

The Department for
Education's progress
on our commitments
in the Education Staff
Wellbeing Charter



Department
for Education

The mental health and wellbeing of staff in education is crucial to the Department for Education's (DfE's) commitment to help create a supportive culture and to recruit and retain staff in schools and colleges.

That is why, in collaboration with schools, colleges and experts, we co-produced and published the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter in May 2021. The charter sets out joint commitments from the DfE, Ofsted and schools and colleges on actions they will take to promote and protect the wellbeing of staff. Following a period of familiarisation, the charter was launched for sign up from schools and colleges in November 2021.

We are encouraging all schools and colleges to prioritise the wellbeing of staff and sign up to the commitments in the charter. Over 3,000 schools and colleges have already signed up since it was launched.

The charter is a shared commitment for government and everyone working in education to support staff wellbeing. We recognise the role the DfE plays in the policy environment in which schools and colleges operate, and that our policies can have a direct and indirect impact on the wellbeing of staff. That is why it is important that we review progress against our commitments in the charter. We have outlined below the progress we have made since the charter was launched two years ago.

1 'Design-in' wellbeing



Our commitment

“We will integrate wellbeing into DfE’s school workload policy test, where appropriate, considering the impact of policy changes on staff wellbeing.”

Summary of progress

Championed by the Permanent Secretary and the Senior Leadership Team, we have undertaken work to support a cross-departmental understanding of our role and responsibility in reducing burdens on the sector in all policy creation and delivery.

- Our sustained internal communications strategies have emphasised the expectation that staff workload and wellbeing considerations must be embedded within the policy lifecycle. This has included creating awareness of the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter commitments across DfE.
- We continue to build workload and wellbeing considerations and mitigations into common departmental tools, such as business case templates, and ministerial policy advice.
- We have strengthened our governance processes at a cross-departmental level to ensure visibility of the totality of policy and other activities affecting burdens on schools and colleges.

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2 Measure and respond to changes in staff wellbeing



Our commitment

“For the school sector, we will measure on an ongoing basis the levels of anxiety, happiness, worthwhileness, life satisfaction and job satisfaction across the sector, using established metrics and methods. We will track trends over time and build this evidence into policy making. We will also continue to take the advice of sector experts on wellbeing and mental health. We will engage with Further Education (FE) sector bodies to understand insights into staff mental health and wellbeing within the sector. Where appropriate we will build this evidence into policy making.”

Summary of progress

We continue to review and strengthen our evidence base and consult with school and college experts in shaping plans for staff mental health and wellbeing support.

- Wave 1 of our longitudinal study of teachers, ‘Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders’, was published in 2023. This is a large-scale annual survey of teachers and leaders in England. By surveying the same individuals over time, including those who choose to leave the profession, it provides a rich data source that will build on existing evidence. The study covers several policy areas simultaneously and examines factors underlying teachers’ key career decisions. It also covers teachers’ self-reported wellbeing and career intentions.
- We regularly commission research to assess the wellbeing of leaders, teachers, and school staff (for example, the School and College Panel regularly collects wellbeing data), in addition to monitoring relevant emerging research in the field.
- We engage with sector experts on wellbeing and mental health, including our wellbeing charter drafting committee members*, and ongoing engagement with the unions, charities, and representative bodies such as the Association of Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges Association. We have undertaken extensive engagement with FE sector bodies and as part of the FE Professional Development Grants pilot, we provided funding so initial teacher training providers could put in place enhanced support for newly qualified teachers whose training was disrupted by the pandemic.
- In response to user need, we are funding **mental health and wellbeing support for school and college leaders**. We have announced the expansion of the programme so that more school leaders can have access to this valuable support over the next three years.

* Members of the Expert Advisory Group on Staff Wellbeing involved in co-creating the charter. A full list is available on the [charter GOV.UK](#) page.

3 Support the sector to drive down unnecessary workload



Our commitment

“We will continue to work with the sector to drive down unnecessary workload and promote the workload reduction toolkit. We will work to remove unnecessary burdens, including improving how we collect data.”

Summary of progress

We continue to work proactively with the sector to understand the drivers behind workload and wellbeing issues and where we can go further to support schools and colleges.

- In September 2023, we launched a workload reduction taskforce. The taskforce is made up of union representatives, experts and experienced practitioners. Building on the **three 2016 independent workload review groups** and the teacher workload advisory group, it will review the drivers of excessive teacher and leader workload, the effectiveness of current measures, and existing working time rights of teachers and leaders. The taskforce will make recommendations to government, Ofsted and school and trust leaders by the end of March 2024.
- The DfE School workload reduction toolkit is comprised of practical resources created by school leaders for school leaders, to identify and remove unnecessarily burdensome workload practices for teachers in their schools. The toolkit was updated with ten new resources in 2022 and is now in the final stage of a digital project to improve the user experience of the toolkit in order to increase adoption rates. Resources were designed for schools, but can also be used in colleges and other settings. An evaluation report by the **Education Development Trust** across eight teaching schools demonstrated positive outcomes for schools using the toolkit. These successes are an encouraging example of how schools can identify and address their workload challenges. When schools used the toolkit to address workload, average time on the target tasks reduced from around 1 hour and 20 minutes to half an hour. Teacher wellbeing improved and pupil attainment and progress remained constant or improved.
- For the FE sector, we are seeking to improve our evidence base on the barriers and motivations of the workforce, including the impact of workload. We are investing £470m in financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 to enable colleges to address key priorities such as recruitment and retention. We anticipate this funding will help reduce vacancy rates and therefore help to mitigate some of the workload challenges associated with teacher shortages. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the funding.

