

37. Staff Wellbeing

Executive Principal	
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Contents

Policy Statement

This policy focuses on fostering staff wellbeing and creating a supportive work environment that aligns with the school's guiding philosophy. At the British International School of Tunis (BIST), our shared vision, mission, ethos and values form the foundation for all actions and practices. These principles guide the development of policies that prioritise staff wellbeing and the overall school community.

Aims

- Support the mental and physical health of all staff.
- Create a positive and supportive workplace.
- Address evolving staff needs and personal responsibilities.
- Assist with specific wellbeing concerns.
- Ensure staff understand their role in achieving these objectives.

Promoting Wellbeing at all Times

At BIST we are committed to fostering a positive and supportive environment that prioritises the mental health and wellbeing of all staff. This section outlines how we will monitor and enhance staff wellbeing throughout the school year, ensuring that policies and practices remain effective and responsive to evolving needs.

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

- Treat each other with empathy and respect.
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff.
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support.
- Follow the school's policy on out-of-hours working, including guidance on when it is and isn't reasonable to respond to communications.
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit.
- Use shared areas respectfully, such as the staff room or offices.

- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing.

Line managers are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern.
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their team.
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies.
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance.
- Make sure new staff are properly and thoroughly inducted and feel able to ask for help.
- Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate.
- Keep in touch with staff if they're absent for long periods.
- Monitor staff sickness absence and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge.
- Conduct return-to-work interviews to support staff back into work.
- Conduct exit interviews with resigning staff to help identify any wellbeing issues that led to their resignation.

SLT members are expected to:

- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff and adhering to agreed working hours.
- Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff.
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations.
- Make sure accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring.
- Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork and seek alternative solutions wherever possible.
- Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives.
- Respond to feedback from staff to constantly evaluate team needs.

- Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school.
- Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated.
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload.
- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as ISI inspections.

The Board/Britus

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, e.g. by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment.
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the Executive Principal.
- Ensure that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing.
- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regard to workload.
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work.
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them.
- Policies and procedures grounded in shared beliefs.

Challenges to Staff Wellbeing

Teaching and support staff at BIST can face some pressures that can impact their wellbeing, including:

- Tight Deadlines: Managing curriculum planning, assessments and administrative tasks within limited timeframes.
- Anxiety: Balancing high expectations from pupils, parents and the school community while adapting to diverse cultural dynamics.
- Overwhelm: Handling competing responsibilities, such as classroom management, extracurricular commitments and personal obligations.
- Isolation: Adjusting to life in a foreign country, often without close family or familiar support networks.

- Work-Life Balance: Struggling to disconnect from work due to the intensive demands of an international school environment.

Recognising these challenges is the first step in creating targeted strategies and support systems to promote staff wellbeing. By addressing these concerns, we aim to foster a healthier and more productive environment for all staff members.

Relevant Statistics

- According to a report by the Education Support Partnership, around **77%** of teachers in the UK experience stress, with workload being a significant factor.
- The same report highlights that **54%** of education professionals have considered leaving the sector due to mental health and wellbeing concerns. Locally, a study in La Manouba, Tunisia, reported that **66.4%** of teachers experience workplace stress, linked to professional factors.
- A survey by the National Education Union (NEU) found that **40%** of teachers reported working more than 50 hours a week, impacting their work-life balance.
- Research indicates that schools providing access to mental health resources and professional development opportunities see improvements in staff morale and retention. A study in 2017 led by professionals at the Razi Hospital shows that access to mental health support and training programs for teachers remains limited. Efforts like the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) show potential for integrating mental health services within educational frameworks.

Steps to Overcome Wellbeing Challenges: A Management Perspective

As part of our commitment to staff wellbeing, we have implemented the following strategies to address common challenges faced by teaching and support staff:

Foster Open Communication

- **Regular Feedback Sessions**: Conduct regular sessions to understand staff needs and act on their suggestions effectively, scheduled with the Executive Principal and Head of HR.
- **Continuous Surveys**: Conduct regular surveys to assess staff satisfaction and wellbeing.

Manage Workload Effectively

- **Clear and Achievable Deadlines**: Set realistic deadlines and prioritise tasks to avoid overwhelming staff.
- We allocate additional PPA time for PGCE pupils, NQTs and ECTs; they are also assigned an appropriate mentor within the teaching and learning team.

- Staff within departments, where possible, have PPA time together to allow for collaborative planning.
- Collaborative planning enables teachers to discuss and share best practice while also sharing the workload.
- Work From Home Day: Offer one work-from-home day for administrative staff to enhance flexibility.

Professional Development

- The school calendar is well planned to ensure school events are evenly spaced across the year to support workload.
- The school leadership structure, and supported leader development, allows various opportunities for growth as a school leader, should teachers wish to follow this route.
- Access to Mental Health Resources: Ensure availability of counselling and wellbeing sessions for staff through CPD.
- Professional development opportunities: Offer CPD on stress management or time and maintaining work-life balance.
- Back-to-Work Chats: Arrange follow-up meetings for staff returning from mental health leave to check on their wellbeing.

Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance

- Promote Boundaries: Discourage work-related communication outside of working hours to respect personal time.
- Flexible Working Arrangements: Support flexible working options to accommodate personal responsibilities where possible.
- Personal Leave Days: Provide teachers with personal leave days outside of holidays to manage personal commitments.
- Wellbeing Days: Allocate three wellbeing days per year, one per term, to focus on staff health.

Build a Strong Community

- We provide well-maintained centralised staff rooms in both campuses
- Induction programs: Provide comprehensive induction for new staff to help them adapt to the international school environment and inset days at the beginning of every term.

- Staff are encouraged to lead on community social events such as Traditional Tunisian Day.
- A day in your shoes: Facilitate a job swap day where teachers and admin staff exchange roles to appreciate each other's contributions.

Managing specific Wellbeing issues

- Giving staff time off to deal with a personal crisis.
- Arranging internal support with our school counsellor.
- Arranging external support, such as counselling or occupational health services.
- Completing a risk assessment and following through with any actions identified.
- Reassessing their workload and deciding what tasks to prioritise.
- At all times, the confidentiality and dignity of staff will be maintained.

Monitor and Evaluate Wellbeing Initiatives

- Regular Reviews: Continuously assess the effectiveness of wellbeing policies through staff surveys and feedback.
- Adjust Strategies: Adapt strategies based on staff input and emerging challenges to ensure ongoing improvement.