



Kingsmead's Approach to Wellbeing

Over the last five years there have been considerable steps forward in creating a culture that makes the necessary demands of teaching in an ambitious school something that is achievable. That is not about 'bolt-on' activities, but instead a holistic approach that is closely allied with the general approach to leadership (see Leadership Approach document).

In addition, practical steps that have been taken to ensure that teachers are able to focus on the quality of the curriculum, how best to deliver it and how to maximise its impact. The following are some key examples.

- Clear, consistent approaches to behaviour that makes it possible to teach effectively.
- A centralised detention system.
- The creation of specific time at the end of the day each day for departmental training, planning and curriculum development.
- Focus on ensuring effective development of the curriculum through collaborative planning and shared resources.
- Reduction of assessment points across the year and an emphasis on adaptive teaching instead.
- Removal of judgemental lesson observation, replaced with peer observation (tied into teaching and learning communities across the school year) and departmental development.
- Clear professional development pathways that focus on research-based approaches and allow ownership of one's development.
- Incremental coaching.

Overall however, the key to wellbeing is everyone being willing to be human and transparent. At Kingsmead, what you see is what you get, and everyone is moving forward from where they are. That is why the motto is 'Practise to Perfect'.

Below is the more detailed outlined principles of approach to teacher wellbeing.

Kingsmead Teacher Wellbeing Statement

We will never hide that we are an ambitious school that expects the very best experiences and opportunities for the children who come here and will always expect teachers both to meet the teaching standards and aim for routine excellence.

However, we also believe that should not be achieved at the expense of creating an excellent workplace and sense of community for colleagues. It is our responsibility to those who trust us with their working lives to make that as fruitful and meaningful an experience as we can.

Indeed, in a profession that by its nature will always place unique emotional demands, a focused, efficient and reasonable workplace is how our ambition for the children will be best realised. It will help to produce teachers who are able to be at their best.

Two key pieces of literature inform this approach.

1. DFE School Workload Toolkit
2. Kat Howard 'Stop Talking About Wellbeing'

These two pieces of literature are key because they focus on a strategic, holistic and preventative approaches to wellbeing, avoiding the tokenistic or compensatory. The former is a practical toolkit to change workload, but the latter is wider in scope.

This statement is not to be seen as a checklist of activities or compliance to list of expectations about workload. Workload should always be reasonable, but best workplaces are those that focus on the psychological experience and sense of clarity and humanity. That is not something that can be documented and is what makes one of the biggest differences to the experience of working life.

It is also not a policy in the sense that it forms part of the Code of Conduct or any other school policy. It is a document that outlines our philosophical approach as an institution.

Foundational Principles of Wellbeing

Schools are complex systems in which a lot of meaningful change takes time and draws deep on capacity. We wish we had a magic wand, but our main message about wellbeing remains the same few things.

- 1) Meeting the teaching standards and achieving excellence for the children is not simple, but it is what we are here for.
- 2) The workload in teaching is big, complex and often emotionally loaded. It simply has to be distributed across teams and spread out where possible.
- 3) Stress is minimised by having the pre-requisites in place: good behaviour systems, good curriculum, good resources, efficient systems and planning.
- 4) We have to be systematic, consistent and hold the same high standards for both one another and the children in order to minimise the likelihood of problems for one another.
- 5) Leadership in the school is not about doing everything oneself, it is about prioritisation, proportionate delegation and effective organisation of teams.
- 6) **Everyone must take shared responsibility. It is never helpful to simply say no, but it is incredibly important to have an ongoing professional dialogue about workload and feel free to collaborate on a solution.**
- 7) Struggling with something is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of challenging oneself and we deserve to be supported in that.
- 8) When problems occur, we must seek first to understand the reasons why and focus on next steps and lessons learned.
- 9) Ultimately relationships matter: we are people, this is hard and we need to trust and support for one another. If you work at Kingsmead, you will be seen both as a person and as part of a community of professionals.

There are some key areas that the school needs to have clear approaches to in order not just to avoid preventable stress, but to allow everyone to flourish.

1. Relationships
2. Clarity and Efficiency
3. Planning and Marking
4. Institutional and Personal Development
5. Sense of Ownership

What follows is an outline approach to each.

I. Relationships

While there are high expectations of colleagues, we are all people first, colleagues second. Once someone is a Kingsmead colleague then they are part of a community and deserve to feel valued and protected. We want them to have:

I.1 A Sense of Safety and Protection

Aside from the basics of physical health and safety - the perception of which was considerably complicated by the recent pandemic - it is hugely important to us that colleagues feel emotionally safe at work, and that we each feel that the working environment is rational and predictable. In addition, that we embody the school motto of 'Practise to Perfect'. No one personally judged negatively according to where they are now, but they **are** supported to move forward as quickly as possible.

We aim to achieve this through having systems that make it possible.

- Foundational principles of wellbeing are used in all decision making.
- School leaders focus on producing excellence but will also work hard to ensure that the school is safeguarded against external threats e.g. funding issues or OFSTED.
- School leaders will make clear what the expectations are of a role and hold accountable according to explicit, shared criteria.
- Appraisal starts on the premise that teachers most likely deserve to progress on the pay-scale and that targets are the beginning of a conversation about effort and focus on achieving them rather than being binary success/failure.
- Lesson observation is normally peer to peer and developmental. If there is a problem, it is assumed to be something a colleague needs support with and there is patient development. It starts with the question 'What is it about the situation that has produced this outcome?' and works back to the wider schools and departmental context rather than immediately assuming it is the colleague that is the issue.
- While never avoiding accountability and holding high standards, we try to focus on praising as much as possible and giving credit.

