



welbee

National Staff Wellbeing Survey  
Summary Report July 2021

# Foreword

At the time of writing, the effect of the Coronavirus pandemic continues to be felt. As we all hope to take the final step towards 'freedom', I'm reminded once again of the huge gratitude we owe to all staff for keeping schools open and continuing the education of all pupils throughout the last fifteen months.

I am heartened by the renewed focus on improving the wellbeing of staff in the schools we support and of the commitment of so many leaders to maintain a focus on this, alongside everything else they are being asked to deliver.

Prior to the pandemic, there were already significant attraction, retention, absence and mental health challenges in schools. From the Government's own figures showing missed recruitment targets since 2012 and one third of new teachers leaving within five years, through to reports from Education Support suggesting more than one third of teachers are experiencing some form of mental ill-health.

It isn't just teachers that keep schools running and we wanted to ensure the views of support staff and leaders were also heard. We want to know how the last year has shaped feedback from all staff, to identify what is going well and where support is most needed.

We invited staff from across the UK to take part anonymously and were surprised and delighted to have had 7,849 participants. As well as their scores, many of them were kind enough to share comments, over 500 pages of them! We are still working through these and will share more details and additional analysis in further reports.

We used the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards as the way to measure what was happening, so we could effectively compare scores across geographies, sectors and phases and with cross sector organisations. This allowed us to measure workplace wellbeing and how well leaders manage the risks of workplace stress and build a culture where staff are likely to thrive and do their best work. Achieving this through putting staff first will underpin the pupil outcomes we all seek and contribute significantly to Covid catch-up.

This, rather than increasing the number of lessons through extended hours and shorter breaks is where successful Covid catch up lies, as well as creating a long-term solution!

If you have any comments, I would love to hear from you.



Mark Solomons  
Founder & CEO, Welbee



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# Key Findings

## Higher Comparative Scores

School and college staff score comparatively higher than those across other sectors in three of the six Management Standards:

- Role (top 20%)
- Support (top 30% Peers and top 50% Managers)
- Relationships top (30%).

They are also consulted about Change and are clear how Change will work out in practice (top 30%). These all relate to people and suggest there is a strong base on which to build a wellbeing culture.

## Secondary Score Lowest

Staff in Local Authority maintained secondary schools recorded the lowest scores across all of the management standards and those in Academy secondary schools were not far behind.

The higher demands from colleagues, focus on more regular student testing and challenges for leaders in communicating with larger numbers are some of the reasons for this.

## Regions Differ

There are differences between regional performance, though understanding the significance of this needs further work.

The North East scores were generally lower in most standards and for all job roles.

Staff in Northern Ireland, particularly support staff had high scores. Full details are in the tables within each Standard in the report.

## Lower Comparative Scores

School and college staff score comparatively lower than those across other sectors in two of the six Management Standards:

- Control (bottom 20%)
- Demands (bottom 30%)

They also have fewer opportunities to question leaders about Change or when Changes are made (bottom 20%).

Workload and flexibility remain two key challenges to be addressed.

## Academy vs LA Schools

There is little difference between scores of staff in the same phases of Academies and Local Authority controlled schools.

This supports our belief that staff wellbeing is largely about school culture (leaders), rather than school type.

It also suggests that opportunities for staff development and the benefits from economies of scale are not being taken by all Academies.

## Job Roles Matter

Scores across the Management Standards, with the exception of Change, follow the same pattern. Scores from high to low were; support staff; teaching staff; middle leaders; senior leaders. Senior leaders had the second highest score for Change.

Support staff are less likely to be in the classroom and may as a result have greater freedom to plan, operate and meet deadlines.

## SEN Schools Score Highest

Staff working in SEN schools recorded the highest scores of any school type across the management standards:

- Top in five Standards
- Within 0.1 of the top in the other two standards

This was surprising given the additional demands staff face. Greater 1-1 support and 'purpose' from supporting vulnerable pupils could be a reason for this.

## Independent Schools

Independent schools generally score similarly to state schools, with the exception of SEN schools.

Independent school staff score comparatively highest in Control, suggesting they have a little more flexibility, while they scored lowest of all school types for change.

Differences were not significant in most standards, again supporting that wellbeing is about the culture leaders create.

## Leaders Score Lowest

Senior leaders have the lowest scores in the majority of cases, which is not what we have seen overall in survey's we have run directly with schools.

Middle leaders had the second lowest scores, and in our school surveys, they are usually the ones needing most attention.

They are caught between the senior team and staff, and with limited time available, particularly those who are teaching. It is clear leader wellbeing needs focus.



## Top 5 Question Scores

Below are the questions with the highest comparative scores. Participants give scores of between 1 and 5, with 5 being the highest. Further details available under methodology on page 6.

Top 20% of staff when compared to scores across other sectors:

1. If work gets difficult my colleagues will help me (Peer Support) – 4.09
2. I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues (Peer Support) – 3.93
3. I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are (Role) – 4.26

Top 30% of staff when compared to scores across other sectors:

4. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do (Manager Support) – 3.36
5. Staff are always consulted about changes at work (Change) – 3.10

## Bottom 5 Question Scores

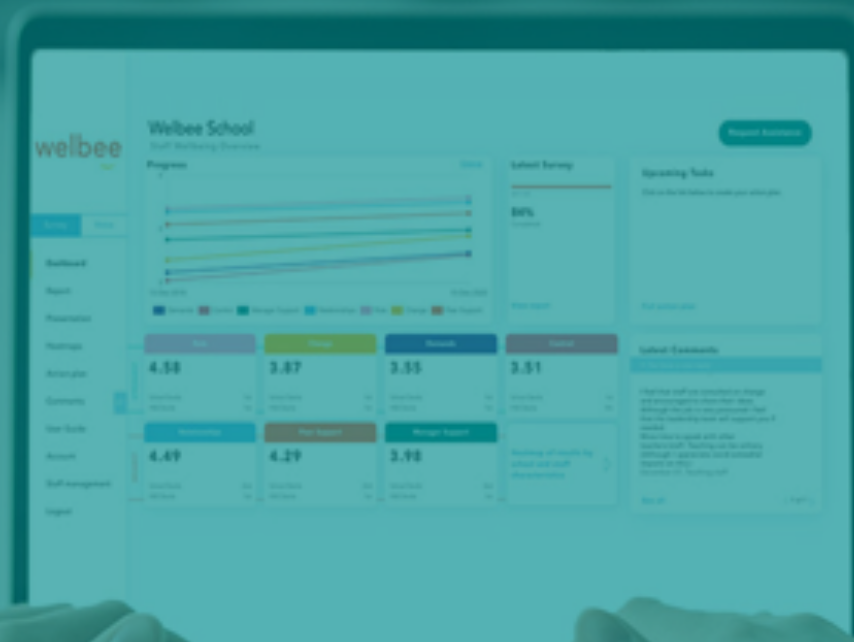
Below are the questions with the lowest comparative scores. Participants give scores of between 1 and 5, with 1 being the lowest. Further details available under methodology on page 6.

Bottom 10% of staff when compared to scores across other sectors:

1. My working time can be flexible (Control) – 2.39
2. My line manager encourages me at work (Manager Support) – 3.72

Bottom 20% of staff when compared to scores across other sectors:

3. I am unable to take sufficient breaks (Demands) – 2.98
4. I have to work very intensively (Demands) – 2.02
5. I have a say in my own work speed (Control) – 3.08



# Methodology

We wanted to provide the opportunity for all staff across the home nations to give feedback and provide scores to 35 Likert scale questions from the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Indicator Tool survey, together with comments to two open questions. Scores given are from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest and averaged across all participants.

We invited staff by sending an email directly to their inbox. Emails were sent to over 250,000 staff members covering senior and middle leaders, and teaching and support staff.

7,849 staff members took the opportunity to participate. The HSE's Indicator Tool, is a recognised way of measuring the risks of workplace stress and wellbeing. It is one of the tools identified to use, within the references from the Department for Education's new Staff Wellbeing Charter.

This uses the Management Standards approach as developed and recommended by the UK Governments Health & Safety Executive ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)). These Management Standards represent a set of conditions that if present:

- Demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach.
- Allow assessment of the current situation using pre-existing data, surveys, and other techniques.
- Promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees and their representatives, to help decide on practical improvements that can be made.
- Help simplify risk assessment for work-related stress by:
  - Identifying the main risk factors;
  - Helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention; and
  - Providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

Using these standards, we can define the characteristics and culture of a school and any organisation, where the risks from work related stress and poor workplace wellbeing are being effectively managed and controlled.

They cover the six key areas of work design, that if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity, increased sickness absence and lower staff retention. By measuring staff against these, we can determine how staff view their working environment and act, where required, to improve it.

## The Management Standards

The respondents were asked to anonymously answer questions that indicate how well they believe their school is managing against these six standards:

1. **Demands:** This includes such things as workload, working hours and the work environment (from the HSE website). We can add anything that places demands on staff, so could add further examples - deadlines, timetable, non-directed time available, and the behaviour of students, parents, colleagues, and leaders.
2. **Control:** How much say the person has in the way they do their work. It includes what they do and how they do their work and the degree to which they have choice and flexibility.
3. **Support:** The Indicator Tool we used to survey staff, splits this standard into:
  - a. **Manager Support:** This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation and line management.
  - b. **Peer Support:** This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and support provided by colleagues and peers.
4. **Relationships:** This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
5. **Role:** This includes whether staff understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
6. **Change:** How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated. This includes the degree to which staff are consulted and have the opportunity to question leaders.

## This Report

This is a summary report, and will be followed by further reports, for example looking at each school sector and phase and providing more detailed findings.

The scale of the staff response has provided a rich data source and we are continuing to work through the scores and survey responses to provide further analysis. The exception to this was Northern Ireland and Wales, where we only had sufficient responses from two of the phases to use as comparators. There are no figures in tables where we received insufficient responses.

The report considers how scores from staff in schools compare:

- With employees in other sectors.
- Across the nine regions of the UK, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Across the following job roles; support staff, teaching staff, middle and senior leaders.
- Across the following school sectors and phases; Primary schools, Academy Primary schools, Secondary schools, Academy Secondary schools, Independent schools and SEN schools.

Reviewing scores, in addition to the experience we have from working with schools and discussing findings with school leaders, has enabled us to make recommendations. We have focussed actions on those that school leaders can take, while also suggesting the areas that the Departments responsible for Education in the home countries might like to consider.

We have also focussed on the areas that survey results and staff feedback suggest are of greatest concern.

## Why Improve Staff Wellbeing

There is considerable and **compelling evidence** that clearly demonstrates improvements in staff wellbeing lead to a wide range of improved outcomes. These include:

- Improved student outcomes, including in exam performance.

- Improved staff engagement and productivity through increases in discretionary time given.
- A reduction in staff absence levels and the need for cover, reducing demands on staff and supply costs and improving the continuity of teaching.
- It improves staff attraction and retention. You are more likely to become an employer of choice, will prevent good staff leaving and in time recruit better teachers and support staff. They will stay longer and as a result build greater knowledge, experience and quality.
- The financial costs of high absences, low retention, recruitment and training are high.
- It reduces management time spent on unproductive tasks, such as staff friction, poor performance or grievances.
- It is more likely you will meet your regulatory requirements, for example the Ofsted Leadership and Management Judgement that says, *“Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage staff, including their workload. Leaders protect their staff from bullying and harassment.”* Other inspectorates are likely to have a strong focus on wellbeing given the impact of Covid.
- You better meet your legal requirements as an employer.
- It is morally the right thing to do and you are likely to have more success as a leader, working with more people who want to be there and who are enjoying their job.
- Teachers will have better physical and mental health and role model this for students.

In the next section we review the survey results across each of the Management Standards.

# Survey Scores and Findings By Management Standard





# Management Standard #1

## - DEMANDS -

2.91

This standard includes such things as workload, working hours and the work environment.

2.98

I am unable to take sufficient breaks.

2.02

I have to work very intensively.

3.23

I am pressured to work long hours.

Questions with lowest scores compared to other sectors ranked left to right. Staff score all Demand questions, except "I have unachievable deadlines" lower than for employees in other sectors. The average score for this question is similar to that given by all employees.

## Demands by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	1.98	2.65	3.50
Northern Ireland	-	-	2.40	4.00
North East	1.41	1.78	2.78	3.60
North West	2.29	2.49	2.76	3.48
Yorkshire & Humber	1.89	2.47	2.68	3.30
East Midlands	2.77	2.54	2.87	3.50
West Midlands	2.59	2.19	2.70	3.33
East of England	2.28	1.86	2.83	3.68
Wales	-	2.33	2.66	3.23
London	2.05	2.33	2.90	3.47
South East	2.68	2.49	2.63	3.31
South West	1.68	2.63	2.73	3.69
All Regions	2.25	2.36	2.76	3.55

4.0 - Support staff Northern Ireland

1.41 - Senior leaders North East

*"Underlying pressure to complete tasks causes stress for many staff"*

Primary school teacher

# About Demands

Demands continue to be a challenge for many school staff and there is a significant difference in performance across regions when comparing all staff in all schools.

Scores range from a low of 2.65 in the South East to a high of 3.07 in the East of England. This is a significant difference and we are continuing research to understand what might be causing this, for example local culture and management.

More than 70% of staff in other organisations score more highly in Demands than those working in schools, highlighting the current challenges faced. All demand questions saw below average comparative scores, with

*the pressure to work long hours, need to work intensively and the inability to take breaks, being three of the lowest.*

This calls into question the strategies for Covid catch up that involve extending the school day or reducing breaks or lunchtimes.


Scores also differ significantly between the four job roles we measured. The lowest scores were from senior leaders in the North East, followed by those in the South West and Yorkshire and the Humber.

The score of 2.25 for Senior Leaders was the lowest overall, followed by Middle Leaders (2.36) and Teachers (2.76).

## Demands by school type

3.54 - SEN  
South West

2.37 – Secondary  
South West



Region	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Primary	Secondary	SEN	Independent
Scotland	-	-	2.79	2.59	-	2.67
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	2.77	-	-
North East	3.34	3.34	2.78	2.39	-	2.69
North West	2.68	2.68	2.93	2.83	3.31	2.80
Yorkshire & Humber	2.65	2.65	2.99	2.71	2.64	2.62
East Midlands	2.61	2.61	2.76	2.86	2.76	2.49
West Midlands	2.81	2.81	2.82	2.70	2.63	2.87
East of England	3.24	3.24	3.30	2.59	3.45	2.77
Wales	-	-	-	2.66	-	2.97
London	3.24	3.24	2.89	3.04	-	3.00
South East	2.79	2.79	2.60	2.56	3.12	2.71
South West	2.56	2.56	2.68	2.37	3.54	3.04
All Regions	2.95	2.84	2.94	2.78	3.39	2.87

Support staff score significantly higher (3.55) and comparatively well against staff in other sectors and across all Demand questions. Those in Northern Ireland score highest.

It is a reminder of the need to include senior and all leader wellbeing on the agenda and ensure they are also well supported. Too often they are charged with managing the wellbeing of other staff with little consideration given to their own.

The difference in scores between Academies and Local Authority schools is not significant and Independent schools also score similarly. There is however a range of scores when considering different

school types and phases across regions.

As an example staff in Local Authority schools in the North East score significantly higher than those working in Academies, both in primary and secondary settings.

Staff in special schools score highest comparatively, which might appear unexpected, given the additional physical and emotional demands they face in supporting vulnerable students. This corresponds with school surveys we run.

In England, commitment 11 of the Department for Education Staff Wellbeing Charter asks schools to continue to tackle this. Commitment 6 asks schools to:

*“Drive down unnecessary workload.”*  
And says, *“We will work proactively to drive down unnecessary workload, making use of available tools.”*

There is a clear need for demand on staff to be reduced and it has to be an areas of focus. We provide recommendations later in the report.

**“I think working in schools has got more demanding than ever.”**

Learning support assistant

# Management Standard #2

## - CONTROL -

3.22

How much say the person has in the way they do their work. It includes what they do and how they do their work and the degree to which they have choice and flexibility.

2.39

My working time can be flexible.

3.08

I have a say in my own work speed.

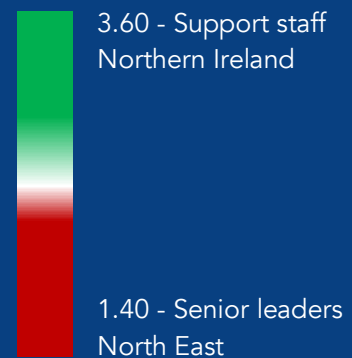
3.57

I have some say over the way I work.

Questions with lowest scores compared to other sectors ranked left to right. Staff score all Control questions, except "I have a choice in deciding what I do at work" lower than employees in other sectors. The average score for this question is similar to that given by all employees.

### Control by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	2.45	3.16	3.23
Northern Ireland	-	-	2.82	3.60
North East	1.40	2.12	3.01	3.17
North West	2.91	3.08	3.02	3.17
Yorkshire & Humber	2.39	3.02	3.03	3.17
East Midlands	3.40	3.00	3.18	3.36
West Midlands	3.37	2.70	3.06	3.26
East of England	3.12	2.43	3.21	3.37
Wales	-	2.79	3.04	3.36
London	2.51	2.84	3.26	3.42
South East	3.46	3.17	3.13	3.09
South West	2.41	3.30	3.14	3.51
All Regions	2.90	2.91	3.14	3.37



*"I wish I had more ownership over my lessons instead of having to do what Head of Faculty dictates."*

Secondary school teacher

# About Control

Control is the management standard where schools score comparatively lowest against other sectors and this is also what we find in surveys we run directly with schools.

This should not be a surprise, particularly for those working in the classroom, given how much of what they do is timetabled.

The new voluntary DfE Staff Wellbeing Charter, covering English state schools asks leaders to **“Champion flexible working and diversity.”** Specifically to create a supportive culture around flexible working, and to agree an approach that not only recognises employees’ legal rights to request flexible working but also acknowledges for some

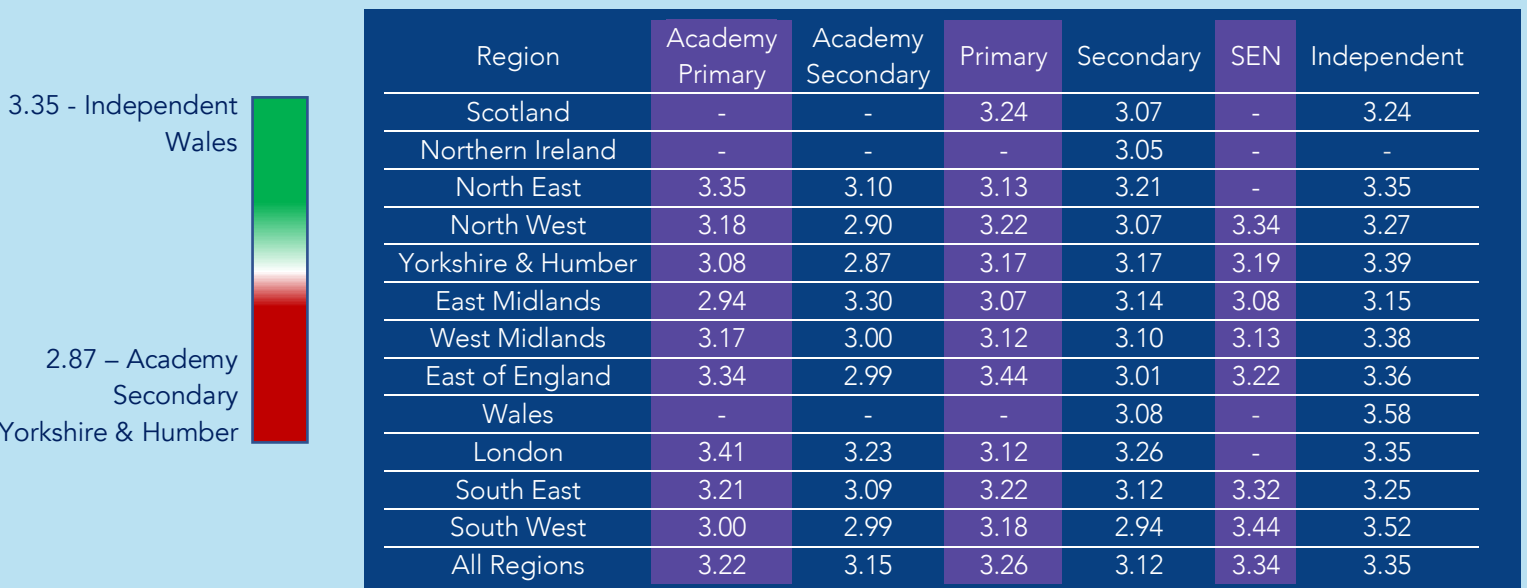
staff that this may be a key means of protecting and enhancing their personal wellbeing.

This is relevant for all school sectors and schools across the home nations as recruitment, retention, absence and mental health challenges are tackled.

Staff strongly indicate they want a more flexible working environment (it is the lowest comparative score to other sectors across the survey), as well as wanting greater say in what and how they do their work.

Regional scores vary from 3.30 in London to 3.06 in Northern Ireland, with most others closer to the average score, with differences needing further investigation.

## Control by school type



We would expect senior leaders to have the greatest autonomy, yet this is only true in three of the nine regions where we had sufficient senior leader responses. North East again has the lowest scores.

Reviewing scores in other areas, alongside these, would suggest that they have such demands and responsibilities that they have little opportunity for flexibility and choice.

Support staff generally have the highest scores, which is also something we would expect, given many of them work outside the classroom. Once again Northern Ireland has the highest score.

Lack of staff autonomy is reflected across all sectors and phases with average scores being between 3.12 in secondary schools and 3.35 in Independent schools.

Should we have expected these higher scores in the Independent and special school sector?

Perhaps the higher number of 1 to 1 support roles and focus on individual strategies in SEN schools and greater capacity in many Independent schools allow greater choice in what and how staff do things.

Local authority and academies in both the primary and secondary phases share similar scores.

There appears to be a greater degree of discretion available in the

Independent sector, and despite the high workload, it may be those choosing to work in this sector perceive they are given more authority.

We will continue to investigate the scores and comments, so we can add further commentary and clarity on what is happening for different roles and sectors.

**“Not enough autonomy, no time for breaks.”**

Secondary school leader



# Management Standard #3 (a)

## - SUPPORT -

(Manager)

3.64

This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation and line management.

3.72

My line manager encourages me at work.

3.93

I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem.

3.36

I am given supportive feedback on the work I do.

Questions with highest scores compared to other sectors shown in green circles above ranked right to left. Staff score all Manager Support questions, except the for the one shown in the red circle above, higher than employees in other sectors.

### Management Support by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	2.93	3.39	3.55
Northern Ireland	-	-	3.57	4.28
North East	1.66	2.41	3.49	3.65
North West	3.18	3.28	3.46	3.75
Yorkshire & Humber	2.73	3.17	3.42	4.02
East Midlands	3.90	3.53	3.68	3.89
West Midlands	3.67	3.02	3.42	3.65
East of England	3.30	2.58	3.56	3.99
Wales	-	3.12	3.37	3.13
London	2.89	3.18	3.61	3.82
South East	3.04	3.44	3.47	3.56
South West	2.47	3.67	3.57	4.08
All Regions	3.21	3.23	3.54	3.89



"I am very happy at my workplace, am being supported and love doing my job."

Secondary Academy Support Staff

# About Management Support

With the exception of one question, Manager Support is a comparative strength for the education sector. Staff in schools and colleges score more highly in receiving supportive feedback, being able to talk with line management about something upsetting or annoying, being able to rely on them for help with a work problem, and being supported through emotionally demanding work.

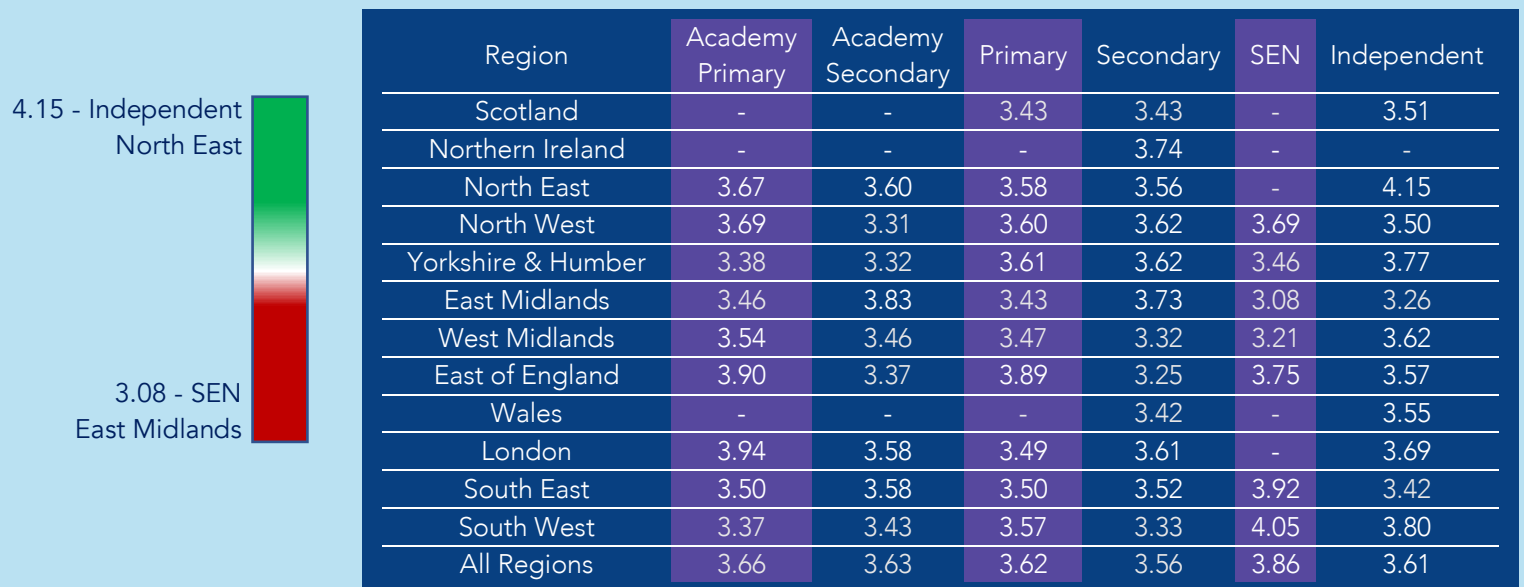
However, they score lower on the question, "My line manager encourages me at work." This has been the case in the majority of school surveys we have run, as well as from respondents to the national survey. Why might this be?

Our own research and discussions with school leaders indicate this is likely to relate to praise and recognition and the impact of distributed leadership.

Senior leaders tend to be good at shout outs, the general email thank you and things like cards in pigeon holes. Many though miss the opportunity to catch people, in the moment, doing things right.

Part of this is about opportunity, with those in the classroom 'hidden' from view in a way that is not typical in many other sectors. First level leaders in particular, as well as those in more senior positions also lack the time, with those still teaching having to lead in 5 or 6 hours a fortnight.

