School Wellbeing Report 2024: UK

Featuring responses from over 6,600 school staff

New for 2024

Positives emerge but some **challenges** for **senior leaders**

Contents

"I think wellbeing – looking after your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others – is more important than ever today.

As headteacher, I feel that weight of responsibility for the colleagues I work with and it's part of a huge responsibility to make sure they do feel supported, that they can do their job and still have a life, and that they're feeling successful in their job."

Helen Abell, Headteacher, The Godolphin Junior Academy

Welcome to the 2024 UK edition of our school wellbeing report

The past year has been a complicated one for the UK education sector, with challenges coming from multiple directions. Against a backdrop of a national cost-of-living crisis, schools are dealing with stretched budgets, recruitment and retention difficulties, and the ongoing effects of the pandemic, particularly around student attendance.

We're enormously grateful to the almost 7,000 school staff who've participated in our annual wellbeing survey telling us how they've felt over the last year in education. Their honest responses, highlighting both successes and struggles, offer invaluable insight into the current state of the profession.

This report delves into the key issues facing educators in 2024 and we're honoured to share these perspectives with the wider educational community. As always, our goal is to gain a clearer understanding of current challenges, explore potential solutions and empower schools to implement positive changes that improve teacher wellbeing and ultimately, enhance student outcomes.

Key findings

There's no avoiding the fact that schools and teachers have faced significant hurdles over the past year. Rising costs continue to be an issue for leaders, with some experts predicting that schools could be facing a "new financial crisis[1]**" and budgets could yet be pushed further in 2024. Meanwhile, staff shortages have rarely been out of the news, with Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), branding the issue as "**the single biggest problem facing the education sector[2]**".**

The lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to be felt in the classroom, with experts warning that the gap between those from the most and least disadvantaged families continues to widen in the wake of lockdowns[3]. There's also tension between families and schools, and signs that relationships may be suffering. A recent poll for the Centre for Social Justice[4], for example, found that almost a third of parents (28 per cent) agreed that the pandemic demonstrated that it's not essential for children to attend school every day, while only 61 per cent of parents of secondary school students felt that their child's needs were being met.

And, of course, the ever-present issue of workload continues to cast a shadow over the profession. This is despite schools revising practices in efforts to reduce the load[5], including making changes to marking, feedback, lesson planning, data tracking and school behaviour.

Yet even within this difficult landscape, our 2024 wellbeing report reveals pockets of progress and positivity. **We heard from 6,668 school staff across the UK at all levels** – close to 14 per cent more responses than in our 2023 report – and it was heartening to hear that 75 per cent of educators feel confident in their roles – a 17 per cent increase from last year.

"I feel confident performing my role"

2024

75%
of staff
agree

2023

58%
of staff
agree

This echoes the sentiments voiced in the National Education Union's State of Education report[6], where 71 per cent of teachers surveyed reported feeling confident in their ability to impact pupil education, and 63 per cent felt they contributed positively to student lives.

But our 2024 survey also found that almost three out of four respondents – a significant 74 per cent – had contemplated leaving the profession entirely in the past year. This dissatisfaction wasn't just being directed at, or caused by, individual schools and leaders; many respondents voiced concerns with the system more broadly, placing blame with issues rooted more deeply in the sector.
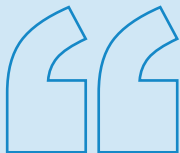
This sentiment aligns with the unexpected 11 per cent increase in confidence towards school leadership. It seems that, in such a troubled system, teachers appreciate the genuine efforts being made within their schools, even if the overall picture remains tough.