I.2 Positive Peer to Peer and Line Manager Relationships

- Recruitment and promotion has a focus on how human and how good a fit someone is for the culture of decency in the school just as much as their expertise. This is intended to ensure the highest probability of positive relationships and cultural alignment.
- There are clarified expected behaviours of colleagues, including 'Working collaboratively, positively and flexibly.'
- Expectations of line management are made clear and expected to be consistent so that everyone is working on the same terms.
- We try to make space in the school day for colleagues to work together where possible.

I.3 Clear and Consistent Behaviour Systems That Allow Positive Relationships

- Behaviour expectations are clear and consistent across the school and everyone is held to them to support one another.
- There are clear positive approaches to behaviour in the school that makes space for teachers to develop positive relationships with students rather than just punitive.
- There is strong support staff and SLT response to behaviour issues and an expectation of basic respect.
- Behaviour Data is analysed and strategically responded to.

2. Clarity and Efficiency

Schools are large and complex and both the amount and variety of information a teacher has to deal with on an ongoing basis can be overwhelming. We aim to ensure unnecessary complexity and strain are minimised by:

2.1 Long-Term Planning and Effective Whole School Organisation

- Long, medium and short-term aims are clarified and repeatedly communicated.
- Those aims are sequenced and paced to be manageable across teams and across the school.
- Leaders and teachers are kept on track with those aims through both the line management systems and whole school reflection.
- Policies and expectations are clear and readily available.

2.2 Quality and Timing of Communication

- School systems, expectations and events are repeatedly communicated through as many channels as possible and where information can be found is signposted clearly.
- The school year is planned on predictable cycles.
- As much as possible, colleagues are provided with both the information they need to organise themselves and for them to be able to do so in good time.
- Face to face communication is preferred to email.

2.3 Quality and Frequency of Meetings

- Meetings are planned with a specific purpose in mind and with a clear purpose and agenda.
- They are kept to a minimum for what is needed to be achieved.
- They are prepared for well and chaired effectively.
- Where possible, meetings are planned in well in advance and work on a predictable cycle. If the meeting is a regular one, the agenda should be predictable.

3. Planning and Marking

These tasks take up the bulk of a teacher's time outside of the classroom. While it always remains the individual teacher's responsibility to plan and adapt lessons to be able to meet the needs of learners, as well as assess their individual learners effectively and respond, this can be done in ways that make the task clearer and the starting point simpler.

3.1 Lesson Planning and Resourcing

- Departments are expected to produce long-term and medium-term plans that make explicit what the concrete and procedural knowledge to be learned is and how progression is made across the curriculum.
- Time is made on a weekly basis for teams to plan together and departmental meetings are expected to have a reflective focus.
- There is a clear set of questions to be considered when planning a lesson.
- Teams are expected to have shared resources in place for teachers to start with when planning lessons for their class.

3.2 Focus, weight and purpose of assessment

- Assessment is focused on adaptive teaching in the classroom.
- Comment marking is not expected, but effective student response is.
- Mastery and Deepening lessons/activities are built into lessons to allow whole class feedback.
- Summative assessments are distributed across the term so as to distribute the workload.

4. Sense of Ownership

It is significant in our working lives that we both understand fully what is expected of us and have the opportunity to use our judgement to adapt it while achieving the outcomes. It also matters both that we

understand what success looks like, we are trusted and that we get the opportunity to use discretion when appropriate.

4.1 Opportunity to Adapt

- School systems and approaches are clarified and the focus is on the active ingredients rather than the delivery method.
- School policies relating to teaching and learning are made with the expectation that departments will need the opportunity to adapt for their context.
- It is made clear what is 'tight' and what is 'loose' so that both teachers and teams feel able to adapt to meet their needs.

4.2 Opportunity to Influence at Department and Whole School Level

- Practise to Perfect is the school motto, so where possible and appropriate teachers are asked to contribute to both whole school and departmental approaches in advance of any change but also on an ongoing basis.
- There are formal and predictable methods for consultation both on school policies and strategic direction and feedback is actively sought as part of the development process.

4.3 Protection from Pressures of Inspection

- OFSTED will not drive the agenda of the school and no colleague will be asked to do anything purely for their benefit. This is a school that knows what it is aiming for and is driving to achieve it.

5. Effective Personal and Institutional Development

It is essential that everyone who works in the school can see a sense of direction and progress, both for themselves and the school. Even a beautiful, well organised and collaborative environment that is standing still can be stultifying. There is nothing worse than coming to work every day simply to do the same thing over and over again for the sake of it and feel it is all going nowhere or backward. Equally, that the steps to be taken on the journey should be clear and an end destination in mind.

It should also be that systems focus on supporting colleagues to develop based on the belief that they will want to rather than on the need to use high stakes judgement to motivate them.

5.1 Change Management

- Change will fit into a long-term plan for improvement.
- Improvement planning uses the EEF implementation cycle assess the scale of required change and best steps.
- The rationale behind the change will be clearly explained and the plan for implementation consulted on.
- The implications for groups of teachers within the school will be considered when assessing feasibility.

5.2 Quality of Professional Development

- It matters that it is clear what is expected of people in their role, that they are given training to achieve it and/or to build on their existing skills.
- In addition to the whole school priorities for improvement, there will be departmental aims and personal objectives. Each will be tracked and progress celebrated.
- Teacher development will align with the school approach, but also allow for reflection and individual adaptation.
- Professional development will be in place for all stages of one's career and be informed by the latest research and benchmarked against excellence in the profession.

5.3 Lesson Observation

Unless due to the need to provide support or any more formal a process, observation of lessons is used in a low stakes way and peer to peer informal observation is encouraged so that teachers feel observation is a normal part of professional life.