



School Wellbeing Report 2023: UK

Featuring responses from nearly 6,000 school staff



One year on
from Covid –
**have things
improved** for
UK schools?

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Welcome to the 2023 UK edition of our school wellbeing report

These are unquestionably challenging times for UK schools. While much of the logistical upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has finally calmed down as life on the corridors returns to (largely) business as usual, its after-effects on young people and their teachers still loom large, as other stresses and pressures also take a considerable toll on staff at all levels.

We're extremely grateful for the input of almost 6,000 school staff who responded to our wellbeing survey, and shared their highs, lows and everything in-between for our annual check-in on how the profession is doing.

This report is a unique deep dive into the current issues educators are facing in UK schools. We feel privileged to be able to collect and share these insights with the wider sector, with the aim of better understanding the issues, sharing solutions and helping schools to make changes that can improve wellbeing and help staff to do what they do best, improve more children's lives through education.

“Staff wellbeing is an absolute priority for Liberty Academy Trust. Working in education can be tough and the impact on staff in SEND schools can bring additional challenges, so it is vital we build resilience and support staff wherever possible.”

Dr Nic Crossley
CEO, Liberty Academy Trust



Key findings

It's common knowledge in the UK that school budgets are currently stretched further than ever before. At an unprecedentedly difficult time for the profession in the wake of the pandemic: a [recent government review](#)¹ even acknowledged that the funding given to schools to help young people catch up in the wake of Covid has been "insufficient". Other pressures, such as energy price rises, mean there is even less money to go around, at the same time as strikes over pay are highlighting the worries and frustrations within the profession amid a deepening cost of living crisis, with [school leaders warning of the need for a "significant" rise for staff](#)².

Related concerns around spending on schools clearly came through in the results of our latest annual wellbeing survey. For the 2023 edition, we heard from 5,858 UK-based school staff, who told us all about their working lives and the sense of wellbeing they have within them. Worryingly, only 20 per cent of staff surveyed said that they feel their school is well funded (while 61 per cent said theirs is not) and it's perhaps no surprise then, that only 36 per cent of staff said they feel that they have enough resources to do their job at present.

The impact of these turbulent, cash-strapped times can also be seen in the way that staff feel about their performance. Some 82 per cent of respondents told us that they believe they are skilful workers, yet troublingly, close to a quarter (22 per cent) said that they don't currently feel confident performing their role. Evidently, there is a sense of wasted skill and potential among the workforce, which is likely to be having a negative impact on wellbeing and mental health.

We heard from
5,858
UK-based school staff

Only
20%
of staff surveyed said that
they feel their school
is well funded

Only
36%
of staff said they feel that
they have enough resources
to do their job



1 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/recovery-premium-school-funding-nowhere-close-enough>
2 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-pay-must-go-up-education-priority-jeremy-hunt>

And workload is, as ever, also a key concern for wellbeing: alarmingly, only 18 per cent of respondents said they feel that their current workload is manageable, compared with 68 per cent who feel it is not manageable (a further increase from 65 per cent last year).

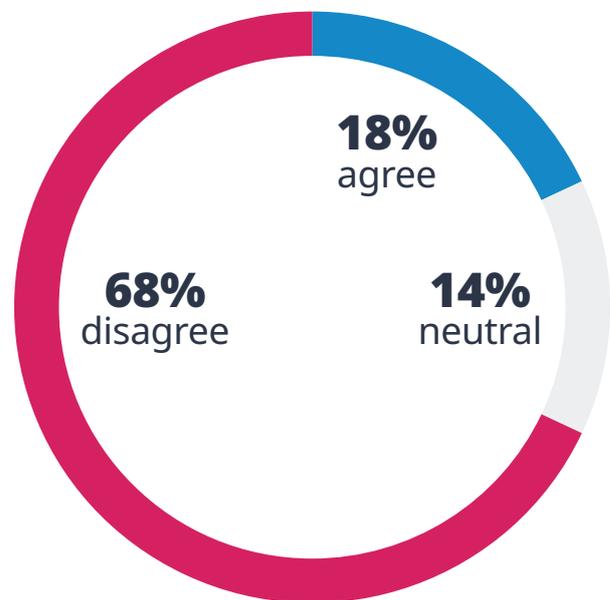
The lack of support from leaders also seems to have a considerable part to play: almost half (45 per cent) said that they don't feel supported at work, compared with 32 per cent who said they do. And it's a starker picture when broken down by role: while 47 per cent of leaders said they feel supported, only 27 per cent of teachers said the same.

It's no wonder then, that researchers have found these factors, and more, are taking a [heavy toll on the mental health of school staff](#)³. Education Support's latest UK Teacher Wellbeing Index was released in late 2022 and reported that stress, depression and anxiety are at unsustainably high levels, as a record number of staff are considering leaving the profession. And for the first time in the history of the index, lack of resources was cited as one of the top five reasons that staff, especially in primary settings, were considering quitting.