"My leadership team makes good decisions"

11%
more agree with this statement than last year

> "With the challenges schools are facing, schools are trying so hard to put systems in place to support their staff, to have conversations and open discussions; what can we do? What can we do better, how can we help? I think a lot of teachers recognise that and they've got confidence in that leadership."
>
> **Christie Cavallo**, Headteacher, Southwater Infant Academy

1 tes.com/magazine/news/general/schools-funding-new-financial-crisis
2 tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-shortage-dfe-recruitment-strategy-delay
3 tes.com/magazine/news/general/covid-catch-up-decade-restore-progress-attainment-gap
4 centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/the-missing-link
5 tes.com/magazine/news/general/revealed-how-schools-are-trying-cut-teacher-workload
6 neu.org.uk/latest/library/state-education-2023

Confidence, enjoyment and motivation

Our 2024 survey found a dramatic increase in professional positivity among respondents, with 75 per cent telling us that they feel confident in their ability to perform their roles – a near 20 per cent jump from last year's survey.

So, what's happening? We know that increased staff empowerment within school life can have a major impact, and just under half of respondents (45 per cent) reported feeling that they have autonomy, up an impressive 14 per cent from last year. Comprehensive training and continuing professional development may also be a factor in this boost to self- perception, with 86 per cent now identifying themselves as skilled workers (compared with 82 per cent last year).

"I have autonomy to make decisions"

30% disagree

45% agree

25% neutral
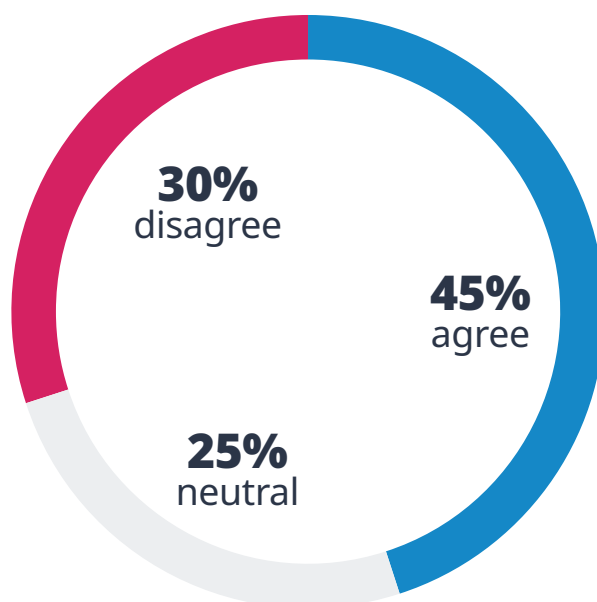
It's heartening to see that despite the difficulties faced by the profession, educators are remaining resilient, and appear to be rebuilding confidence and self-worth post-Covid. However, beneath the surface, concerns remain, not least around how much staff actually enjoy their roles. Some 39 per cent of respondents told us that they don't find work fun.

One respondent offered this advice to school leaders looking to improve in this area: **"Listen to us. Consider our feelings. Make us feel useful and wanted."**

Another said: **"Give us time to actually do the job properly and stop blaming us when it isn't. Three periods to plan, prepare and mark for all classes is ridiculous. Behaviour is also incredibly poor, and we seem to have no power to stop it. I regularly feel unsafe, and I'm so sad not to enjoy my job anymore."**

It's not that leaders aren't trying to address these issues. We saw a four per cent increase in schools implementing behaviour management software and/or processes, and 58 per cent of respondents told us that their school makes an effort to help everyone feel part of a community.

And despite significant challenges, staff dedication to the job shines through, with 77 per cent of respondents saying that they "really throw themselves into their work", up 6 per cent from 2023; another sign that the challenges faced by the profession in recent years haven't affected the dedication shown by teaching staff and their willingness to go above and beyond for the pupils they teach.

Actively listening to staff concerns, implementing effective solutions based on proven successes, and tackling core issues like scheduling and communication are crucial steps. And there are efforts being made to improve staff wellbeing: 60 per cent of respondents told us that their school had implemented wellbeing surveys, along with 47 per cent offering wellbeing resources.

But there remain clear areas for improvement, with only 15 per cent of those surveyed reporting that their school had implemented flexible working practices (up 3 per cent from 2023), and the same number saying that their school has brought in reduced workload solutions to help manage their wellbeing (also up 3 per cent).

While these positive trends are undoubtedly encouraging, schools should explore what they can implement to cultivate a truly supportive and empowering environment.

