

Wednesday 19th October

Teacher wellbeing and mental health: Call for Action

Dear Secretary of State,

The Chartered College of Teaching and Education Support are apolitical sector actors founded in the 1800s. Our organisations have sustained in-depth knowledge of the education sector, workforce and policy for well over a century. We look forward to meeting you to hear about your priorities and working together to improve and support schools in England.

We come together now to draw your attention to the persistent state of stress and burnout among teaching professionals, and the inevitable impact this has on teacher retention and ultimately pupils' educational attainment.

Teacher and student wellbeing are two sides of the same coin. There is rightly increasing attention being paid to the mental health challenges of this generation of children and young people. Many of them are struggling with social, emotional and mental health challenges (including emotional dysregulation at school) which in turn affects their readiness to learn. These challenges, however, cannot be viewed as distinct from the mental health and wellbeing of those responsible for their education. Teachers are key in student recovery post-pandemic but no one can do their best at work if they are mentally and emotionally depleted.

Research shows that for five years, teachers have had consistently lower wellbeing (demonstrated via WEMWBS scores in Teacher Wellbeing Index, Education Support, 2021) than the general population, report higher rates of workplace stress (Health and Safety Executive, 2019) and higher rates of depression and anxiety (Teacher Wellbeing Index, Education Support, 2021). In addition, the pandemic caused the teaching profession to face



relentless challenges, from an already low base of mental health and wellbeing. These teaching professionals are responsible for inspiring our young people and delivering an education recovery agenda that will enable future generations to prosper.

As it stands now, we are very clear: a stressed and burned-out workforce cannot deliver the highest quality education for children and young people. The evidence repeatedly shows that no one does their best work when they are significantly stressed or burned out. In this case, the effects are felt by pupils.

Teachers are committed to their students' learning. What they lack, however, is the time to focus on high-quality teaching and their own professional development. We asked over one thousand teachers to identify immediate improvements that can be made to their working lives to increase their wellbeing, and the time and energy they have to support their students' learning.

Competing priorities in the sector continue to limit the time that teachers have available to prepare high-quality lessons. We know from analysis of the British Skills and Employment Survey that teachers' work intensity is higher than any other profession in modern Britain. In addition, the lack of time and focus on their professional development negatively affects morale. According to our respondents, the following four areas put a particular strain on teachers:

- administrative tasks that have no impact on student learning
- the introduction of new initiatives and expectations during an academic year without proper planning and support
- preparation for Ofsted inspections
- a lack of support staff in schools.



The last point is likely to worsen as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, budgets remain strained and teaching assistants leave schools seeking higher-paid employment.

Finally, teachers need to be trusted as the experienced and knowledgeable professionals they are so they can take the decisions that best support their students in their specific contexts.

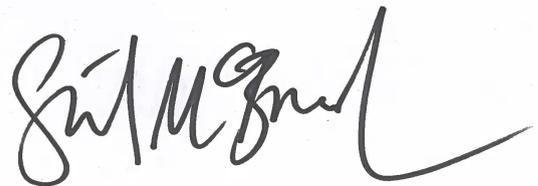
We rightly have ambitious national plans for education recovery and student outcomes. Yet, the Health and Safety Executive recognises teaching as one of the most stressful professions. As we look towards a challenging winter, it is more important than ever to reduce the drivers of stress and burnout among our teachers and all education staff.

We look forward to meeting to discuss how we can work together to make meaningful improvements for schools in England.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Alison Peacock
CEO of the Chartered College of Teaching



Sinéad Mc Brearty
CEO of Education Support