## Management Support by school type



It needs focus and effort and to make this a clear objective, for example having a goal each day to catch people doing something right. CPD and leadership development have an important part to play, on top of increasing the capacity of leaders.

Scores across regions are high, when compared to other sectors, ranging from 3.41 in Wales to 3.76 in the East Midlands. Scores of support staff are the highest, and higher than teaching staff, partly because they are more visible to leaders. Northern Ireland once again has the highest scores.

Yet those with the lowest scores are leaders themselves, with middle leaders having lower scores than support and teaching staff and senior

leaders the lowest scores of all. Those in the North East again score lowest.

This is important and we need to find a way to ensure all senior leaders feel encouraged. This is a role for the CEO, principal, headteacher and the board of governors and trustees.

We will identify suggestions and recommendations later in the report.

All school types have similar scores, apart from those in SEN schools, with little difference between Local Authority schools and Academies.

There are regional differences, and as with the other management standards, further research is needed to understand why this might be.

From our work with schools in reviewing their results and supporting

them in setting goals and taking post survey action, we believe the area of manager support to be the most important management standard.

It provides a quick win and underpins improvements across all management standards, to raise staff self-reported wellbeing and improve student outcomes and school financial and academic performance.

"SLT take a 'what we say goes' approach, rather than discussing with staff."

SEN teaching staff

# Management Standard #3 (b)

## - SUPPORT -

(Peer)

4.01

This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and support provided by colleagues and peers.

4.06

I get the help and support I need from my colleagues.

3.93

I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues.

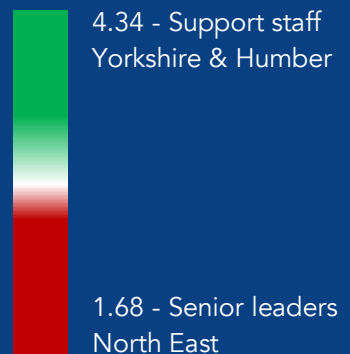
4.09

If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me.

Questions with highest scores compared to other sectors shown in green circles above ranked right to left. Staff score all Peer Support questions higher than employees in other sectors.

### Peer Support by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	3.39	3.94	4.06
Northern Ireland	-	-	3.91	4.28
North East	1.68	2.67	3.86	4.07
North West	3.57	3.69	3.86	4.05
Yorkshire & Humber	2.92	3.79	3.81	4.34
East Midlands	3.98	3.83	4.05	4.18
West Midlands	3.94	3.41	3.83	3.95
East of England	3.54	2.90	3.97	4.31
Wales	-	3.63	3.92	3.65
London	3.03	3.42	3.97	4.11
South East	4.03	3.83	3.92	4.06
South West	2.75	3.98	3.97	4.25
All Regions	3.41	3.59	3.94	4.18



"Supportive colleagues, we all understand we are working for the same aim."

Independent teaching staff

# About Peer Support

This is a comparative strength for the education sector. Staff in schools have scored significantly higher in all questions within this management standard and this is the highest score of any of the standards, when comparing to other sectors. This is something we see in almost all school surveys we run too.

Despite the stress and challenges of teaching and working within schools and colleges, we can rely on our colleagues for support, compared to employees in other sectors. This differential in comparative performance has not been affected by the isolation caused by Covid, both during lockdown and when managing in bubbles when in school.

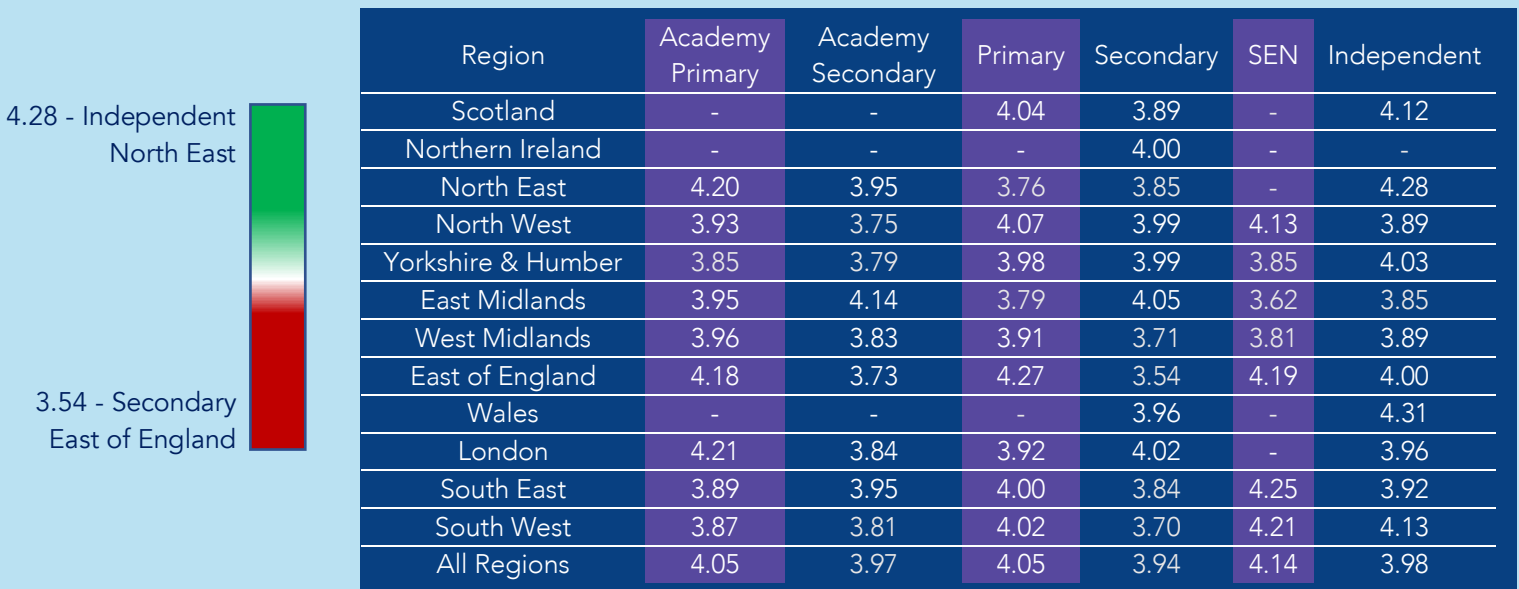
Regional scores are all comparatively high, ranging from

3.91 in the Yorkshire and Humber, to 4.08 in the East of England. With the exception of Wales, support staff again come out with the strongest scores, while Senior leaders indicate they have the lowest level of support from their peers and colleagues.

Senior leaders in the North East stand out as being particularly low again and their scores put them as being comparatively very low against other sectors, as well as compared to their peers in other regions.

Although the number of leader participants in the region is lower compared to teachers and support staff, which is why the overall score remains comparative to others, this is something that needs further investigation.

## Peer Support by school type



Middle leaders in the North East also have the lowest regional score and further research is needed to understand what might be behind these scores and why they are so different to the majority of other regions.

This is the only management standard where support staff in Northern Ireland are not the highest scorers. Those in Yorkshire and the Humber and the East of England score higher.

The performance across school types is relatively close, as it is with most of the other management standards, with staff in secondary schools scoring an average of 3.94 through to those in SEN schools scoring 4.14.

Scores for Local Authority maintained and Academy secondary schools are identical and very close for primary schools, suggesting once again that school type is not a key factor in determining staff wellbeing.

Commitment 2 in the new DfE Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, includes, *"We will empower staff to take ownership of their own wellbeing and look out for the wellbeing of others."*

While scores indicate staff do look out for each other, there is much to do to meet the other elements within this commitment.

How can we use this comparative strength and give confidence to more

staff, to not only better manage their own wellbeing, but to improve in those areas where scores tend to be significantly lower when compared to other sectors? These are the Management Standards for Demands, Control, and aspects of Change.

**"We generally have a supportive team that help and support each other."**

Primary school leader



# Management Standard #4

## - RELATIONSHIPS -



4.05

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

4.62

I am subject to bullying at work.

4.38

I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour

3.59

Relationships at work are strained.

Questions with highest scores compared to other sectors shown in green circles above ranked right to left. Staff score all relationship questions higher than employees in other sectors.

### Relationships by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	3.01	3.85	3.80
Northern Ireland	-	-	4.02	4.34
North East	1.79	2.69	3.95	4.11
North West	3.48	3.66	3.95	4.04
Yorkshire & Humber	2.80	3.86	3.91	3.98
East Midlands	3.96	3.94	4.13	4.27
West Midlands	3.89	3.40	3.86	4.03
East of England	3.57	2.99	4.03	4.40
Wales	-	3.57	3.80	3.67
London	3.02	3.56	4.10	4.21
South East	3.88	3.90	3.97	4.07
South West	2.65	3.97	3.96	4.18
All Regions	3.36	3.63	4.00	4.22



4.34 - Support staff Northern Ireland

1.79 - Senior leaders North East

*"There is friction because of new initiatives, new ideas, new technologies and new directions, every day!"*

SEN Teaching Staff

# About Relationships

Relationships is another of the management standards where education staff score more highly than those in other sectors.

Scores range from 3.82 in Scotland to 4.17 in the East Midlands, and even those towards the lower end are comparatively strong.

