



Staff Wellbeing

Strengthening Staff Wellbeing
2024



Brigidine College St Ives

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Introduction

The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) has developed a process for reviewing and strengthening staff wellbeing. The wellbeing of staff is crucial for both their effective performance at work and the academic growth of their students (Collie & Martin, 2023). A whole-school approach to wellbeing includes a focus on staff wellbeing and actions being taken at an individual, social and organisational level to protect, promote and support wellbeing. To guide the development of a school's approach to staff wellbeing, we refer to our AISNSW Wellbeing Model.



Key Components and Implementation Process: Diagram representing the components and process of strengthening Whole-school Wellbeing.

A Whole-school Approach to Wellbeing

School wellbeing processes, practices and pedagogy, are the actions taken by a school to support school community members to build their capability and capacity to feel well, function well, and feel connected now and into the future (Cross & Lester, 2023). These actions include universal approaches to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all.

“A whole-school approach is about embedding wellbeing into the school’s vision, mission, ethos and school improvement planning process to ensure it permeates the school culture and all levels of school activity – it is everyone’s business.”

(Cross & Lester, 2023. p. 196)

Key Components

The following are key components of a whole-school approach to wellbeing that may be used by wellbeing teams when reviewing and planning a school’s implementation process:

- **Leadership**
Establishing a dedicated wellbeing leadership team who understand the needs of their school community and promote a vision for wellbeing.
- **School processes and practices**
Implementing processes and practices informed by quality evidence of effectiveness that are well understood and consistently actioned across the school.
- **School climate**
Valuing diversity and fostering positive and respectful relationships within a safe and inclusive environment that includes wellbeing practices that foster a sense of belonging.
- **Wellbeing education**
Embedding and integrating the explicit teaching of social and emotional skills using quality evidence-based pedagogy and opportunities for practice.
- **Community partnerships**
Enabling meaningful opportunities for families to be active participants in enhancing whole-school wellbeing.

Reference: Cross, D. & Lester, L. (2023). Leading Improvements in School Community Wellbeing. ACER Press.

Staff Wellbeing

These essential components are consistent in enhancing the wellbeing of staff, students, and the community. The following model can specifically be applied to focus on staff wellbeing.



Process

The following actions are considered alongside the above components. The actions form part of an implementation process for a whole-school approach to staff wellbeing that is defined by a comprehensive school-wide vision:

- **Leadership Commitment**
Review the implementation of the key components of a whole-school approach to staff wellbeing across a continuum from *Implementing* to *Sustaining*.
- **Review Wellbeing Outcomes**
Review staff wellbeing outcomes against staff data.
- **Map and Assess Processes and Practices**
Map the school's staff wellbeing processes and practices and use data collected to undertake a wellbeing status check to reflect on the effectiveness of current practices.
- **Implement Actions**
Plan the implementation of staff wellbeing actions with realistic timeframes. Identify goals and actions to enable successful achievement of staff wellbeing priorities.
- **Embed and Sustain**
Regularly monitor, evaluate, and review whole-school actions that promote staff wellbeing.


Process for Reviewing, Assessing and Strengthening Staff Wellbeing

1. Leadership Commitment

School leadership that values, prioritises and supports staff wellbeing benefits the school and the staff members. Within a whole-school approach at an individual, social and organisational level, schools can strengthen a climate where staff feel connected, engaged and appreciated.

Leadership Commitment

Staff Wellbeing



Guidance on how to demonstrate leadership support and commitment:
School leadership that values, prioritises, and supports staff wellbeing benefits the school and the staff member. Within a whole-school approach at an individual, social, and organisational level schools can strengthen a climate where staff feel connected, engaged and appreciated.

Practical Tips:

- *Establish a staff wellbeing team that meets regularly to discuss staff wellbeing, coordinate meaningful wellbeing initiatives, and review and monitor wellbeing outcomes.*
- *Develop a Staff Wellbeing Framework.*

Staff Wellbeing Team established to lead the evaluation and review.