So what can be done? While there are, unfortunately, no quick fixes for the ongoing challenges around funding for schools, ensuring that staff are offered meaningful support in managing these tough times clearly needs to be a top priority for leaders.

"My workload is manageable"

2023



Only **27%** of teachers feel supported at work

3 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/nearly-9-10-school-leaders-experience-poor-mental-health-due-work-teachers-wellbeing>

Our survey data shows that some schools are already making this a priority, with a number of them implementing a range of initiatives to help manage staff wellbeing, understand staffs' needs and provide meaningful support. 63 per cent of respondents say their school is using wellbeing surveys to gain insight into staff wellbeing, while 50 per cent have provided resources on wellbeing to support staff and 32 per cent have invested in staff development.

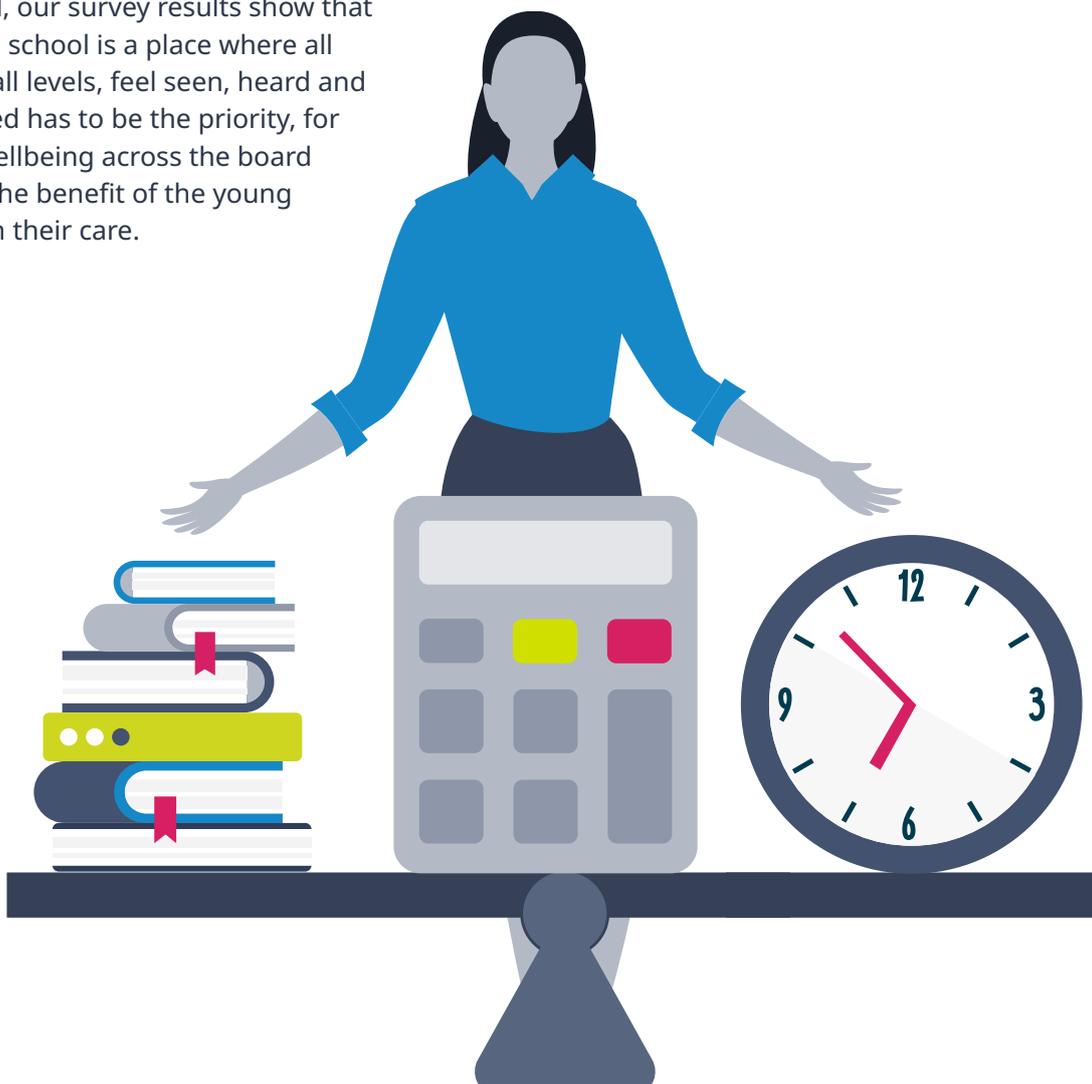
Communication tools, such as anonymous wellbeing surveys, can start vital conversations about where to focus efforts to benefit staff most. There are also a wide range of software options that can simplify some elements of school life – from behaviour management tools to help foster smoother classroom experiences for all, to intelligent timetabling to minimise unnecessary room changes and enable flexible working – which 50 per cent of our respondents said they don't get and would like to have.