"I throw myself into my work"

8% disagree

15% neutral

77% agree
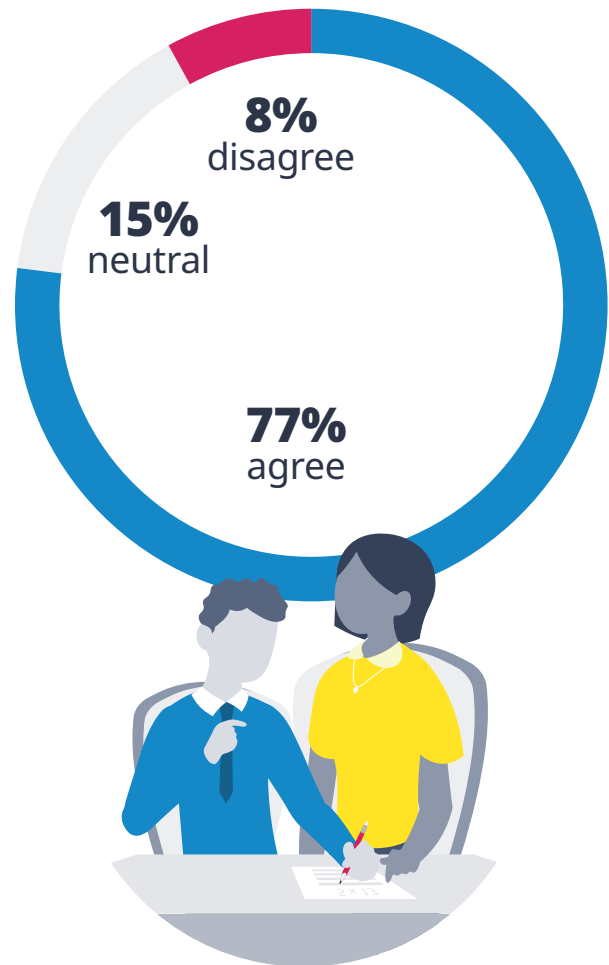
" We've introduced recently a learning day during the year which every member of staff is entitled to. They can book a day of their choice and they can spend that day doing something that they feel will develop them or improve things or just make their wellbeing better in whatever way, shape, form they choose. "

Christie Cavallo, Headteacher, Southwater Infant Academy

Workload and work-life balance

Unsurprisingly, teacher workload remains a critical issue. A troubling 61 per cent of our 2024 respondents said that their workload isn't manageable, despite 50 per cent reporting that their school has reduced marking (up from 49 per cent in 2023), 36 per cent having implemented time-saving behaviour management software or practices (a 5 per cent increase from last year), and the same number having streamlined staff meetings to try and lighten the load (a 2 per cent increase).

The burden is particularly acute for SENCOs, with 78 per cent feeling their workload isn't manageable, which aligns with other recent surveys predicting problems in delivering adequate support for SEND. Middle leaders are also feeling the strain, with 71 per cent reporting that their workload isn't manageable, followed closely by teachers themselves (66 per cent).

"My workload is manageable"

20% agree

19% neutral

61% disagree

The disparity between state and independent schools is also significant, with 64 per cent of state school staff reporting unmanageable workloads compared with just 31 per cent in independent schools. The frustration this causes is evident in the responses, with pleas for better working hours, efficient technology solutions, more administrative support and sufficient planning time (PPA).