Considerations when establishing a staff wellbeing team:

- **Who** will lead the staff wellbeing team? Who is included in the staff wellbeing team*.
- **How** will the team be formed? How will the team operate? (consider the purpose and scope of the team's role)
- **When** will the team meet?
- **Where** will the team meet?

*Are there teaching and non-teaching staff on the team and representatives from all parts of the school eg. Primary, Secondary, Boarding?

- Develop a [Staff Wellbeing Framework](#)

Considerations when establishing a staff wellbeing framework:

- **How** does our school define wellbeing and how does staff wellbeing align with this?
- **What** are the overarching goals for staff wellbeing?
- **What** are the specific objectives and strategies and why are they needed?
- **Who** is responsible for planning the staff wellbeing strategy and initiatives?
- **Who** is responsible for setting targets?
- **How** will the staff wellbeing activities/initiatives be funded?
- **How** can all staff be involved?
- **How** will progress and effectiveness be monitored?
- **How** will the activities be implemented?
- **How** will barriers to staff engagement be addressed?
- **When** will staff well-being activities/initiatives take place?
- **When** will the activities/initiatives be evaluated?

The Association of Independent Schools of NSW

Guidance and Templates

- Leadership Commitment: [1. Demonstrate Leadership](#)

Additional Support Materials

This research report, [*Student and staff wellbeing and mental health*](#), undertaken by Dr Kevin Runions and Professor Donna Cross (2022) on behalf of Independent Schools Australia, describes wellbeing issues amongst school students to inform and make recommendations that would help protect the mental wellbeing of students and school staff.

This literature review, [*How Can Schools Support Whole-school Wellbeing? A Review of the Research*](#) (Runions, Pearce & Cross, 2021), explores the implementable elements of effective whole-school approaches to student wellbeing. The establishment of a dedicated leadership team to drive implementation is a key finding. The literature review was prepared for the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW).

This Spotlight on Wellbeing in Australian Schools highlights teaching as a demanding profession, and educators need time and experience to identify which non-teaching tasks to prioritise to effectively support learner growth and achievement. Additionally, professional development is essential to enhance their ability to support students' wellbeing. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/wellbeing-in-australian-schools>

This research conducted by Collie & Martin (2023) shows the impact of teacher wellbeing. Teacher well-being and sense of relatedness with students: Examining associations over one school term. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 128, 104233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104233>

The book, [*Leading Improvement in School Community Wellbeing*](#) (Cross & Lester, 2023), provides key research-based school improvement practices, authentic case studies practical explanations outlining how to choose a particular wellbeing practice and how to successfully embed or implement that strategy within a school.

2. Review Wellbeing Outcomes

An assessment of staff wellbeing can be led by the staff wellbeing team. Both collective and individual needs should be benchmarked and monitored. Once the results have been collated by the wellbeing team they can co-develop initiatives with staff to further support identified needs.


Actions:

- The wellbeing team may use a Gap Analysis to assess the school's current position.
- Qualitative data may be gathered via interviews, discussions, and focus groups.
- Quantitative data may be gathered via an annual or biannual survey tool that measures workplace, social and emotional, mental and physical wellbeing.
- Present results to staff for reflection and discussion.
- Work with staff to co-develop and implement measures to improve outcomes.
- Review school-level structures, processes, policies and procedures.

Measures that may be used:

- A staff wellbeing team has been appointed.
- Staff wellbeing is being regularly considered by the leadership team, monitored and responded to by the leadership team.
- Actions to improve staff wellbeing have been co-developed in consultation with staff.
- Meetings are held regularly to address staff wellbeing.
- There is a system of mentors who support staff and provide advice.
- There is a whole-school culture of staff help-seeking and support.
- Workloads are regularly reviewed to encourage work-life balance.
- Positive whole-school staff social activities are encouraged to build fellowship and are free or low-cost.
- Regular staff wellbeing surveys are implemented and findings monitored.
- A wellbeing policy is in place that addresses the needs of staff.
- Opportunities are provided for staff to come together to support each other and problem solve together.