Above all, our survey results show that ensuring school is a place where all staff, at all levels, feel seen, heard and supported has to be the priority, for better wellbeing across the board and for the benefit of the young people in their care.

“The sector is facing a recruitment and retention crisis and teacher burnout is a very real challenge. It is something that we must prioritise and tackle head on if we are to keep our best colleagues and successfully fill vacancies.”

Richard Tutt

Director of Secondary Education,
Astrea Academy Trust



Confidence, enjoyment and motivation

First off, some happy news: it seems that confidence among school staff is improving. Some 58 per cent of our respondents confirmed that they feel confident performing their roles now, in comparison with 54 per cent of those in last year's survey. It's a minor boost, but one that may suggest recovery from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, and perhaps even nods to increased resilience among staff after the incredible challenges they overcame during that period. When it comes to enjoyment of school life, however, the picture unfortunately remains stubbornly the same: for another year, a worrying 51 per cent of staff said that they don't find their work fun.

"I feel confident performing my role"

2023

2022



58%
of staff
agree



54%
of staff
agree



Nonetheless, they continue to give it their all: an enormous 71 per cent of school staff said that they really throw themselves into their work (an increase on the 68 per cent who said the same last year), with that number rising to 85 per cent among senior leaders, 81 per cent among trainees and 74 per cent among middle leaders (while 64 per cent of teachers said the same).

Overall, then, we're left with a mixed picture. There is certainly a feeling that more support is needed from leaders; but at the same time those leaders are focusing on their roles and giving it their all. So, with the ed-tech sector bringing new technologies to the market – from tracking software to simplify behaviour management, to online seating plans to save admin time and parent communication tools to strengthen links with home – a potential solution lies in harnessing technology and smarter approaches, rather than being able to conjure up more effort and hours.

“I really throw myself into my work”

Agreed, by job role:



Workload and work-life balance

Workload is always one of the biggest challenges in any school, and it's no surprise to see that it's still a primary concern for our respondents. Only 18 per cent said that their workload is manageable, while 68 per cent said that theirs isn't. This paints a similar picture to last year, when our survey found 18 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively.

This should come as no great surprise to anyone: amid ongoing recruitment and retention struggles, workload is consistently cited as a contributing factor for those leaving the profession (which in turn creates a knock-on effect of further increased workload for those still employed in schools).

Efforts are being made to improve these challenging circumstances where possible. Among respondents, some 49 per cent said their school had reduced marking to help alleviate workload, while 34 per cent reported a streamlining of staff meetings, and 32 per cent said their school had implemented behaviour management software to help lighten the load. And it's an issue worth paying attention to in terms of recruitment and retention: our respondents also said that a good work-life balance and manageable workload was the most important consideration in current and prospective roles.



“My workload is manageable”

2023



2022



Has your school implemented any of these solutions to help reduce workload?

Please tick all that apply.