"I would absolutely love some flexitime. Being able to be in a bit later one morning or leave earlier," one respondent told us.
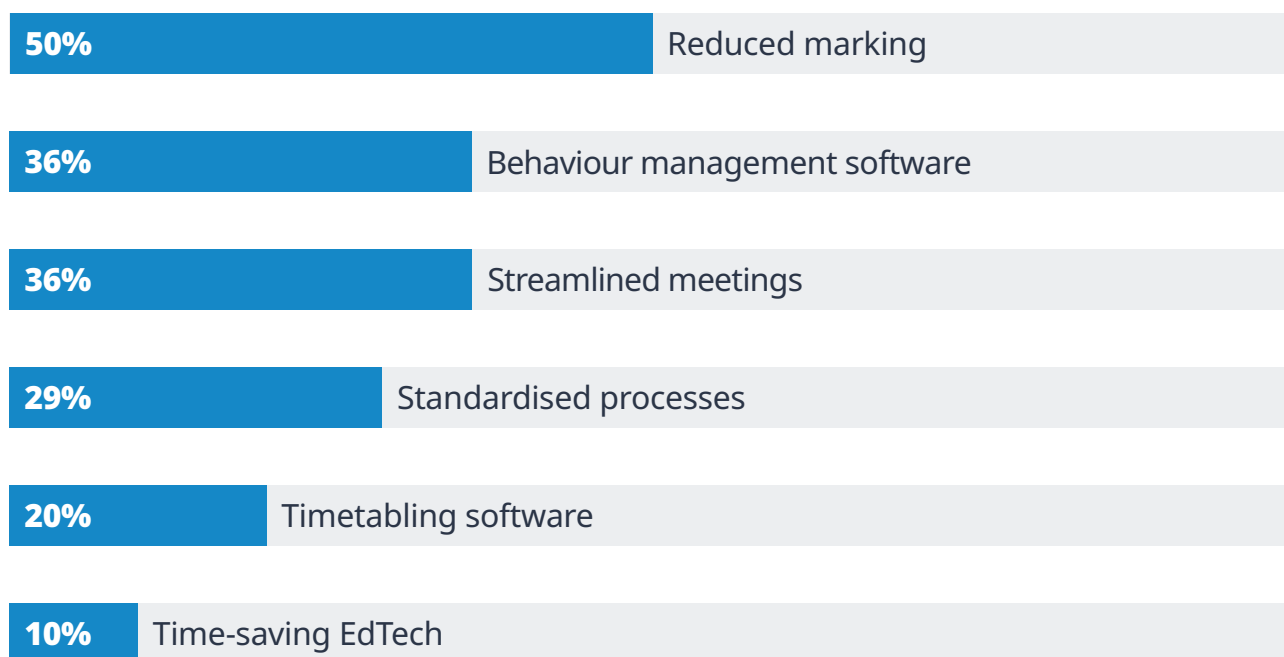
Another said that their school would benefit from **"more staffing in admin, management and organisational roles rather than making them all the responsibility of individual teachers and not having a centralised way to do things."**

To make a major impact, the findings from this report show that leaders should consider a multi-pronged approach that brings in efficiency-boosting elements – such as reducing admin requirements and introducing flexible working options – along with time-saving technology solutions – such as timetabling and scheduling tools.

Has your school implemented any of these solutions to help reduce workload ?

Please tick all that apply.

50%	Reduced marking
36%	Behaviour management software
36%	Streamlined meetings
29%	Standardised processes
20%	Timetabling software
10%	Time-saving EdTech

" **We know that teachers turning up in classrooms energised, motivated and excited to teach...that's going to make the biggest difference. Teaching a class all day, every day, that's pretty much a full-time job right there. Everything outside of that, has to be stripped out as much as possible.** "

Ben Levison, Executive Head of Kensington Primary School, and former Tes Award winner

Funding and resources

When it comes to resources, again, the divide between the state and independent sectors is evident: 62 per cent of independent school staff said they have enough resources to do their jobs, in comparison to only 26 per cent in state-funded schools.

18 per cent of respondents told us that their school had invested in resources to improve support in the classroom. There were also signs that schools were beginning to use funds to adopt a technology-led approach to workload. 20 per cent of school staff (5% more than last year) said their school had used timetabling software to save money through more efficient scheduling.

"My school is well funded"

2024

29%
of staff
agree

2023

25%
of staff
agree

The call for more funding and government accountability rings loud and clear, with staff urging fairer distribution and better budget management. Investing in digital resources is also high on the wish list.

One respondent told us that "governors and staff are doing everything they can to reduce costs and retain staff", while another said the problem is **"a government funding national issue, not a school issue"**.