(Cross & Lester, 2023)

	Introducing	Embedding	Sustaining
 <p>Leadership</p> <p>School leadership that values, prioritises, supports, and enables staff wellbeing within a whole-school approach at an individual, social and school organisational level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school has staff focused on promoting and enabling staff wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school has appointed a dedicated Wellbeing Team who coordinate wellbeing initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school has an established Wellbeing Team who meet regularly to coordinate meaningful wellbeing initiatives and review, monitor and discuss staff wellbeing.
<p>Associated Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AINSW Handout: Guidelines on demonstrating leadership support and commitment. Leading for Staff Wellbeing PL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders value staff wellbeing and utilise a framework for staff wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders value, prioritise and promote staff wellbeing and link this to the school's vision, goals, expectations and direction. A framework for staff wellbeing to analyse strengths and opportunities is aligned to the whole-school wellbeing approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders value, prioritise and promote staff wellbeing. The staff wellbeing framework is utilised to analyse strengths and opportunities with precision. The goals and directions are measured, evaluated for effectiveness and adapted dynamically.
<p>Practical Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with retired and current principals and education consultants High-level professional learning programs and professional association connection Access to sabbatical leave, paid access to qualified counselling support, access to flexible work options Highly skilled administration and executive support (p20) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders support their own wellbeing. Our school acknowledges the intermittent workload intensification of staff. Our staff has access to line supports e.g. a line manager, head of department or stage leader. Our school recognises the individual needs of staff e.g. engaging new staff. Our school leaders support respectful and caring interactions. Supports are in place to restore and repair relationships in the event of workplace conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders promote and support their own wellbeing as well as whole staff wellbeing. Our school understands and provides support to staff experiencing intermittent workload intensification. Our school has collegial support systems in place where staff members have access to appropriate supports e.g., a line manager, head of department or stage leader. Our school recognises the individual needs of staff and provides support e.g., mentoring early-career teachers and engaging new staff. Our school leaders model, guide and support respectful and caring interactions. There are established processes and procedures to restore and repair relationships in the event of workplace conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school leaders protect, promote and support their own wellbeing as well as whole-staff wellbeing. Our school recognises the impact of workload intensification and has mapped this across staff member responsibilities and proactively provides adjustments and supports. Our school has well established collegial support systems where staff members feel known and connected and have clear access to appropriate supports e.g., a line manager, head of department or stage leader, or mentor. Our school recognises individual needs and has structured approaches across the multi-tiered framework to collaboratively support and nurture staff e.g., mentoring early-career teachers, engaging new staff. Our school leaders model, guide, and actively promote respectful and caring interactions to create a safe and supportive environment. There are clear and accessible processes, procedures and practices to support staff to restore and repair relationships in the event of workplace conflict.

Guidance and Templates

- Staff Wellbeing Gap Analysis: [2. Gap Analysis](#)

Additional Support Materials

[Perspectives](#) AISNSW have created a comprehensive suite of surveys including staff wellbeing. Understanding how your staff are feeling can enhance targeted recruitment and retention strategies. Collect information about your school's most valuable asset, your staff, to understand their needs in a systematic and evidence-informed way. The data collected can be used at strategic and operational levels and may assist in the development and realisation of larger planning priorities.

[School Wellbeing Check](#) (Education Council, 2019) has been developed as part of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, this assessment survey helps to identify and analyse the school's approach to wellbeing across the five elements – leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support.

[Six Star Wellbeing](#) has partnered with ACER and developed a survey designed to provide schools with information about staff and student wellbeing across six areas – mood, resilience, engagement, communication, relaxation and positivity. Costs apply.