4 Ensure that DfE guidance meets user needs



Our commitment

“Where appropriate, we will ensure DfE guidance covers staff wellbeing. We will also develop guidance based on the needs of educational staff, focusing on what they need to know and do. We will publish GOV.UK content aimed at education staff only during working hours (unless, for specific guidance documents, there is a significant user need not to do so, or there is a legislative requirement).”

Summary of progress

We remain committed to ensuring our guidance meets user needs and we aim to publish GOV.UK content intended for education staff only during working hours (unless, for specific guidance documents, there is a significant user need not to do so, or there is a legislative requirement).

- Internally, we have established ‘principles for effective guidance’ and aim to ensure these principles are followed across the DfE. The objective is to avoid additional burdens on the sector, by ensuring our guidance is concise, user focused, and the main messages and actions are clear.
- We are also exploring how we can streamline the volume of communications sent to the sector from DfE, and further embed our understanding and practice of good communications, including content and timing, into ongoing plans.
- Our ‘design-in’ wellbeing actions (as outlined in commitment 1) will support in raising awareness of our charter commitments across the DfE.

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5 Champion flexible working and diversity



Our commitment

“We commit to establishing school cultures, and encourage FE settings to support and value flexible working at all career stages. We will also strengthen our efforts to promote diversity in the sector – eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”

Summary of progress

We know that expanding and promoting opportunities to work flexibly can help to recruit, retain, and motivate teachers and leaders and help promote staff wellbeing. We want teaching to be an attractive profession where teachers and leaders from all backgrounds get the same opportunities to progress in their careers.

- We have a broad programme of activity underway to support schools to implement flexible working and to champion culture change. In September 2023, we published a new **toolkit of resources**, that we co-produced with school leaders and other **sector experts**. These build on our wider set of **resources** on GOV.UK which include non-statutory guidance, research, and case studies.
- We are funding **targeted support** aimed at embedding flexible working in multi academy trusts and schools. This includes the appointment of 12 regional and specialist (SEND, alternative provision and high disadvantage) **flexible working ambassador multi academy trusts and schools** that will champion flexible working and provide bespoke peer support. Building on a previous programme funded in 2021-22, these ambassadors are funded until 2025, and their work will be complemented by a national programme of workshops and webinars.
- In FE, flexible working practices have particular value as they encourage dual professionalism in FE teaching, and ensure students are taught to develop relevant knowledge and skills that have currency with employers. The flexible nature of FE teaching and the ability to work concurrently in FE teaching and industry has been promoted as one of the central messages in our **‘Teach in FE’ campaign**. This is helping to raise awareness of FE teaching as a career route and encourage more industry professionals to join the sector. We are also committed to supporting the sector to foster knowledge and skills exchange between FE teachers and employers through two-way secondments and other relevant activity.

Champion flexible working and diversity (continued)

- In July 2023, we published new commissioning guidance which recognises equality, diversity and inclusion as a marker of a high-quality trust. Our recruitment campaigns strive to attract people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. We are also working with the Teacher Vacancy Service to ensure online case studies are inclusive.
- We are working to ensure our services and programmes are inclusive and supportive of all teachers across their career journeys, as well as improving our evidence base.
- We are supporting diversity and inclusion in the FE sector through ringfencing places on our Teacher Mentoring Programme for individuals from underrepresented or priority groups in the FE workforce. We are also funding the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to deliver specific diversity programmes, with other programmes offering free places for FE leaders from an ethnic minority background and/or with a disability to build a more diverse future pipeline of leaders. Find out more about [ETF's Leadership and Governance programmes](#).

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6 Break down stigma around mental health



Our commitment

“We will build staff wellbeing and mental health into DfE’s wider communications strategy on recruitment and retention, linking to existing campaigns that aim to tackle mental health stigma in our society.”

Summary of progress

Our promotional activity recognises the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing.

- We produce materials, including a range of advice and case studies direct from teachers and school leaders on the **DfE Teaching Blog** and in our social media content to explore, reinforce and amplify messages supporting openness around the mental health of education staff. We promote these materials, as well as the many wellbeing resources and programmes, using an ‘always on’ approach so that there is constant messaging from the DfE highlighting the support available.
- We use key ‘moments’ to promote positive mental health in education settings, for example, publishing a series of wellbeing videos during Mental Health Awareness Week.