"I have enough resources to do my job"

46% disagree   **31%** agree   **23%** neutral
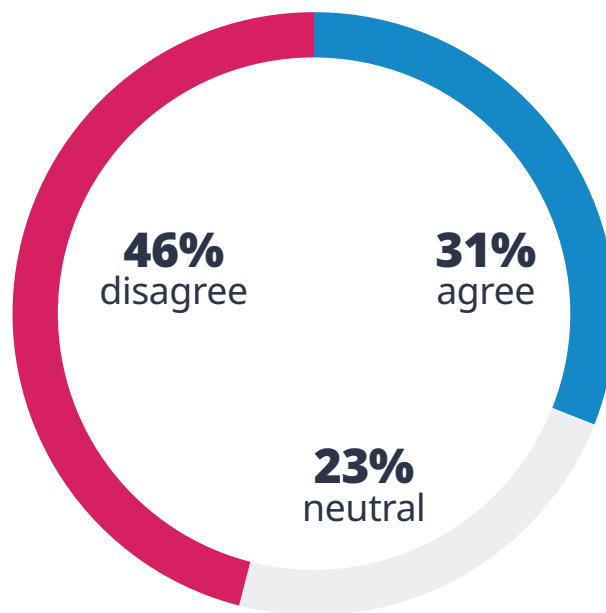
Another aired their exasperation: **"I'm not sure how they could improve funding but there are not enough digital resources for the students. We have 25 Chromebooks between about eight classes."**

But in times of strained budgets, what other options are there to improve efficiency? Technology may be the answer once again. Solutions that streamline not just staff time but also resource management can help, but only when combined with proper training and integration, and a commitment to prioritising teacher wellbeing.

Communication, feedback and development

There's a cautious optimism in many areas of this year's survey, but when it comes to communication, there's a clear divide between senior leaders and school staff that needs to be addressed.

Some 74 per cent of senior leaders told us that their school has a clear vision for the future, while only 42 per cent of teachers said the same. Half of all respondents (50 per cent) feel that information isn't shared effectively within their school, and only 16 per cent of teachers feel their voices are heard, in comparison with 75 per cent of leaders.

"My school has a clear vision for the future"

Agreed, by job role:

74% of senior leaders

42% of teachers
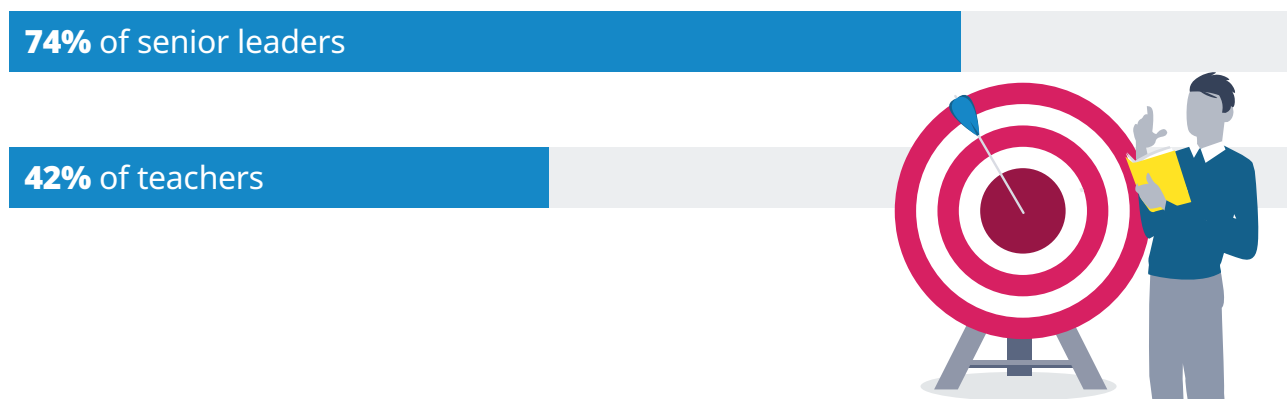
So, what can be done? Ensuring that communication speaks to career aspirations could be a good place to start for many: while 32 per cent of respondents said that they see development opportunities in their position, a significant 45 per cent disagreed. We also found a lack of clarity on career progression planning from schools, with only 14 per cent of respondents saying their school offers clear pathways for advancement.