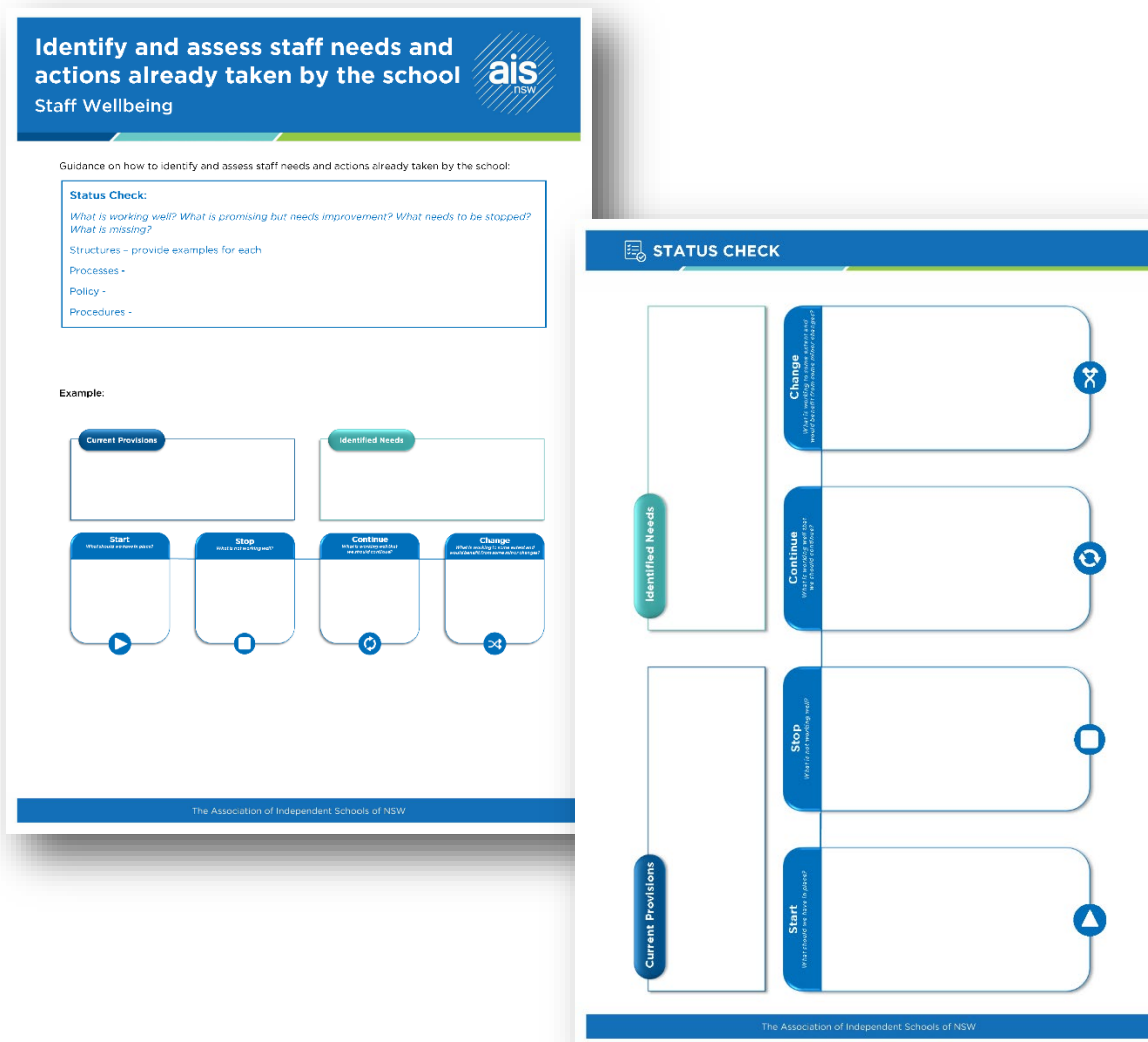
[Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#) (Warwick Medical School, 2021) can be accessed as a quick and useful 14-item scale or free 7-item scale.