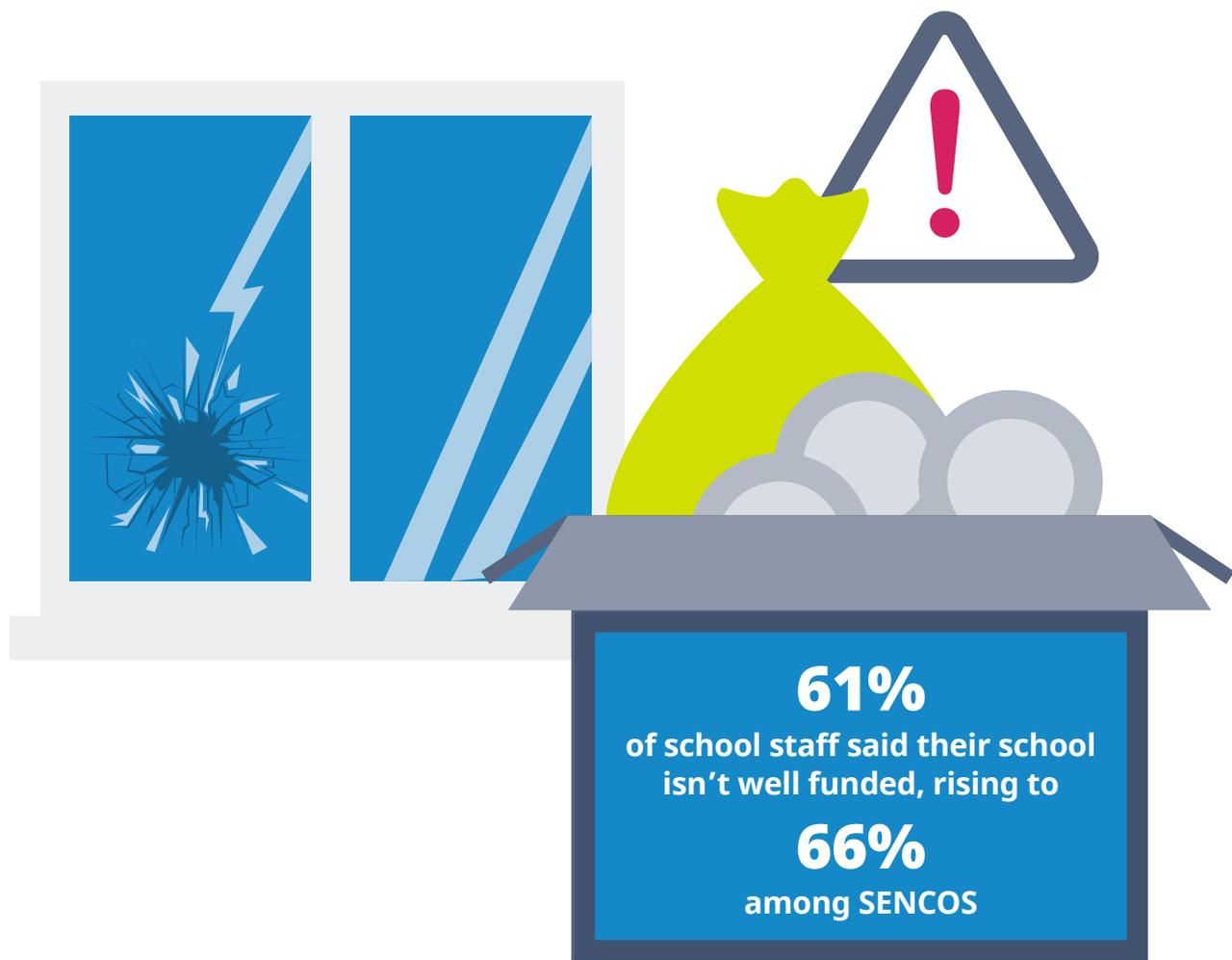
Funding and resources

As the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite across the country, schools are far from immune. They too have seen their energy bills soar, and at a time when budgets are already being stretched by other increased costs.

It's no surprise, then, to see the impact of this loud and clear in our 2023 wellbeing survey: some 61 per cent of school staff said their school isn't well funded, while only 20 per cent said that theirs is. This concern was particularly strong among SENCOs with 66 per cent saying their school wasn't well funded, hinting at the [now well-understood challenges of securing funding](#)⁴.

This is clearly affecting how staff feel they're performing: 43 per cent of school staff said they don't have enough resources to do their job at the moment, similar to the 41 per cent who said the same last year. A stark divide can be found between sectors here, however, with only 22 per cent of those working at independent schools feeling that way, in comparison with 46 per cent of those in state schools.

These tight times mean schools are having to find creative approaches to try and make their budgets work, from using trainee teachers, early career teachers or graduate interns to save on salaries (as seen in some 65 per cent of schools surveyed) to making efficiencies in the way the timetable is run (33 per cent).



4 <https://www.tes.com/for-schools/blog/article/how-use-provision-map-secure-extra-funding>

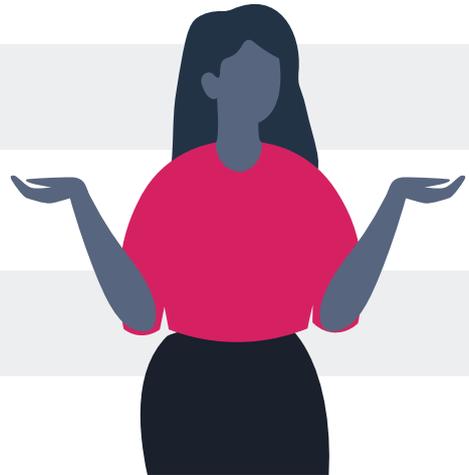
“I do not have enough resources to do my job at the moment”

Independent schools

22% agree

State schools

46% agree



“Workload can be a real challenge to staff wellbeing, so we ensure senior leaders in each of our schools provide consistent expectations. This means every member of the team knows what’s expected from them and what they shouldn’t feel obligated to do, creating a fair and manageable workload. We offer a comprehensive package of wellbeing provision to everyone. Staff who are struggling can also access free and confidential counselling support.”

Seamus Murphy
CEO, Turner Schools

Has your school implemented any of these solutions to help manage your school’s budget?

Please tick all that apply.