There are also clear wins to be had around positive professional dialogues. While 47 per cent report that their school celebrates individual successes, only a third feel they consistently receive feedback on their performance, prompting questions about the structure and effectiveness of existing performance conversations.

Improvements could be found in listening, too: just 20 per cent of respondents said that their school has so far implemented a strategy to actively listen to their feedback. Similarly, 23 per cent of respondents told us that their school has increased communication, up from 20 per cent in last year's survey.

When asked about how their schools could improve communication, feedback and development, our respondents didn't hold back. **"Communication is a huge problem. Staff need to know what is going on,"** said one. Another proposed: **"Provide good quality training opportunities that are relevant and allow staff time to attend such events."**

Bridging this gap between staff and leadership through improved communication, feedback mechanisms and a firm focus on professional development seems crucial if leaders are to nurture engaged, informed and happy school communities.

Engagement and pride

This year's survey found that staff feel increasingly connected to their schools. We saw a 6 per cent rise in staff recommending their school as a place to work (up to 37 per cent) and a 5 per cent jump in feeling proud to work at their school (up to 52 per cent).

But the breakdown of that statistic reveals a more divided picture. While leaders hold a 74 per cent pride rate, only 41 per cent of teachers share the sentiment.

"I'm proud to work at my school"

28% disagree

21% neutral

52% agree
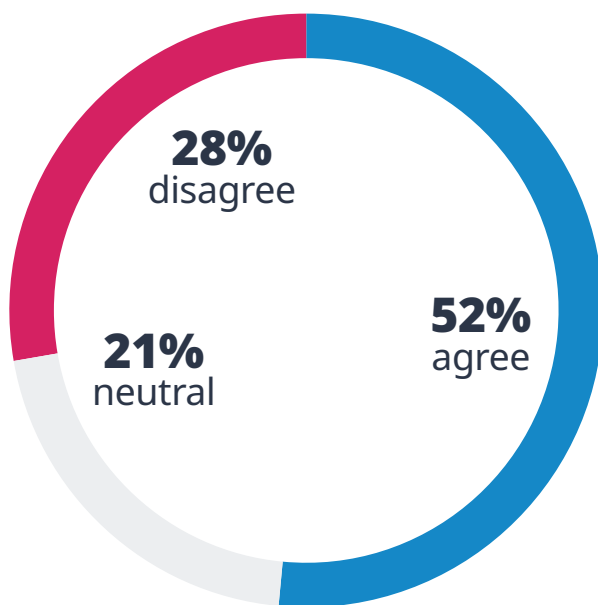
Nonetheless, a huge 78 per cent of respondents said they have good relationships with students, a 6 per cent increase from 2023. A clear sense of purpose is also evident, with 49 per cent agreeing with the statement "I'm working towards goals that matter to me", a 16 per cent increase from last year. However, only 30 per cent of respondents believe that their school prioritises professional growth.

When asked about what would make them feel more engaged and prouder, respondents offered firm ideas for improvement. One said schools should **"share a clear vision and empower staff to help achieve it"**, while another highlighted the need to **"focus on community and rekindle the positive staffroom atmosphere"**. Another added: **"I feel valued, but more could be done to reduce workload."**

Bridging this perception gap is crucial. Leaders must actively share their school vision, prioritise meaningful goals, and address teacher concerns like workload and communication to create schools that make all their staff feel empowered and proud to be there.

"I'm working towards goals that matter to me"

2024

49%
of staff
agree

2023

33%
of staff
agree

tes

Tes Schools Awards 2024

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Relationships and support

Relationships and support within schools seems to be on the up, with positive progress seen across different levels.

