

HAYS Recruiting experts
in Education

STAFF WELLBEING & COVID-19

Hays Wellbeing in Education Report 2020

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Education has been on the frontline for much of the Covid-19 pandemic, with education professionals having to persevere through last-minute legislative changes, widespread uncertainty and more.

The start of the new school year immediately following a national lockdown put thousands of education employers and employees under incredible stress, and without urgent action to understand the impact and offer wellbeing support, there is a risk that many education professionals could experience burnout and even consider leaving the profession.

This report seeks to set out the current state of employee wellbeing, and highlight the factors most impacting staff, helping education leaders to understand and improve wellbeing in their teams.

Methodology

The following report was collated from a survey of almost 800 education employers and professionals in October 2020.

Work-life balance negatively affected

With Covid-19 overshadowing the start of a new school term, education professionals at all levels have been feeling the pressure. When asked how their work-life balance had fared since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, both employers and employees noted a dramatic drop in the quality of their work-life balance. Before the pandemic, only 20% of teaching staff rated their work life balance as poor or very poor. Today, that figure is almost half (46%). Among leadership staff the shift is even more dramatic, with more than half of respondents saying their work-life balance is poor, up from only 28% before the pandemic.

Work-life balance has undeniably been affected and it is impacting employee wellbeing, but what is making the situation worse is the disconnect between employers and employees. In many cases, senior staff perceive the work-life balance of their teams to be better than it truly is. Over a quarter (26%) of employers believe their teaching staff to be suffering from a poor work-life balance, whilst nearly one in two (46%) employees report their work-life balance as poor or very poor.

How would you rate your work-life balance?

■ Before Covid-19 ■ Since Covid-19

Leadership staff (poor or very poor)



Teaching and other staff (poor or very poor)



How would you rate the work-life balance of your teaching staff?

■ Poor/very poor ■ Average ■ Good/very good

Leadership staff



Teaching and other staff



Overworking increases risk of burnout

Education has always been a challenging profession which demands a lot from staff. But as Covid-19 has changed the world in which we teach and learn, staff of all levels are under increasing and unsustainable levels of stress. 69% of education leaders say they are working more hours as a direct result of Covid-19, as are 44% of teaching and other staff. 45% of senior professionals and leadership staff say they are working more than 50 hours a week, with 32% saying they are working over 56 hours.

Are you working more hours currently due to the impact of Covid-19?

■ Yes ■ No

Leadership staff

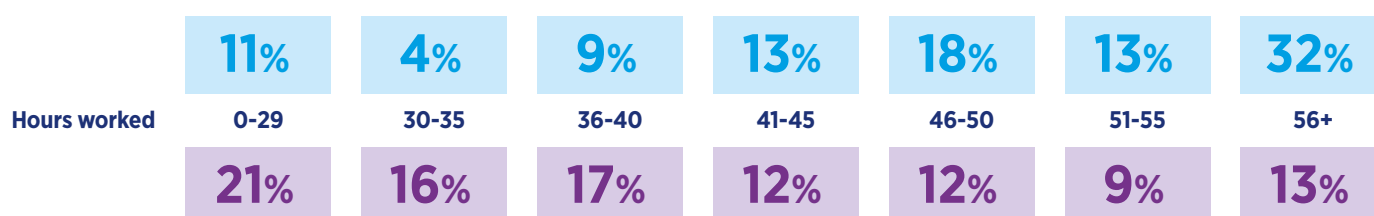


Teaching and other staff



How many hours do you usually spend working in a normal week?

■ Leadership staff ■ Teaching and other staff



Covid-19 processes impacting work-life balance

When we asked professionals what had most dramatically impacted their wellbeing and work-life balance, 75% said the increased processes resulting from Covid-19, with the same proportion (75%) also saying that longer hours are having a particular impact on their work-life balance. Add to this that at least 49% of schools fail to actively monitor changes in employee workload, and you have the perfect conditions for stress-related burnout.

“75% said the increased processes resulting from Covid-19 are having a particular impact on their work-life balance.”

What aspects of the profession have negatively affected your work-life balance?