3. Map and Assess Processes and Practices

The findings from the gap-analysis tool, together with the staff wellbeing data, can be used to understand what and how the school is currently providing support to meet the desired outcomes and identify any gaps. The wellbeing team can decide what needs to be:

- **Started:** What should we have in place?
- **Stopped:** What is not meeting identified goals.
- **Continued:** What is working well that we should continue?
- **Changed:** What is promising and may benefit from refinement and strengthening?

The use of quality research is important when determining the effectiveness and impact of existing approaches and practices that are currently being implemented and those that are being considered.



Guidance and Templates

- **Status Check:** [3. Identify and Assess Staff Needs and Actions](#)

Additional Support Materials

[The Australian Education Research Organisation Practice Guides](#) (AERO, 2023) outline strategies for promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness in primary and secondary schools. The guides feature advice for school leaders and teachers.






[The Australian Education Research Organisation's Research reflection guide](#) (AERO, 2023) helps education practitioners and policymakers reflect on a piece of research that provides evidence about the effectiveness of a particular policy, program or practice (that is, an approach), which they may be considering implementing.

[The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's \(AITSL\) Spotlight – Wellbeing in Australian Schools](#) (2022) addresses learner wellbeing and examines how it is defined, why it is important, and how it can be measured.











[The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#) has resources designed to support school leaders and educators to select effective, evidence-based social and emotional learning programs that best meet the needs of their community.











4. Implement Actions

After assessing the data collected in the gap analysis tool, staff reviews and any other screening tools, the wellbeing team can develop an action plan. Each goal would be clearly identified and include a strategy for how it may be achieved e.g. the how, what and when. Success should be measured, and each target reviewed when completed.

	Strategy	Overview	Staff involved and Resources	Timeline	Measure	Evaluation/Review (monitor processes, progress, and outcomes)
LEADERSHIP 	Establish a Staff Wellbeing Team	Will organise a range of activities and initiatives	Staff from all parts of the school. A meeting room and timetabled meetings	By the end of Term 4 ready to launch in Term 1	A dedicated group of staff, meeting regularly and delivering activities/initiatives that staff are engaging in	Gather feedback and evaluate each activity/initiative
SCHOOL CLIMATE 	Survey staff on their perception of wellbeing	Incorporate a survey into a staff wellbeing activity e.g. Morning tea or wellbeing day	Create a survey or use an existing one e.g.	Survey at beginning and end of year	Number of surveys completed, quality of data	Use data to review wellbeing and to determine activities/initiatives that are needed
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS 	Staff / Community involvement in whole-school event	Staff V Parents/Care rs students swim relay in Swimming Carnival	Staff swim team and a student team (seniors/captains) Practise swim for staff prior to date	Finalise team 4 x weeks prior to carnival	Engaging staff and students on the day and creating a sense of belonging and connection e.g. cheering	Gather feedback from participants and spectators. Observational data: e.g. Number of people watching race
WELLBEING EDUCATION 	YMHFA Training for all staff	Dedicated time on staff days or in term time to participate in training	Book a YMHFA instructor and a venue. Organise release and cover required	By the end of Term 2	Staff reporting increased confidence in noticing and approaching students regarding their mental health. Early intervention	Feedback from staff who are trained, review student management processes to see if YMHFA is impacting school referral processes
PROCESSES & PRACTICES 	Establish clear referral pathways for supporting students	Create a decision-making matrix for student referrals	Wellbeing Team to create a process	By end of Term 4 ready to launch in Term 1	Staff reporting feeling supported by transparent process that supports students and therefore supports staff wellbeing	Feedback from staff and evaluate the process

Example: This is a populated example of actions schools may consider relevant to each component of whole-school wellbeing.