65% Used graduate interns / early career teachers / trainee teachers

33% Saved money through efficiencies in the timetable

29% Addressed staff absences

29% Restructured admin support

4% Purchased budget planning software



Communication, feedback and development

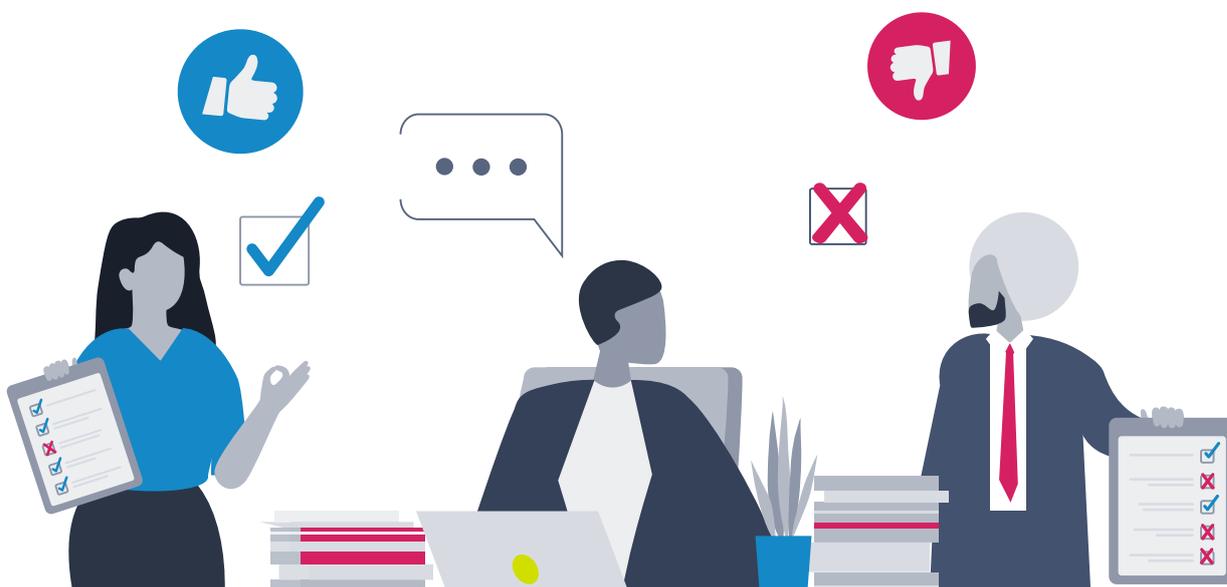
In turbulent times, the right communication can make all the difference – but it seems not all school leaders are getting it right on this front. While around a quarter (24 per cent) of those surveyed said that information is shared effectively between staff at their school, a worrying 55 per cent said this wasn't the case at theirs.

Moreover, more than half of staff (51 per cent) in the 2023 survey said they feel they don't have a voice about how things go in their school, a marginal increase from the 49 per cent who said the same a year before. The picture is slightly better for primary staff, only 46 per cent said they feel this way, compared with 56 per cent of those in secondary schools. There was also a stark difference among those in different roles: some 62 per cent of teachers raised the concern about a lack of voice, along with 61 per cent of teaching assistants and 47 per cent of middle leaders, while, perhaps predictably, only 12 per cent of senior leaders said the same.

These communication challenges also popped up in questions around staff receiving feedback on their performance: while less than a third (28 per cent) said they have opportunities to know how well they're doing at work, almost half (48 per cent) said they don't get this vital information.

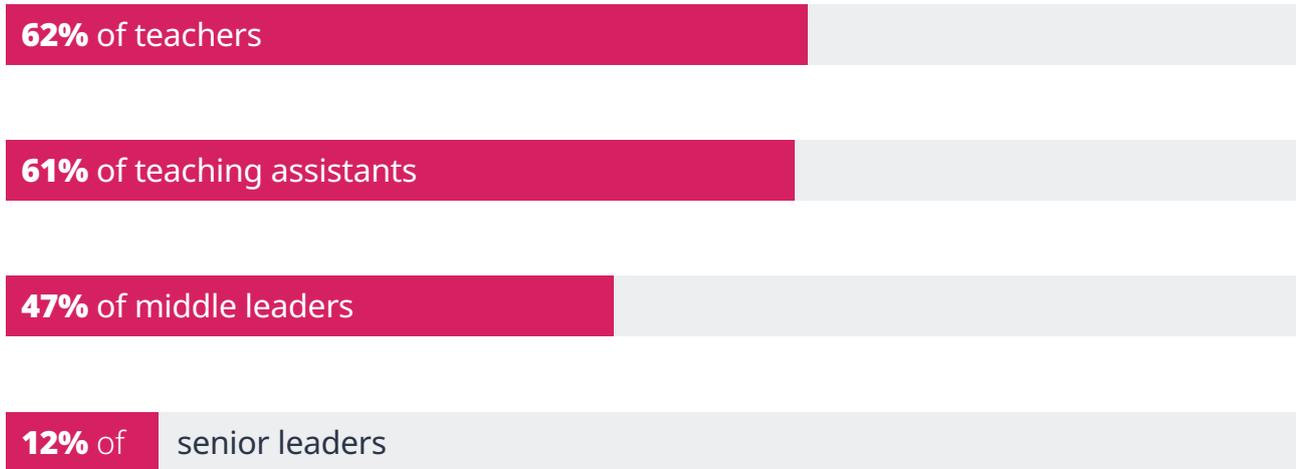
We found remarkably similar figures around opportunities for development: 48 per cent said they feel there aren't opportunities for them, while 30 per cent feel there are. Again, role has a considerable part to play here, with 53 per cent of teachers and 56 per cent of teaching assistants raising the concern about lack of development opportunities, while 58 per cent of senior leaders said they do have such opportunities.