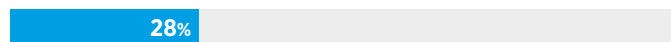
Increased procedures as a result of Covid-19



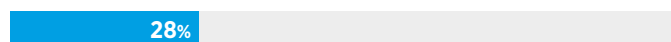
Working long/extra hours



Keeping up with curriculum changes



Inspections



Pay



Does your school actively monitor your workload?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Sometimes ■ Unsure



Mental health and wellbeing are threatening retention

The impact of a greater workload and the increased procedures as a result of Covid-19 have significantly affected an already challenging profession, leading to concerns about pressure on staff and the effect on their mental health. Around 40% of both leadership and other staff say they have experienced a mental health condition as a result of their job, with similar volumes saying their job has affected their mental health in some way.

The negative effect on wellbeing is a key concern for employers due to its direct impact on employee retention and attraction. 65% of employees have at some point considered leaving the profession due to poor wellbeing, and rely on their employers to offer wellbeing support when it is needed. 89% consider the availability of wellbeing support as important or very important in their current job.

Have you or are you experiencing a mental health condition as a result of your job?

■ Yes ■ My job has somewhat affected my mental health ■ No

Leadership staff



Teaching and other staff



Have you ever considered leaving the profession due to poor wellbeing?

■ Yes ■ No



How important is it to you that wellbeing is supported by your employer?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Neutral ■ Unimportant



Wellbeing and candidate attraction

When seeking out new employment, education professionals are acutely aware of wellbeing, and would be more attracted to organisations that prioritise and support their mental health. 69% said they would be more likely to work for a school, nursery or MAT which offered staff wellbeing training, and an overwhelming 97% said that wellbeing is important or very important to them when looking for a new job.

Are you more likely to work for a school, MAT or nursery that offers free wellbeing training?

■ Much more likely ■ Likely ■ Neutral ■ Unlikely



How important is wellbeing to you when looking for a new job?

■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ Neither important nor unimportant ■ Not important



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Wellbeing strategies and communication

Along with the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, staff reliance on wellbeing support is resulting in the majority of employers (87%) now saying they have a wellbeing strategy or are working towards one. Only 45% of staff however are aware of such a programme at their organisation.

This suggests a lack of communication between leaders and education professionals which is exacerbated by the persistent stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing. Only 35% of staff felt comfortable raising wellbeing concerns with their senior leadership, and 43% found it difficult to find information about how to get help if they felt their wellbeing was under threat.

Does your school have a wellbeing strategy for staff?

■ Yes ■ Not at present, but we are developing one ■ No



Are you aware of whether your school has a wellbeing strategy?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure



I feel comfortable raising concerns about my wellbeing with senior leadership

■ Agree ■ Disagree



There is clear information available for staff about how they can get help with their wellbeing if they need it

■ Agree ■ Disagree



Wellbeing is openly discussed as part of our day-to-day school life

■ Agree ■ Disagree



SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion about the wellbeing of education professionals has never been more prominent, but the efforts being made by employers to support wellbeing amount to nothing if they are not communicated properly. Communication is the key to ensuring wellbeing is properly maintained, make sure your working environment is a comfortable, safe space in which staff can openly discuss matters of personal wellbeing and find the resources and support they need.

Education is a calling for many teachers and school workers, and they will show loyalty through this challenging time, but they expect to have their wellbeing supported. Failing to do so, or failing to properly communicate the support available, will impact staff retention and make it more difficult to hire staff in the future.

Recommendations

- Consider the importance of work-life balance and make allowances wherever possible to give opportunities for breaks from work.
- Wellbeing training is essential, so consider free training packages like Wellbeing First from [Hays Education Training](#), which offers a range of wellbeing training courses designed to fit into busy schedules.
- Do not neglect the wellbeing of senior staff. Much of the focus of wellbeing is often centred on teachers, but leadership teams are working extremely long hours and are running a risk of burnout.
- Ensure you understand the reality of wellbeing at your organisation, open a discourse and encourage open, frank discussion. Sometimes all that is required is a sympathetic ear – other times, clear signposts to training and support may be needed.
- If hiring, ensure your dedication to wellbeing, and the support you offer staff, is clear and accessible in all your recruitment materials.

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