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE	
 GOALS	
 BARRIERS	
 FACILITATING FACTORS	
 STEPS	
 TIMELINES	
 RESOURCES	
 COMMUNICATON	
 PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE	
 IMPLEMENTATION STATUS	
 EVALUATION	

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE									
 GOALS	 BARRIERS	 FACILITATING FACTORS	 STEPS	 TIMELINES	 RESOURCES	 COMMUNICATION	 PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE	 IMPLEMENTATION STATUS	 EVALUATION
								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
								<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
								<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
								<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
								<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	

Guidance and Templates

- Support Document: [4. Develop an Action Plan](#)

Additional Support Materials

Evidence for Learning's (2022) guidance report [Putting evidence to work: a school's guide to implementation](#) aims to help school leaders understand how they can create the right conditions for implementation, as well as a structured process for planning, delivering, and sustaining change.

The [Insights into de-implementation](#) (Evidence for Learning, 2022) includes resources and tools to assist school leaders in thinking about the complex task of de-implementation.

Harvard researcher [Teresa Amabile](#) talks on how you can overcome disengagement and use small wins that may be helpful when implementing change. [YouTube video](#)

This paper, [From evidence to impact: Joining our best school mental health practices with our best implementation strategies](#) (Lyon & Bruns, 2019), reflects on ways in which educational-specific applications of implementation science principles may guide more consistent use of evidence in schools' approaches to mental health practices.

5. Embed and Sustain

Regularly monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing whole-school actions for staff wellbeing is essential. This stage will identify successes to celebrate and areas needing improvement. Annual surveys establish a baseline and measure the effectiveness of strategies and programs each year. It is important to capture the time, effort, resources, and specific strategies that worked well for different staff members. This data will inform future actions.

Monitor, Evaluate and Review Staff Wellbeing



Guidance on how to monitor, evaluate and conduct a review of the staff wellbeing action plan.

It is important to regularly monitor, evaluate and review whole-school approaches to staff wellbeing. This will highlight successes, that should be celebrated, and areas which may need to be modified. Annual surveys help to capture a baseline and then measure annual success of strategies and the program. Time, effort, resources and identifying what worked well for which staff members all needs to be captured. This data will highlight future actions.

(Cross & Lester, 2020)

Practical Strategy | Staff Wellbeing Program

Date	Activity/Initiative	People involved	Cost	Evaluation	Link to Whole-school Approach	Continue next year
Term 1 Week 6 Tuesday Recess	Welcome Morning Tea	All new staff and their mentors	\$7.50/per person covered by school catering budget	Mentor to seek feedback from their buddy and pass on to wellbeing team	Building connection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Include welcome by principal next year

Template

Date	Activity/Initiative	People involved	Cost	Evaluation	Link to Whole-school Approach	Continue next year
						<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>
						<input type="checkbox"/>

Staff wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, and all staff are encouraged to regularly review their own wellbeing, as it impacts both individual and collective wellbeing. Schools may use an individual wellbeing plan to benchmark wellbeing and review work-related stressors. The staff wellbeing team can then implement a program that specifically targets these stressors and include protective factors.



Staff Wellbeing

Personal Wellbeing Plan

“A whole-school approach to wellbeing supports and encourages individual staff to take action to prioritise and improve their own wellbeing as well as promoting and cultivating a healthy school climate.”

(Cross and Lester, 2023)

This template is designed as a guide to develop your own *Personal Wellbeing Plan* for you to refer to daily, weekly or as needed. If you need further assistance, please refer to your school's mental health resources and/or access supports for example an employee assistance program.



How do I know when I am functioning well and feeling well? What might others notice about me?

What might I notice about myself if I wasn't going ok and perhaps felt like I was struggling? What might others notice about me?

Guidance and Templates

- Guidance and Template: [5. Monitor, Evaluate and Review](#)
- Individual Wellbeing Plan: [Personal Wellbeing Plan booklet](#)