It seems that leaders do recognise the importance of relevant staff development, however: 55 per cent of staff said their school has introduced online courses or webinars for CPD, while 53 per cent have implemented observations and shadowing, and 38 per cent are offering teacher training courses. And we can see how widespread this understanding is becoming, as 58 per cent said that they currently feel their school offers a strong commitment to their CPD, while 30 per cent said they do not but would like to.



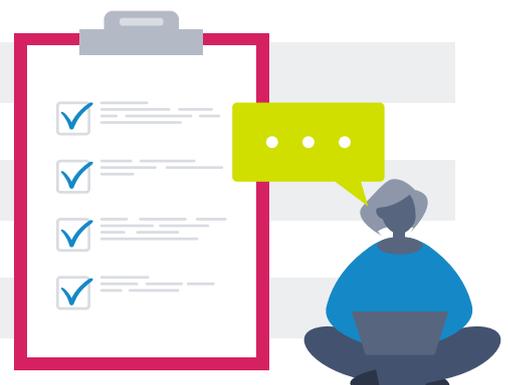
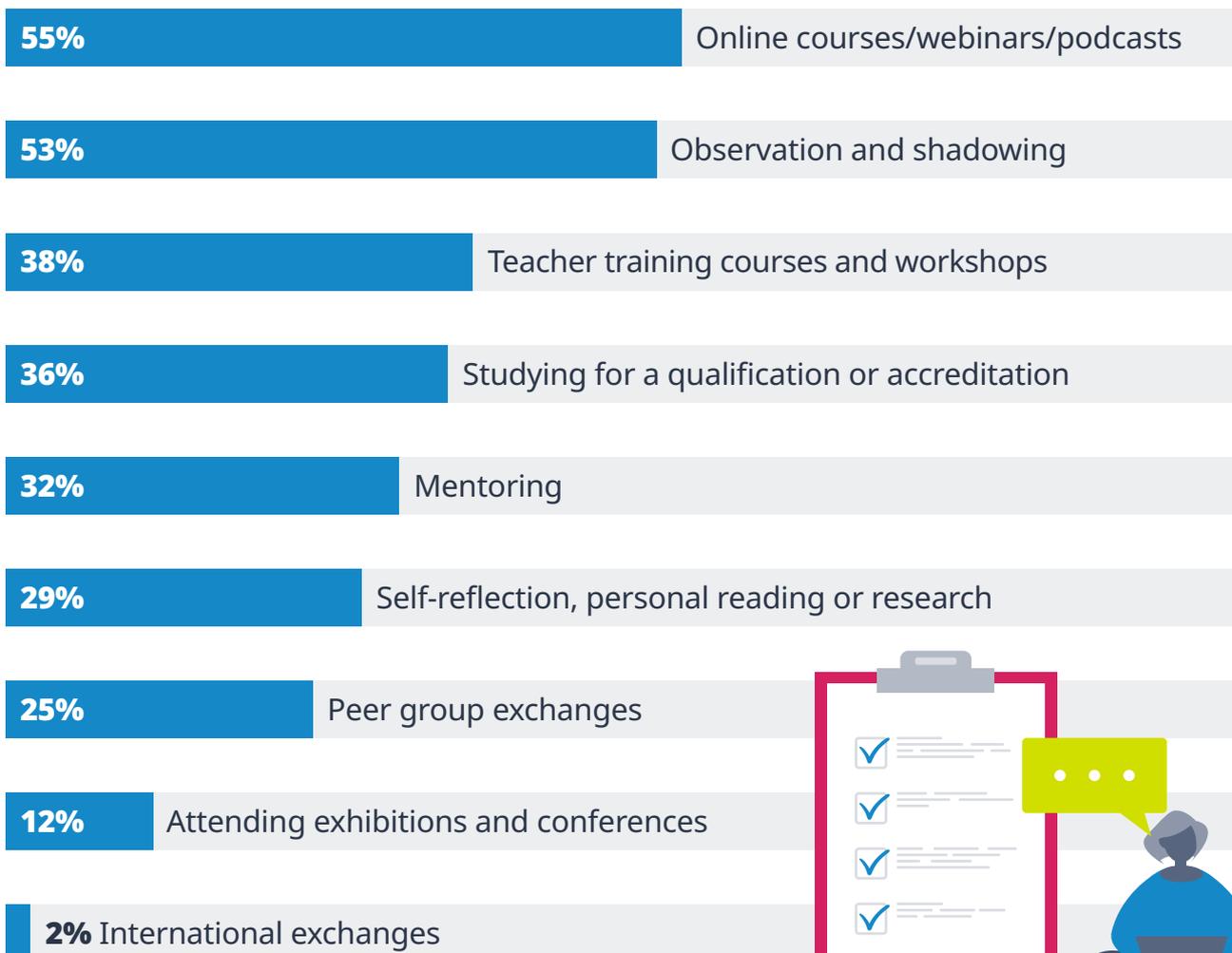
“I have a voice in how things go at my school”