All questions asked received high scores, with the two highest being *"I am subject to bullying at work"* and *"I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour."* For those schools inspected by Ofsted, this is encouraging as this is asked about within the Leadership and Management judgement.

This is what the framework has to say:

- Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage staff, including their workload.
- Leaders protect their staff from bullying and harassment.

The two specific questions on whether staff feel they are bullied or subject to harassment through unkind words and behaviours, are two of the highest comparative scores in the survey. Average scores are higher than those given by more than 80% of employees in other sectors. Despite the high workload and stress we know staff face, this is a real positive and particularly given the need to be role models.

## Relationships by school type

Region	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Primary	Secondary	SEN	Independent
Scotland	-	-	3.93	3.71	-	4.02
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	4.09	-	-
North East	4.25	4.03	3.93	3.85	-	3.91
North West	3.84	3.79	4.09	4.04	3.91	4.00
Yorkshire & Humber	4.01	3.89	3.89	3.95	3.85	4.09
East Midlands	3.87	4.27	3.86	4.01	3.77	3.75
West Midlands	3.96	3.87	3.88	3.77	3.70	4.06
East of England	4.39	3.80	4.31	3.86	4.24	4.01
Wales	-	-	-	3.88	-	3.97
London	4.30	4.05	3.97	4.08	-	4.11
South East	3.96	3.98	3.95	3.99	4.23	3.96
South West	3.94	3.95	3.98	3.67	4.13	4.05
All Regions	4.11	4.07	4.05	3.97	4.10	4.03

4.39 – Academy Primary  
East of England



3.67 - Secondary  
South West

For those covered by other inspectorates, there is a growing focus on wellbeing, with Covid increasing this significantly and the survey results are high across all school types.

There are again significant differences in scores between job types and regions, with senior leaders standing out with the lowest scores across all school types.

Scores move low to high from Senior to Middle Leader, then Teaching Staff and finally support staff, with a significant difference in scores as we progress through the job roles. Again support staff in Northern Ireland have the highest scores and senior leaders in the North East the lowest.

This progression of scores by job type is true for most regions, though there are regional differences that will need further investigation. Despite this, scores remain comparatively high in most cases.

Scores across school types are relatively similar and comparatively high, with Academy primary schools being on top (just), followed by those in SEN schools. Staff in Academies seem to score slightly more highly than comparable Local Authority schools, though the difference is not significant.

The highest score, 4.39, is from those staff working in Academy primary schools in the East of England, followed by those in Primary schools in the same region. The lowest score,

3.67, is from those working in secondary schools in the South West.

We have seen scores in Relationships remain high throughout Covid in school surveys we have run. This is in spite of the increased anxiety we know many staff have felt from the increased isolation they have faced. This and the strong scores in peer support show how the majority of staff look out for each other.

*"There has been a lot of strain, especially where staff have left and not been replaced."*

Independent School Leader

# Management Standard #5

## - ROLE -

# 4.22

This includes whether staff understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.



4.16

I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the school.

4.32

I know how to go about getting my job done.

4.26

I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are.

Questions with highest scores compared to other sectors shown in green circles and ranked right to left. Staff are clearer about their job and duties compared to other sectors, though have less clarity about what is expected of them and how what they do fits with the aim of the organisation.

## Role by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	3.41	4.05	4.10
Northern Ireland	-	-	4.18	4.55
North East	1.87	2.73	4.13	4.42
North West	3.88	3.99	4.03	4.20
Yorkshire & Humber	2.95	4.04	4.10	4.39
East Midlands	4.13	4.07	4.22	4.43
West Midlands	4.12	3.74	4.03	4.15
East of England	3.85	3.19	4.15	4.47
Wales	-	3.76	3.87	3.80
London	3.12	3.80	4.19	4.35
South East	4.30	4.12	4.10	4.16
South West	3.05	4.26	4.14	4.48
All Regions	3.62	3.86	4.13	4.39



**"To fulfil our role, the number of hours required has grown exponentially over the last 10 years."**

Academy Primary Teaching Staff

# About Role

Scores for role range from 4.30 in the East Midlands to 4.03 in Wales, and other Regional scores are spread between them.

Staff in schools are clearer on what their duties are and on how to get their job done when compared to those in other sectors. They are less clear on what is expected of them at work and the lowest comparative score is that they are less likely to understand how their work fits with the overall aim of the organisation.

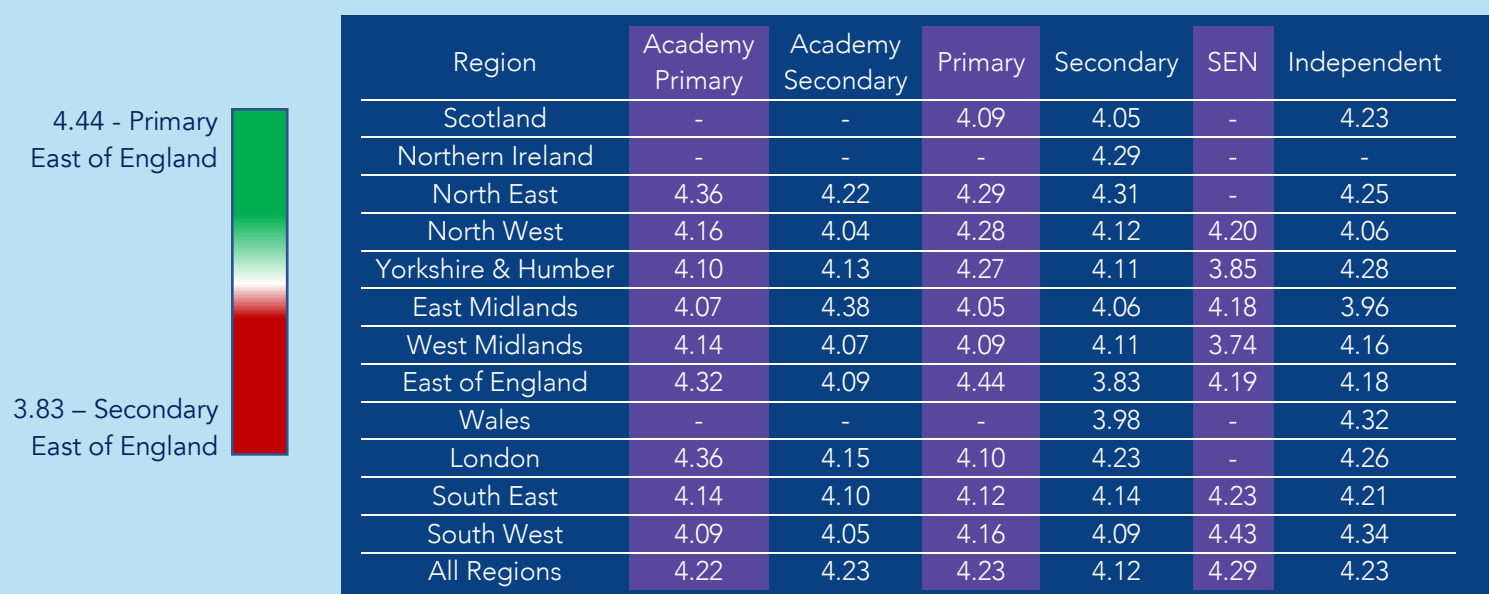
There are opportunities to improve the wellbeing of staff through agreeing clear objectives with them and ensuring these include the overall school direction, and not just what relates to the staff members specific role.

Distributed leadership, effective line management, who delivers appraisals, when and performance management are all part of the solution.

Scores by job role follow the same pattern as the other management standards. Senior leaders have the lowest scores, with those in the North East again at the bottom, followed by those of middle leaders, teaching staff and finally support staff. Senior leaders in the North East have the lowest scores once again.

Support staff again, have the highest score, indicating they are the ones with the greatest understanding of Role, led by those in Northern Ireland.

## Role by school type



This is a surprise and different to the results from the majority of surveys we run with schools, where senior leaders have the highest scores.

Many of the schools we work with, already have a focus on staff wellbeing and it is possible that leaders in these schools have a greater clarity on their role and direction.

Comparing pre-Covid school survey scores of all staff, from our regular surveys, with those seen since the pandemic took hold, has seen a reduction in role scores, particularly relating to what is expected from staff.

Lockdown, remote teaching, communication, and the speed of

change, have all played a part. Staff lacking clarity on expectations is often down to:

- Significant change, including changes in working practices.
- There is uncertainty
- Different and / or contradictory messages are being given.
- Staff are waiting for something, for example changes in policy or an Ofsted inspection is expected, and are unsure of what action to take.

Despite this, school scores remain comparatively high against other sectors. With the exception of secondary schools, the score of staff in all school types is very close with four of the school types scoring 4.22 or 4.23.

Regional differences range from a high of 4.44 in primary schools in the East of England to a low of 3.83 in secondary schools in the East of England. Scores across all school types and regions are generally high, with a few exceptions.

There appear to be no patterns and as for other management standards, understanding regional differences will require further work.

**“Support staff expectations and salary scales should match the contributions we make”**

Academy Secondary  
Support Staff



# Management Standard #6

## - CHANGE -



3.14

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated. This includes the degree to which staff are consulted and have the opportunity to question leaders.

3.03

I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work.

3.26

When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice.

3.10

Staff are always consulted about change at work.

