

Experts to drive “real change” in support of teachers’ wellbeing

The support on offer to help school and college staff look after their mental health and wellbeing is set for “real change”, following the launch of a government-led group to ease classroom pressures.

The new group, made up of representatives from mental health and wellbeing organisations as well as schools and colleges, met for the first time this week.

During the meeting the CEO of the charity Mind, Paul Farmer, underlined the importance of placing teachers’ wellbeing at the heart of schools’ and colleges’ decision-making – setting out that teachers and school staff must be listened to in order bring about “real change” to staffroom culture.

This builds on the Education Secretary Damian Hinds’ assertion – when announcing the 26-strong group earlier this year – that “happy, motivated, well supported teachers are more likely to have happy and motivated pupils”.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton and representatives from a wide range of organisations – including the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, Education Support Partnership, and What Works Wellbeing Centre – attended the first meeting to discuss the mental health and wellbeing of school and college staff.

Minister for School Standards Nick Gibb said:

One thing that strikes me when I meet teachers in every school is their selflessness and their willingness to go above and beyond to help their pupils. However, like any important and rewarding job, life as a teacher brings its own challenges and pressures.

I saw first-hand the crucial role this group will play in providing us with expert advice to help prioritise teachers’ mental health and wellbeing – setting a positive example for pupils.

Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills Anne Milton said:

Teachers and heads in schools and colleges face similar challenges and pressures. We want to make sure that we give the right support to those at the front line of education. This group will help us understand how we can do this best.

The Education Secretary announced the creation of the mental health and wellbeing advisory group at the Association of School and College Leaders

(ASCL) annual conference in Birmingham – building on the launch of the first ever integrated strategy to recruit and retain more schoolteachers in January of this year.

The landmark strategy included an ambition to transform the day-to-day experiences of teachers, and laid out plans to create a positive, supportive culture in schools.

Paul Farmer, CEO of Mind, said:

Only by ensuring teachers are well supported can we expect them to thrive and deliver the best outcomes for everyone – pupils, parents and the colleagues they work alongside.

This is an important issue that needs significant attention from government. In order to bring about real change, the views and opinions of teachers and school staff need to be listened to.

Stuart Rimmer CEO, East Coast College and Chair, Association of Colleges Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Group said:

This Expert Advisory Panel is both timely and essential, recognising the importance of staff wellbeing and good mental health for the education sector.

This collaborative endeavour between teachers, leaders, and officials, combined with ministerial support, encourages exploration and most importantly proactive action to address one of the most serious concerns of our sector. We are delighted to contribute.

The creation of the group is part of the Education Secretary's ongoing work to address some of the concerns raised by the profession and to create a great culture in both schools and colleges.

In total, there are twenty-six members of the advisory group, comprised of union representatives, education experts and current teachers, school heads and college leaders.

The panel's members are:

- Nansi Ellis – Assistant General Secretary, National Education Union
- Sara Ford – Deputy Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders
- James Bowen – Director of Policy, National Association of Head Teachers
- Adam Lincoln – Bargaining and Negotiations Official, University and College Union
- Darren Northcott – National Official for Education, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

- Leora Cruddas – CEO, Confederation of School Trusts
- Emma Knights – Chief Executive, National Governors Association
- Stuart Rimmer – CEO, East Coast College; Chair, Association of Colleges Mental Health Policy Group
- Bill Watkin – Chief Executive, Sixth Form College Association
- Tom Bennett – Founder, ResearchED; Director, Tom Bennett Training
- Faye Craster – Director of Teacher Development, Teach First
- Hannah Tyreman – Head of Online Learning and Community, Chartered College of Teaching
- Dame Carol Black – Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge
- Georgina Newton – Associate Professor, University of Warwick
- Dr Tim O’Brien – Visiting Fellow in Psychology & Human Development, UCL Institute of Education
- Paul Farmer – CEO, Mind
- Professor Peter Fonagy – CEO, Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
- Nancy Hey – Director, What Works Wellbeing Centre
- Sinead McBrearty – CEO, Education Support Partnership
- Michael Eggleton – Deputy Headteacher, Charles Dickens Primary School
- Jacqui Ford – Group Director, Weston College
- Ben Levinson – Headteacher, Kensington Primary School
- Nicola McCleave – Health and Wellbeing Manager, Reaseheath College
- Jenny Rigby – Headteacher, Meadow High School
- Steve Rippin – Assistant Headteacher, Tipton School
- Gary Wilkie – CEO, Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust