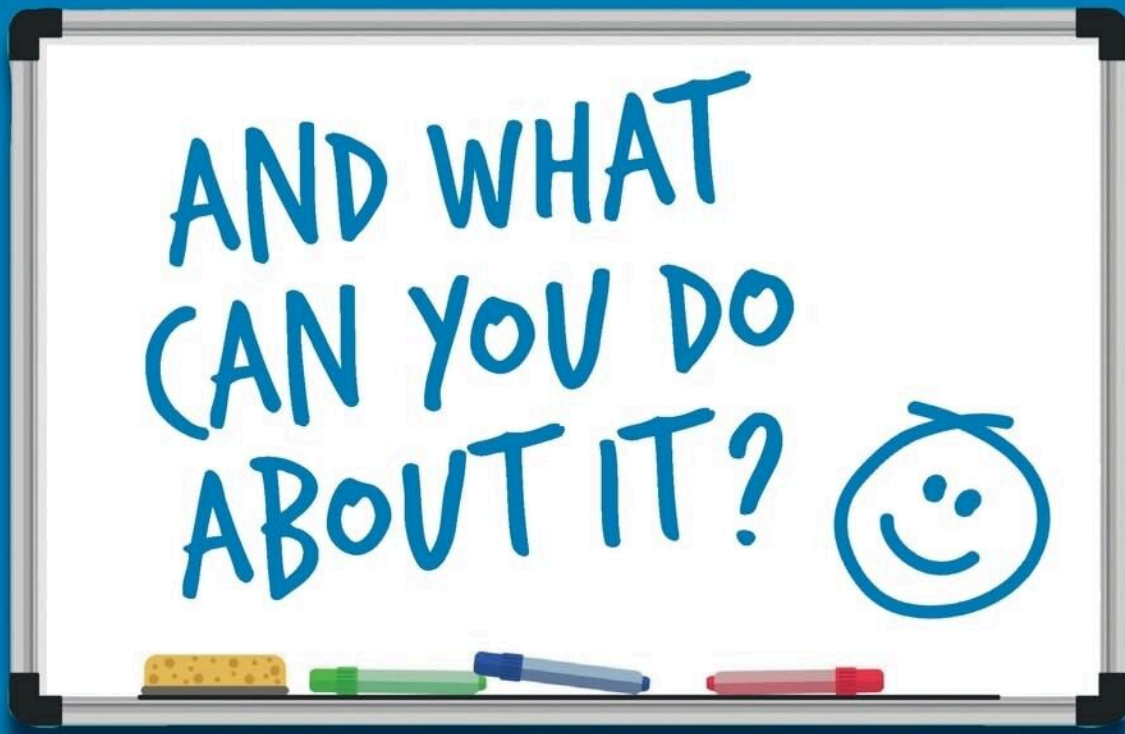


Teacher well-being not a priority in schools, experts warn

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WHAT MAKES TEACHERS UNHAPPY



Building a Culture of Staff Wellbeing

MARK SOLOMONS • FRAN ABRAMS

A **David Fulton** Book

'This is a powerful, thoughtful book that goes beyond treating symptoms, towards looking at the root causes of poor wellbeing.'

Dame Alison Peacock,

Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching

Credit: Routledge

Against a backdrop of funding shortages and recruitment issues across the education sector, two education experts argue that equipping leaders with more soft skills will improve mental health and well-being in school staff.

In the U.K., the government has just announced it is establishing a taskforce to look at reducing teacher workload, with representatives from across the [education sector](#).

"There is a clear and urgent need to make schools better places to work," School well-being expert Mark Solomons explains, "[school leaders](#) need the skills to enact change and quickly."

What exactly is the problem?

Solomons and education journalist Fran Abrams have co-authored a [new book](#) to help schools to build a culture of well-being and to ensure staff are not overworked or stressed, called "What Makes Teachers Unhappy, and What Can You Do About it?"

Solomons and Abrams have extensively examined current research and policy to inform a guide for school [leaders](#), which argues staff well-being should be rooted in the culture and climate of all schools. It provides a roadmap to recovery for schools, colleges and multi-academy trusts, which will lead to improvements in staff morale, workload management and mental well-being.

Solomons explains, "School leaders are often under-supported and underprepared to take on something as challenging as staff well-being in a high-stress environment."

The book provides psychological techniques for school leaders to bolster their own resilience and well-being, something the authors argue is crucial before trying to improve team morale.

Utilizing up-to-date research, the authors advise leaders on how to support staff well-being and reduce stress.

"The issue is that leaders in schools are a product of their knowledge and experience. Often they are a teacher or support staff member one day, then the next they are leading a team, often with no or little training. And they usually have to continue to do more than 80 percent of their previous job."

The guide shows how to effectively audit a school's well-being support on a whole-school and individual level, as well as offering ways to address and improve any gaps.

Structural and systemic failures

The U.K.'s Department for Education (DfE) has this week announced it is planning an update to its teacher recruitment and retention strategy, with a priority to "create the right climate for leaders to establish supportive school cultures."

In "What Makes Teachers Unhappy," the authors analyzed the DfE's Education Staff Well-being Charter, which was published in 2021 and asked schools to sign up to a number of pledges on staff well-being.

They found only minor updates to the charter had been posted on the

DfE website, none of them providing updates on its pledges.

"It is encouraging that the DfE has renewed its interest in staff well-being," Solomons says. "By creating an environment that supports staff development and encourages staff to make decisions, take responsibility and learn from mistakes, rather than being judged from them, it's possible to improve staff well-being and deliver significant benefits to school leaders and students. In short, it's vital that well-being is built into the culture of organizations from top to bottom if real and lasting change is to take place.

"The failure isn't at an individual level, people are thrust into positions they have had no real training for—and with the background landscape of funding cuts and long hours, it's no wonder the [education](#) system seems to be in permanent crisis."

The book, which features a range of real-life examples, will be published by Routledge on September 26. It will focus on how school leaders can build workplace well-being in even the current challenging environment.

More information: Mark Solomons et al, What Makes Teachers Unhappy, and What Can You Do About It? Building a Culture of Staff Wellbeing (2023). [DOI: 10.4324/9781003315766](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003315766)

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