Trust in leadership, for example, has improved, with an 11 per cent increase in those saying that their leadership team makes good decisions (up to 37 per cent). Colleagues remain a strong support system, with a 9 per cent increase in those feeling supported by one another (up to 62 per cent).

"My colleagues care about me"

62%
of staff
agree

But once again, it's a complex picture when broken down, with leaders feeling more positive than their staff. While 74 per cent of senior leaders believe their team makes good decisions, only 27 per cent and 28 per cent of teachers and middle leaders respectively said the same. Similarly, the feeling of being supported varies significantly, with 55 per cent of senior leaders feeling supported compared to just 32 per cent of teachers.

"Leadership needs to truly listen and support, not just dictate," said one respondent, while others sounded calls for improved parental engagement, better opportunities for staff connection, improved communication, and coaching and mentoring programmes.

The upward trends offer hope, but work remains to be done. And there are numerous ways to do it. Anonymous wellbeing surveys, for example, can ensure leaders receive honest feedback and use this to guide policy, rather than implementing it in a top-down way. Likewise, making space for more conversations around vision can boost morale and cohesiveness.

Bridging these gaps through improved communication, addressing concerns openly and supporting staff development through training is essential. Taking on board these findings and suggestions would help to ensure that all staff are bought into a 'school vision.' This can then create a joint goal and purpose across the whole school which can, in turn, support collective working, motivation and inclusion.

"I feel supported"

Agreed, by job role:

55% of senior leaders

32% of teachers

Conclusion

There are clear areas of optimism in this year's wellbeing survey, from teachers' growing sense of confidence in their own skills to their support for one another and remarkable relationships with the young people in their classrooms.

But a disconnect persists. While leadership may be taking what they perceive to be the right steps, their intentions and vision seem to be getting lost in translation. The survey highlights a communication gap, where strategies and goals may not be understood, shared or resonating with the wider staff, leaving some feeling frustrated or out of the loop.

And when efforts are noticed, these fall short of addressing the core issues. Flexible working arrangements, a long-standing desire, remain elusive for many. Meanwhile, the administrative burden continues to weigh teachers down, leaving them aspiring for better support and smarter approaches.

So, are schools doing enough? The answer is complex. Bridging that communication gap is crucial. Leaders must listen actively, ensuring their vision translates into tangible actions and support that resonates with staff. Addressing the ever-present workload pressure is equally vital, possibly through innovative support like AI-driven automation and intelligent software solutions.

In many areas, it has been noted by educators that leaders clearly care about their staff and are making efforts to support them. From overall confidence in leadership to efforts to implement greater professional development and workload reduction solutions, it's clear school leaders are doing what they can to offer support. In these areas, school SLT may be battling strong headwinds outside of their control and sector-wide changes may be required to make the kind of improvement teachers would like.

Technology can offer some promising solutions with software springing up to help with behaviour management, streamlining admin processes and creating optimally efficient timetables, all with the aim of saving time wherever possible. Investing in these areas can demonstrate that staff and their time are truly valued, and that leaders are doing all they can to alleviate pressure during these uniquely challenging times.

This year's survey perhaps doesn't sound an alarm, but it should certainly be a rallying call for leaders. It's an opportunity to acknowledge the gaps, understand their root causes and where leaders can and cannot assert influence; and to then implement, where possible, effective solutions to address pressing needs, and retain and nurture our most valuable asset: passionate, dedicated teachers.

Has your school implemented any of these solutions to help staff development?

Please tick all that apply.

Key: | 2024 | 2023 |

57%
55%
Online courses/webinars/podcasts

53%
53%
Observation and shadowing

43%
38%
Teacher training courses and workshops

40%
36%
Studying for a qualification or accreditation

35%
32%
Mentoring

28%
29%
Self-reflection, personal reading or research

24%
25%
Peer group exchanges

14%
12%
Attending exhibitions and conferences

CPD

2%
2%
International exchanges

Empowering schools.
Enabling great teaching.

Magazine

Develop

MyConcern

Parents' Meetings
Powered by schoolcloud

Recruitment

Resources

Staff Pulse

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