Disagreed, by job role:



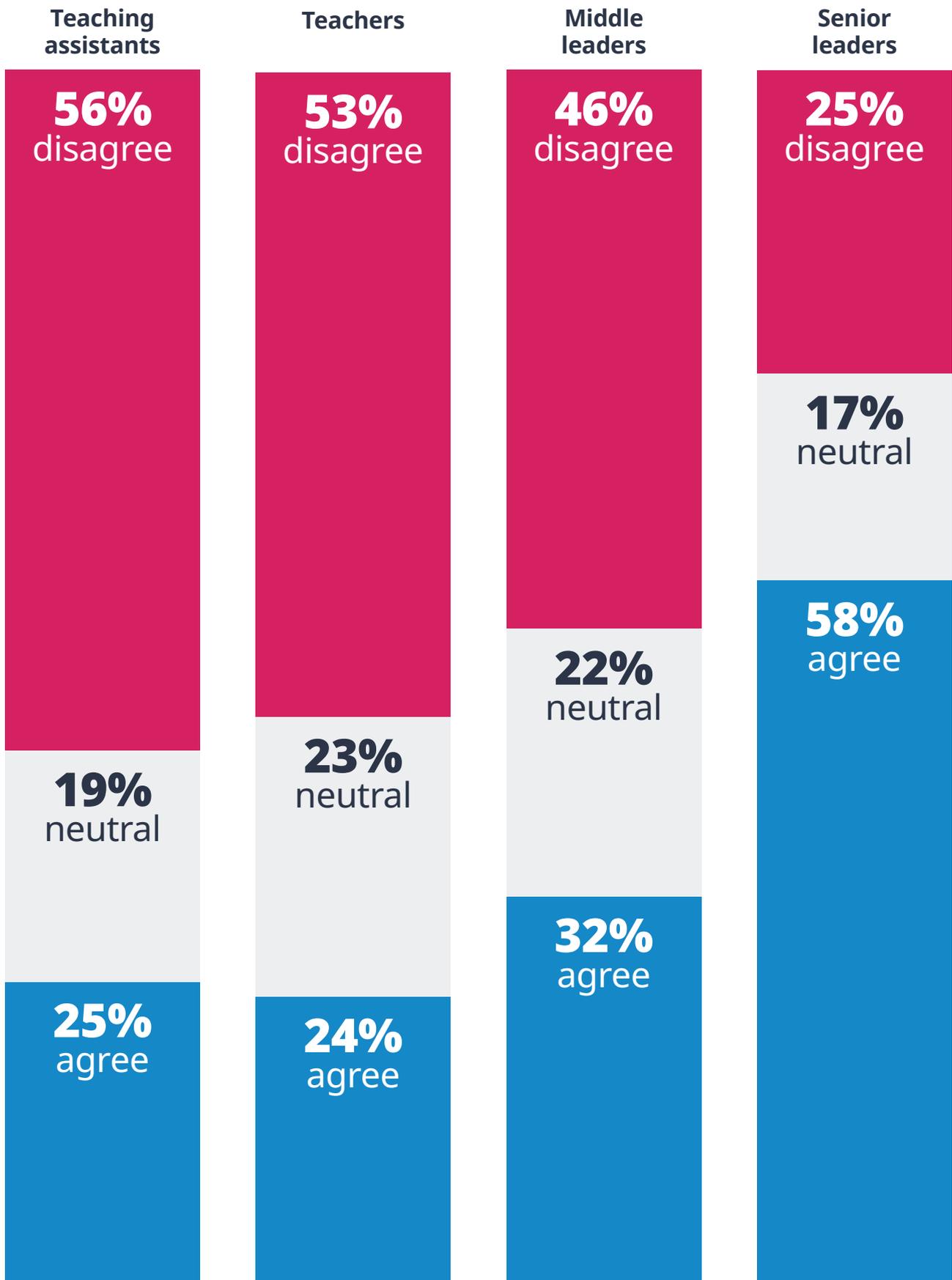
Has your school implemented any of these solutions to help staff development?

Please tick all that apply.



“There are opportunities for me to develop in my role”

By job role:



Engagement and pride

Perhaps the biggest question to ask around wellbeing is whether staff feel their school is a place they'd recommend friends and family to work – and the results here are mixed. While nearly a third (31 per cent) responded that they would, almost half (48 per cent) said that they wouldn't.

And yet the inverse response was found around pride, interestingly. While 30 per cent of respondents told us that they aren't proud to work at their school, some 47 per cent said that they are (tracking closely to the 2022 results of 31 per cent and 48 per cent respectively).

"I'm proud to work at my school"

2023

2022

47%
of staff
agree

48%
of staff
agree



Relationships and support

So what is happening with relationships in schools in these tough times? It seems that these have actually remained largely stable and supportive between 2022 and 2023, despite the many challenges along the way. More than half (53 per cent) of respondents said they feel that their colleagues care about them (compared with 52 per cent last year), while just under a quarter (24 per cent) feel that theirs don't (down from 27 per cent in 2022).

