of job stimulation and enjoyment reported by teachers were significantly and positively associated with the value-added measure of pupil performance. *This finding suggests that where teachers within a school experience improvements in their feeling of stimulation and enjoyment, school performance may also improve.*

What does this mean?

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that there are links between how staff within a school on average feel about their work and the performance of pupils in that school. These links were found even after controlling for other factors that are known to have an influence on pupil performance. This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first study to demonstrate this relationship in a UK context.

Conclusions and implications

The major implication of these findings is that if we want to improve school performance, we also need to start paying attention to teacher wellbeing. How teachers feel on an everyday basis is likely to affect their performance and so, in turn, the performance of the pupils they teach. Ultimately, greater personal wellbeing on the part of the staff may create a more creative outlook, resulting in a more stimulating learning environment and producing better results for pupils.

The full report is available online at www.worklifesupport.com

For further information or support, please contact the Worklife Support team on wbhelp@worklifesupport.com

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