Questions with highest scores compared to other sectors shown in green circles and ranked right to left. Average scores of staff are similar in this standard to other sectors. They are more likely to be consulted and understand the change, though have less opportunity to question leaders.

### Change by job role

Region	Senior Leaders	Middle Leaders	All Teachers	Support Staff
Scotland	-	2.66	2.93	3.28
Northern Ireland	-	-	2.96	3.75
North East	1.63	2.07	2.97	3.38
North West	3.16	3.06	2.94	3.23
Yorkshire & Humber	2.64	2.84	2.85	3.32
East Midlands	3.74	2.99	3.12	3.43
West Midlands	3.55	2.63	2.89	3.13
East of England	3.25	2.24	3.10	3.44
Wales	-	2.54	2.74	2.89
London	2.63	2.73	3.07	3.28
South East	3.71	2.95	2.92	3.17
South West	2.59	3.11	2.98	3.51
All Regions	3.11	2.80	3.00	3.38



"The impact of changes are very rarely workload assessed, which means piling on more to already busy people."

Primary Teaching Staff

# About Change

Change and how this is communicated is often raised as a challenge within the education sector. Yet in two of the three questions, staff in schools score comparatively highly.

They are clearer on how planned change is likely to work out in practice and indicate they are more likely to be consulted about change.

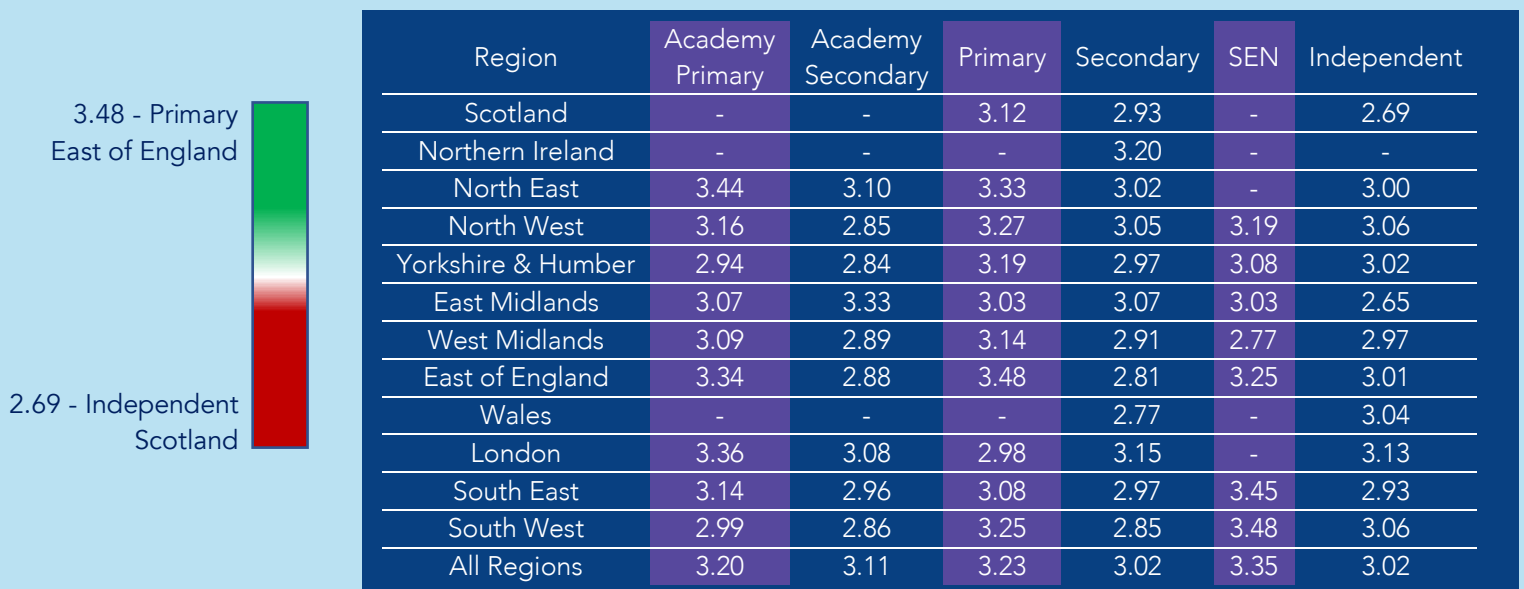
We have seen scores in these two areas improve as we have moved through the pandemic and the level of communication that school leaders have undertaken has increased. Staff comments in the survey shared feelings of isolation and challenges in remote teaching. Despite this many leaders have found it easier to check in with their

teams over video calls, compared to when staff are distributed around school, and particularly seeing those in the classroom.

One challenge for leaders, as school's reopened and staff have moved back to more face to face working, is to maintain this higher level of contact they have been delivering during the pandemic.

Where staff in schools score significantly lower than those in other sectors is in having the opportunity to question leaders about change. Regional scores range from 3.34 in the East Midlands and East of England, through to 2.83 in Wales. With the exception of Wales, other regions score close to 3 or above.

## Change by school type



The lowest score by job type is for middle leaders, who are likely to have responsibility for implementing change and caught between senior leaders and those they lead.

In our regular school surveys, senior school leaders tend to have the highest score, though in this survey they are second to support staff.

It may be they are commenting on the degree of change forced on them by Covid and in particular, both the amount of communication and the short notice they were often given to implement.

From discussions with our own customers, we know many were frustrated with the lack of

consultation and the difficulty they had in questioning or challenging decisions that were being made.

Once again support staff in Northern Ireland have the highest scores, while senior leaders in the North East have the lowest. The senior leader scores in the North East are significantly lower than those in other regions, as they are for all management standards, with the exception of Demands.

Of school types, SEN school staff have the highest scores, 3.35, followed by those in Primary schools, 3.23, and Primary Academies, 3.20. Secondary and Independent schools have the lowest scores at 3.02.

Staff in primary schools in the East of England indicate change is managed most effectively, while those in Independent schools in Scotland give the lowest scores.

There is little difference between schools in Academies and those under Local Authority control within the same phase.

**"It would be better if" management would consider reasonable changes before they are made"**

Secondary Teaching Staff

# Findings & Recommendations

Before looking at recommendations it would be remiss if we did not first celebrate those areas where we see comparatively high scores. Particularly as one of the recommendations is about how we need to pay more attention to what is going well!

The support that staff give to their colleagues is a real sector strength and this is also reflected in the relationships across most schools. Compared with other sectors, staff listen to colleagues about work problems, can rely on each other for help when things get difficult and show respect to each other.

Staff indicate *harassment through unkind words and behaviours* is comparatively lower, and this is despite the impact students can sometimes have on the score for this question, particularly for some secondary schools. Scores suggest there are lower levels of bullying, less friction and less strain between colleagues.

Staff are also clearer about their role and how this fits with the work of their function and the overall aims of the organisation, when compared with staff across other sectors. While we have seen this score

decline slightly during Covid, as staff deal with uncertainty, it still remains comparatively high.

Staff are also consulted to a greater extent about changes to be made and this higher comparative score continued through Covid, even with the pace and regularity of changes that need to be managed.

In four of the five questions for Manager Support we also see higher comparative scores.

Some of these results may come as a surprise, given the news headlines we often see, though are consistent with the direct school surveys we run.

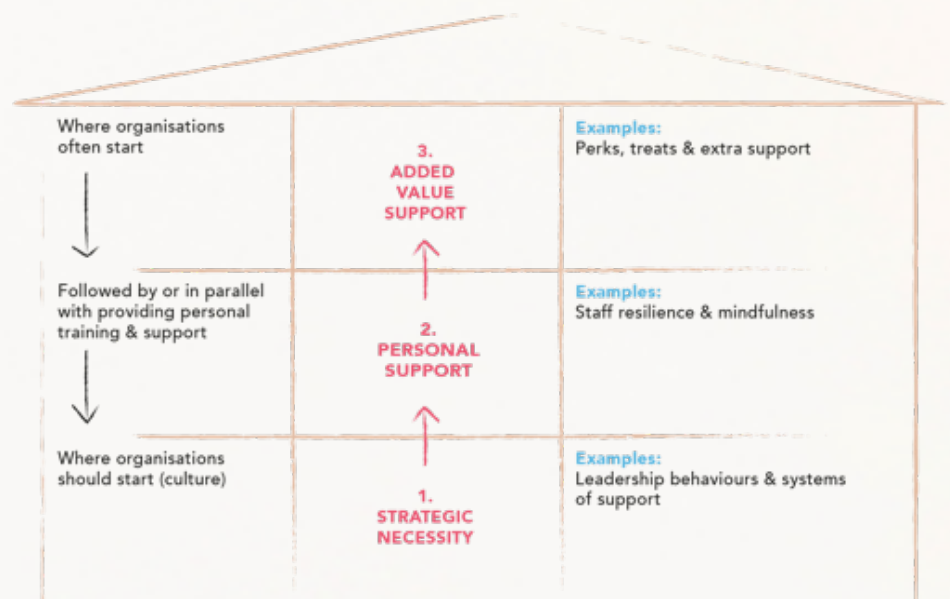
Without this level of support and strong relationships, it is likely that there would be even greater challenges for recruitment, retention, absences and mental health.