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7 Embed wellbeing in training and professional development



Our commitment

“We will continue to strengthen support for professional development. We will ensure that training and development is underpinned by the Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development and that it includes mental health and wellbeing where appropriate. We will also ensure that teacher training and professional development continues to include a focus on managing pupil behaviour effectively.”

Summary of progress

We have ensured training and development for teachers and leaders includes mental health and wellbeing where appropriate.

- Updated in 2021, the new suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) has been designed with teacher workload and wellbeing in mind, by refreshing the assessment to reduce workload burdens.
- The Core Content Framework (CCF) and Early Career Framework (ECF) are both underpinned by the same set of independently peer reviewed evidence about what works in teaching. Both frameworks set expectations about supporting teachers’ wellbeing. The initial teacher training CCF makes it clear that trainees should be supported to manage their own workload and wellbeing while they train and as they embark on their own careers in school. The frameworks are currently being reviewed in parallel to ensure they are founded on the most up to date evidence.
- The ‘professional behaviours’ domain in the ECF expects early career teachers to learn how to “manage workload and wellbeing, by using and personalising systems and routines to support efficient time and task management, understanding the right to support (e.g. in how to deal with misbehaviour), collaborating with colleagues to share the load of planning and preparation and using shared resources (e.g. textbooks) and protecting time for rest and recovery”.
- Behaviour management is explicitly covered in the underpinning content frameworks for Initial Teacher Training, Early Career Teachers and within the suite of National Professional Qualifications.
- In FE, we are supporting the sector to recruit, retain and develop excellent teachers and provide them with access to support and training at all career stages. We know access to a trained mentor can have a positive impact on an early career teacher’s confidence and wellbeing, so in March 2023 we announced the next phase of our government-funded FE teacher mentoring programme. This will strengthen early career support for a minimum of 1,800 FE teachers up to March 2025. Mentor training resources developed through the programme include embedded wellbeing content. Mental health and wellbeing is also included as a cross-cutting theme in some of the DfE’s FE leadership development programmes.

8 Improve access to mental health and wellbeing resources



Our commitment

“We will work to improve access to high quality mental health and wellbeing resources online, with a particular focus on those that help employers and staff deliver the ‘organisational commitments’.”

Summary of progress

We have provided dedicated wellbeing resources hosted on the **Education Staff Wellbeing Charter page** on GOV.UK.

- This includes specific resources on measuring staff wellbeing, supporting staff wellbeing and mental health, reducing workload in schools and more. The resources were refreshed in June 2023.
- The DfE school workload reduction toolkit also provides examples of school wellbeing policies, such as a whole school approach to staff wellbeing, based on a trust-level wellbeing strategy.
- In May 2021, we published a list of mental health resources for parents, children, young people, and staff in schools and colleges so that they can get the advice and help they need.
- We promote these resources on our communications channels and work with the government’s media buying agency to reach education staff who are not already engaged with the DfE through targeted social media and Google search adverts.
- We also provided support through the **College Collaboration Fund** that enabled FE providers to develop and share effective practice and resources to support FE workforce mental health and wellbeing.

9 Review



Our commitment

“We will review progress made against our commitments in 2023. We will also review the impact of this charter in helping to protect, promote and enhance wellbeing among staff.”

Summary of progress

This document provides an assessment of the progress that we are making against our commitments in the charter. While we have made significant progress, we will continue to assess the impact of our actions and respond accordingly on an ongoing basis.

- We are collecting insights from schools and colleges that have signed up to the charter to understand their reason for signing up, the actions they have taken following signing up and any observed impact in their organisations. This work is in progress and will inform our ongoing work.

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Progress update from Ofsted

Ofsted continues to place staff wellbeing at the forefront of its thinking. Our inspection framework includes a clear expectation on schools and colleges to engage regularly and constructively with their staff, so they are aware of, and take account of, the main pressures on them. Inspection is, therefore, an important tool in evaluating the actions schools and colleges take to support staff wellbeing.

As set out in the charter, we will continue to ensure that any changes we make to the way we inspect considers the impact on wellbeing and seek to improve it wherever possible.

The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) was an explicit step away from previous outcomes-led approaches and instead focused on the substance of education – the curriculum. As a key part of the EIF design, we have committed not to consider internal assessment data, which was cited as one of the biggest drivers of teacher workload.

Since the inception of the EIF, Ofsted has set out what the expectations are on schools and, more importantly, what we do not expect of schools during inspection. For example, that we do not grade individual lessons or teachers and that we do not expect schools to prepare for inspections. This includes our extensive myth-busting information in the school's handbook and in our frequent webinar programme and blogs. Recent topics have included significant detail on when a school can expect to be inspected, and how we consider attendance and behaviour on inspection. From this term (autumn 2023), we are launching a new newsletter to communicate directly with schools about inspection.