And perhaps most heartening is the news that teachers' strong relationships with their students are undiminished, even with workload, funding pressures and the myriad other challenges they've come up against. Some 71 per cent of those surveyed said that staff at their school have a good relationship with students on the whole, similar to the 73 per cent who said the same last year.

And that's perhaps all the more remarkable in light of how unsupported many school staff feel: less than a third (32 per cent) of respondents said they currently feel supported at work. Again, the positions of those answering was key: 47 per cent of senior leaders said they feel supported, compared with only 27 per cent of teachers and 29 per cent of middle leaders.

And this undoubtedly feeds into how much staff feel valued: just over a third (35 per cent) of respondents told us that they feel valued at work, while 44 per cent said that they don't, much like those in last year's survey, at 33 and 45 per cent respectively.

Evidently, action needs to be taken to make sure that staff have a better sense of support from their leaders. There are numerous ways to do this, from ensuring that targeted CPD is in place to help with career development, to implementing classroom management software to simplify behaviour challenges.

This too may help staff to feel more positive about those in charge: we found that more than half of respondents (53 per cent) currently feel their leadership team doesn't make good decisions (similar to the 52 per cent who said the same in 2022), suggesting that leaders can do more to improve the confidence of their staff and improve wellbeing and retention.



**“On the whole, staff at my school
have good relationships with the students”**

2023



2022



“We prioritise staff wellbeing because it leads to a happy school. Happy and well supported staff mean the children are happy because staff enjoy coming to work and are able to do their best for the children, the school and the community.

Supporting staff wellbeing means retention rates are higher and we have a positive culture in the school. We also provide professional development for all staff. We spot talents to be developed and nurtured, future proofing the school and making sure everyone feels valued.”

Melody Berthoud

Headteacher, South Norwood Primary School

Conclusion

Our School Wellbeing Report 2023: UK, shines a light on the ongoing tug-of-war of the teaching profession: while systemic issues such as funding and workload are continuing to push staff to their limit and even consider a move away from schools entirely in some cases (such as [one in three science teachers planning to leave in the next five years](#)⁵), strong relationships with students remain front and centre, and pride in this vital work remains buoyant. Likewise, staff are proud of their own abilities, even when hampered by insufficient resources, gaps in communication and leaders tackling the demands placed on them.

It's also encouraging to see a meaningful number of schools prioritising wellbeing by introducing initiatives like wellbeing surveys (63 per cent of respondents said their school has introduced wellbeing surveys). By proactively giving their staff a voice and trying to understand their needs, school leaders can identify issues, implement change and track improvements.

While it's a troubling picture in many ways, it can also be seen to offer hope. It's clear that there are tangible quick wins available to senior leaders. By putting the right elements in place – from opportunities for staff to share their views and concerns, through to more efficient timetabling and targeted CPD to support career progression – schools can ensure that the passion and enthusiasm of their teams is harnessed, and their confidence can be regained.

The right technology can make an enormous difference in this. We know that the pressures and expectations on schools and their staff have changed drastically in recent decades, and technology has taken astronomical leaps in that same time – now offering tools and opportunities that not just reduce administrative burden, but can unlock vast amounts of untapped potential, ensuring that staff are able to do the thing they really care about: getting the best possible outcomes for young people.

“Looking after our staff is not only the right thing to do, and linked to our core values as an organisation, it's also good business sense. We know that staff wellbeing is directly linked to staff satisfaction, productivity and retention. With teacher recruitment a national issue, we want our current staff to thrive and love working here.”

Karen Rose

Director of Partnerships and Organisational Development, E-ACT

5 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/science-teachers-plan-to-leave-school-retention>

“At the start of 2022, as part of our annual staff survey, half of our colleagues told us that their work was either constantly or often disrupted by poor student behaviour, with another third saying this happened sometimes. We heard loud and clear that misbehaviour was preventing them from teaching and our students from learning.

Their feedback led to the launch of our Behaviour and Culture Framework. This sets out new routines and policies that maximise learning time and ensure a calm, safe and purposeful environment. This has been hugely welcomed by our colleagues at all levels, who have commented on how their time in the classroom has been rapidly transformed by these changes.”

Richard Tutt

Director of Secondary Education, Astrea Academy Trust



This report was compiled and written by Tes. The information used to complete the report includes survey results from a survey that was promoted on Tes.com in November 2022. The report includes 5,858 responses from school staff in the UK.

Each ranking question is answered 1-10, for this report 1-4 represents disagreement, 5-6 as neutral and 7-10 as agreement. For this report, only responses from 1-4 and 7-10 have been included.

To make last year's data comparable with this year's data, we've had to redefine last year's data scales in line with this year's data scales. This means when looking back at previous reports, year-on-year data may differ, but it is accurate in this year's comparison.

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we build
trusted
education
solutions**



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tes.com/wellbeing-hub