While this provides a foundation, there are steps that have to be taken in these areas, as well as tackling Control and Demands, if we want to create an environment where staff and students thrive and are able to do their best work and deliver the right outcomes.

## Recommendations for School, College and MAT Leaders

Improving staff (and student) wellbeing is all about culture and creating the climate where people thrive and can do their best work. It is like building a house and laying down firm foundations first. This means establishing effective leadership behaviours and having the right supporting processes in place, so staff always feel valued and supported.

Yet many more schools spend time on building the middle and top floors first. They provide wellbeing days, treats, such as breakfast or cakes at meetings, fruit, yoga and other activities as the focus for their solution.



The House of Organisational Wellbeing © welbee

This is understandable, given the pressure leaders are under, as it is much easier treating symptoms and providing sticking plaster solutions than addressing the real causes. While these may give a short term adrenaline shot or boost, we need long-term solutions.

Once a wellbeing day is over, or the cake has been eaten, what has changed?

There is nothing wrong with these as add-ons, and it is also important that we always have additional support for those that need it. They are just not the place to start.

Building firm foundations will ensure leaders have the tools they need, and staff are empowered to manage their own wellbeing. For schools under the jurisdiction of the Department for Education (DfE), this supports meeting commitments 2 and 3 of their new Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.

Our recommendation is that schools, colleges and MATs follow these principles.

## 1. Establish where you are now

The first recommendation is that school leaders must measure and understand current performance:

- They need to know their numbers; staff turnover, absence, how often support schemes, counselling provision or occupational health is used, information on staff grievances, disputes or instances of poor behaviour and school performance trends.
- They should seek feedback regularly from staff discussions, 1 to 1s, return to work, welfare and exit interviews.
- Add to this by using an evidence built and recognised tool to survey and seek anonymous staff feedback, for example the survey used in this report, the Health and Safety Executive's Indicator Tool.

This will ensure leaders are regularly monitoring performance, tracking progress and taking appropriate action, including celebrating success. This would also meet commitment 11 of the DfE's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, "*Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing.*" Whether or not a school or college sits

under the DfE or they decide to sign the new voluntary charter, without establishing your current performance you will not be able to effectively focus on the right areas or track progress.

## 2. Improve your Control score

Allowing staff greater autonomy and flexibility over what and how they work is a real challenge for school leaders. Timetabling, structure, the curriculum and the need to support students mean much of what staff have to do is pre-planned, particularly for those teaching.

Many new leaders are not provided with the level of training and support to lead others and are given little non-directed time in which to do it. They may not have the necessary soft and social skills needed.

### Implement Coaching

Helping staff feel they have greater choice is supported by leaders adopting a coaching and more consultative leadership style. We are not suggesting that line managers become 'coaches' as this isn't their role, though if they understand and can apply the principles of coaching it will enhance their leadership and when done well leads to greater team wellbeing, performance and results.

To do this well takes time and needs staff to reflect and practice. As well as a significant training commitment it needs to be embedded and for behaviours to change. It needs leaders to move from 'tell' to 'ask' and instead of fixing problems, to encourage others to find their own solutions. With schools being so busy, many leaders find this change difficult, as it is so much quicker to instruct. Investing in this will have a significant impact and for those schools signing the DfE Staff Wellbeing Charter will support in meeting commitment 3, "*Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage,*" and Commitment 2, "*Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing.*"

### Directed Time

Schools and colleges already provide some flexibility for staff within their directed time. This is often limited and workload will likely dictate how staff are able to use the time available. Even where they have choice, some staff may not appreciate or acknowledge this.



Leaders should take every opportunity when communicating and through 1 to 1s to regularly let staff know about any flexibility and choices they have.

When staff do have 'free' time, letting them have as much autonomy over what, when and how they do their work, including allowing them to work from home or outside school, can make a real difference. There can be the added challenge of ensuring fairness, depending on when staff have Planning, Preparation and Assessment time or free periods, though this should not prevent you from exploring all opportunities.

For other school events and meetings, it is suggested that leaders make sure staff are only required to attend those that affect them or where they are needed. Give them a choice over attending others.

### Flexible Working

Whether the current private members bill passes through parliament, looking to expand the rights of employees to be able to ask for flexible working, this is going to become a growing challenge for schools. How might leaders provide greater opportunities for flexible working, to retain talent and support the wellbeing of staff. This might mean allowing staff to work different patterns, reduce their hours or job share.

It is not always possible to meet requests, including those from staff with changing family circumstances, needing to provide care or returning from maternity leave, particularly in smaller schools. Yet with current recruitment challenges, increases in flexible working are likely to be part of the solution to retain and recruit more teachers over the coming years. Those schools that adopt a more flexible approach are likely to see significant benefits.

There is no easy solution.

Commitment 7 of the new DfE Staff Wellbeing Charter states: **Champion flexible working and diversity.** *We will work to create a supportive culture around flexible working. We will agree an approach that not only recognises employees' legal right to request flexible working but acknowledges that for some staff working flexibly can be a key means of protecting and enhancing their personal wellbeing*

Yet this comes with no instructions. Until there is Government or DfE support and funding to increase

capacity, delivering against this will fall on school leaders. They should always start by exploring what they can do, rather than what they can't, and even if they cannot meet the full request, what might they do to better support their staff member. Any change is likely to need the support of other staff and has to be delivered fairly.

### 3. Improve your Demand Score

Schools and colleges are very busy places. Even those that score highly in this area continue to have high workload, and current sector structures and demands are likely to always mean staff will have more to do than the time they have available.

The major difference we see in higher scoring schools and colleges, is in how leaders manage this and how well staff feel able to cope. For example are staff able to leave school with work outstanding and pick it up again, without worrying about it?

This is often about the effectiveness of distributed leadership and leaders across a school or college and the way in which line managers are able to coach and lead, to build a psychologically safe culture.

Celebrating when work is achieved and done well, making sure staff ask for help where needed, and developing personal effectiveness for themselves and their team, all make a big difference. Whether leaders are aware of the 12 competencies that prevent and reduce staff stress will also help and you can see more about this below, under Manager Support.

This does not mean that leaders should not continue to drive out unnecessary workload and those things that have no or low impact. Staff often continue to undertake too much because of their own perceptions, beliefs or fears and as a result put additional pressure on themselves.

Many schools and colleges have already reviewed areas, such as lesson planning, marking, data collection and report writing, and it is important to continue to do this. For those schools covered and who want to sign the DfE Staff Wellbeing Charter, this is covered in commitment 6, **Drive down unnecessary workload.** *We will work proactively to drive down unnecessary workload, making use of available tools (such as the Workload Reduction Toolkit for schools).*

Below are just a few of the common actions we see successful schools use to address this.

### The workload reduction toolkit

Many schools and colleges have reviewed the Government's workload reduction toolkit, including those from across sectors, and if not, it has useful resources. You can see it at the link below.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/workload-reduction-toolkit>).

This sets out a process, provides templates and a workload survey and suggested actions to take.

### Impact Assessment

Before changing or implementing any new policies, procedures or practices, leaders can consider them through the lens of staff wellbeing by asking the question: "What impact will this have on the wellbeing of colleagues as well as outcomes for students?"

Before adopting anything, does it pass the test of what is important. Is it:

1. High effort for staff and low impact for pupils or staff? Ditch these!
2. Low effort for staff and low impact for pupils or staff? Not a priority!
3. Low effort for staff and high impact for pupils or staff? Make these a priority!
4. High effort for staff and high impact for pupils or staff? Review which are worth it!

You can use the same process with existing work to identify those things that have higher staff workload and lower pupil and school impact, and remove them. Applying this test to all work undertaken and ensuring the value provided is greater than the effort needed to deliver it is important. Leaders can also apply an in/out rule, if they aren't already. If a leader is going to add something new to what is already too high workload, then they should remove something of at least an equal load.

### School Calendar

When working directly with schools, one area often reviewed is the school calendar to make sure deadlines and other events are planned to minimise 'hot spots', where workload could end up being greater than in a usual week. They co-ordinate

deadlines to ensure staff who have demands from different leaders and sources (for example, data collection, reports, pastoral support, SEND) are spread.

When setting deadlines, they ensure staff feel confident to feedback when they might struggle and teach them to say 'no'. This includes to themselves and others. It is best to know when work is being set that deadlines will be challenging, rather than being 'let down' when they are not delivered.

### Meetings

Are all meetings held necessary and effective and as a result do they add value and don't impinge on staff time that could be used in other ways. Review meetings that are held to think about:

- Is this the best way to communicate this information or could this be distributed in other ways?
- Does everyone who is attending need to be there?
- Is there a clear agenda set and outcome established from each meeting?
- Is the agenda realistic and can it be covered effectively in the time available? Because specific meetings may happen infrequently there is often a tendency to overfill the agenda and forgetting that more is often less! As a result staff walk away feeling overwhelmed or unable to prioritise key actions.
- Was the agenda adhered to and the intended outcomes delivered? Asking this is often a good way to finish and to take any learning into future meetings.
- Did the meeting start and finish on time? As well as being respectful and good manners, this is important for people who have planned their workload or have other commitments, particularly after school.
- Is everyone prepared for the meeting? This means that any important information needs to be distributed in advance and in a succinct but effective way and staff need the time to review it.

This is not an exhaustive list of actions to tackle demands from within schools and colleges, and is designed as a catalyst for schools to review their current practice.

## Provide Sufficient Breaks

Staff indicating they do not have sufficient breaks is the third lowest survey score, compared to other sectors. We continue to see a trend of reducing lunchtimes and breaks and when duties are factored in, it is clear too many staff do not get the opportunity for a necessary break, some or all days. This is likely to affect senior leaders even more than other staff.

With plans for Covid catch-up currently pointing towards extended school days, it is important this is addressed. Given the already high workload and increasing demands placed on schools, this is having a significant impact on staff productivity, performance and wellbeing, and is adding to the staffing challenges we see within the sector.

There is no easy answer, and we have seen schools close early for up to half a day, change opening hours, and begin to reverse cuts in lunch and break times.

## 4. Improve Your Manager Support Score

The one question where school and college staff score lower than those across other sectors is *“My line manager encourages me at work.”*

From our work with schools we believe there is an opportunity for a quick win through helping leaders and line managers to give more regular and authentic praise and recognition. While it is important to hold staff to account and ensure we are efficient and productive, the findings suggest we need to pay more attention to finding what is going right, rather than wrong. To ensure more positive than negative feedback is given.

While praise must be justified, there is a tendency for all staff to focus more on what has gone wrong (the pupils misbehaving, the not so good lesson, the poor performing staff member and what hasn't been done) and on occasions take those performing well for granted. As a result, some staff can feel whatever they do it is never enough.

Yet staff get so many things done each day, deliver good lessons, deal with many more well behaved pupils and most staff perform well most of the time.

Shout outs, email thanks and notes in pigeon holes are usually done well, and the one thing that can be

missing is giving people personal praise in the moment. Schools are busy and staff often spread across classrooms and buildings.

Building a 'praise and recognition' culture takes effort, if distributed leaders are included and engaged. Asking leaders to set themselves a goal each day of catching people doing things right is a good way to start. It is something that is often done well in the classroom with students and repeating this with staff will have a quick and significant impact on wellbeing across the school.

## Give Leaders the Tools They Need

School and College leaders on first appointment are given limited opportunity to lead, particularly teaching staff. It means they are often given 5 or 6 hours a fortnight to be a leader and a chunk of this will be taken up by tasks and meetings imposed by others. In addition they are rarely given the opportunity to develop the skills needed before appointment and receive limited support after. When it does happen it's usually squashed into short and rushed twilight sessions after a busy day of work. They do not provide sufficient focus on those missing soft and social skills.

Raising awareness of those behaviours that prevent and reduce staff stress is a good place to start.

[Research from Goldsmiths, University of London](#), and funded by the Health and Safety Executive and Investors in People, among others, identified 12 competencies and associated behaviours. If leaders demonstrate these then they will engage their teams and create an environment where more people thrive. Staff will also copy and take greater ownership of their own wellbeing.

Simply sharing these does not address the fact there is not enough capacity or time available for leaders. Time is the one thing none of us have control over and there is no simple answer for this! We do have control over what we focus on and our priorities and it's down to leaders to decide what is most important.



## 5. Improving the Change Score

Make sure there are sufficient opportunities given to staff to question leaders whenever you make change. This usually needs very explicit and regular communication as often very busy staff miss things. As well as overcommunicating, create and let staff know when they have opportunities to ask questions.

Hold a lunchtime Q & A, briefings, or meetings and proactively create opportunities for staff to ask questions. Prepare your own questions in advance and ask members of your team to use them, if other questions are not forthcoming.

Rather than operate an 'open door' policy, where leaders may not have the necessary focus when interrupted, create visible times, and other times when you are not available so you get important work done.

Also plan when and where you and other leaders will be visible and use these as opportunities to answer questions and seek feedback.

## 6. Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs)

With there being little difference in scores between Academies and schools, are MATs doing as much for their staff as they could? Given the economies of scale available, the ability to share resources, practice and training, particularly for MATs that are closely located, it would seem there are opportunities to be taken across the staff lifecycle and in improving staff wellbeing.

The staff lifecycle covers; attraction, recruitment, onboarding, managing performance, development, retention; and farewell. How can you better manage each of these areas and build a reputation as a MAT and schools where people want to work and stay.

In each of these areas there are steps that will improve staff wellbeing, too much to list in this summary report. We will be happy to share further information.

## 7. Monitoring and the Role of the Board

Boards, as well as senior leaders should understand the benefits that will come from a focus on staff wellbeing and make it a board priority. This means ensuring the behaviours of board members and

school leaders back up any words spoken (actions not words). Steps the Board might take include:

- Ask for a report on staff and their wellbeing at a termly meeting. Focus on school data, as well as management feedback, to identify possible trends and areas for focus. Data should include those things highlighted earlier, for example; staff sickness, absence and turnover; Employee Assistance Scheme, counselling provision or occupational health usage as relevant; staff grievances, disputes or instances of poor behaviour; and school performance trends
- Use existing school systems and data when collecting this, wherever possible, to reduce any workload on school staff.
- Include data from additional areas, such as return to work, exit and welfare interviews (anonymised and at a summary level).
- Consider using a staff survey for independent evaluation and one that is a recognised tool, evidence built and benchmarked. It has to be owned and run by the senior executive team and not Governors.
- Set staff wellbeing goals (what will success look like) and ensure actions are added to the school development plan and progress is tracked.
- Remember this must include the wellbeing of senior leaders.

## 8. The Wellbeing of Leaders

One area that does not get the focus it should is the wellbeing of leaders. They are charged with looking after the wellbeing of others, yet are also staff members and need to look after themselves too.

If those responsible for running the school, the welfare of staff and pupils and their outcomes, do not have good wellbeing, they will not be able to manage this for others.

Providing support through check-ins, training and coaching is something we recommend. In many other sectors senior leaders often have professional coaches and mentors, and while the use in education is growing, Boards should consider this for their MAT, school or college.

A wide range of training and support is available, some free, for example, from [Education Support](#).

## Recommendations for Government and those Responsible for Systems Change

We have already discussed the challenges facing new and all leaders. Limited time to carry out 'leadership' practices, little preparation for new roles, and limited training.

The problems facing schools and colleges are well documented:

- 1/3 of new teachers leave within 5 years
- School recruitment targets missed since 2012
- Teacher job satisfaction lowest globally in England (Institute of Education)
- Increasing stress and mental ill-health for teachers (over 1/3 according to Education Support), with stress the number 1 cause of long-term absence (and number 2 cause of short term absence after minor illness).

We can add to these the Covid related challenges managed since March 2020. The survey scores received and particularly staff comments (over 500 pages of them) demonstrate the impact on staff and students.

While we do need to address the need for Covid catch up, it is extraordinary to see the main thrust of this being additional lessons after school, during holidays, or through reducing breaks. The limited funding provided for additional lessons will not provide the capacity needed and will rely on existing staff taking up most of the additional work, and at a time when they are already showing signs of exhaustion.

If we want to support schools in improving the wellbeing of staff we have to make a change. Continuing to put further pressure on already busy staff and after years of recruitment and retention challenges, makes little sense. It reminds you of the saying that if you keep doing what you have always done, you will get what you have always got!

It is clear we need to create greater capacity in the system if we are to give staff greater autonomy and all leaders the opportunity to lead effectively. We need a national debate on how best to achieve this. How can we increase capacity and support those in education? Things to consider include:

- Increasing the number of staff in schools and giving them more non-directed time.
- Improving CPD, beyond simply revamping National Qualifications and Teaching schools, including improving delivery and reflection time, and post training support.
- A longer term plan on Covid catch up and how we will deliver the student outcomes we need
- Asking schools to become more engaged in creating solutions, rather than simply implementing those things decided at the centre.
- Widening the number of stakeholders consulted on change.
- In England, holding the DfE to account on meeting the commitments that are set out in their new Staff Wellbeing Charter. It is down to school leaders to challenge whenever they do not 'build in' staff wellbeing to their policies and practice.

## Calling All Education Leaders

Have your say! What can you do and what do we need from the DfE and devolved education departments to put staff first and begin to solve the wellbeing and long-term education challenges that all know exist.

They have been with us for many years and we need change.

Contact us at [support@welbee.co.uk](mailto:support@welbee.co.uk).



# Thank You

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey and anonymously shared their feedback. We will continue to review the information and comments you provided and share further details. With over 7,849 staff members taking part and in addition to scores, sharing over 500 pages of comments, it will take time for us to fully investigate all feedback.

If you have any questions or would like to share more, please get in touch at [support@welbee.co.uk](mailto:support@welbee.co.uk).

Thank you to everyone working in education and for the incredible job you do and for continuing to support your students throughout the challenges and constant changes during the pandemic. You do not get the recognition that this deserves.

## Run a Staff Wellbeing Survey

The Health and Safety Indicator Tool is recognised as an effective way to measure how well your school manages the risk of workplace stress and wellbeing. We enable you to benchmark against other schools and organisations and easily see your results and track progress in your online dashboard. This also includes filters, heatmaps, recommended actions, and the ability to respond anonymously to staff comments, as well as access to Welbee Voice and Toolkit.

# welbee

<https://welbee.co.uk>

