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There are some things we can all do to support that move forwards and I have listed just 10 here I feel are most important for us as leaders to focus on first. We need to be looking for low effort – high impact, or low cost – high impact.

10 ways to accelerate learning, wellbeing and productivity in your school this year:

1. I think the most important one of all is to **address unnecessary workload for the staff**, simply because we want them to be focussing their attention on our children, doing what they do best – facilitating learning! Take time to look at their workload with them, not for them. Ask the staff to discuss with you what takes time and seems sometimes nonsensical and would be a great help if it were halted or minimised. My staff said marking, planning and working walls! We discussed the impact each of those had on the quality of learning and we included the children in those conversations.
* The children stated they don’t read the marking and would prefer a conversation or colours/highlights or even just symbols – hence they were given the task to help rewrite the marking policy. It became the feedback policy with highlights and symbols only but with verbal feedback being preferable.
* Next, we addressed planning – this was stifling the outstanding teachers and put a ceiling on what they could achieve so we stopped planning for all who did not want to do it (NQT not included!) and the staff moved to planning the weeks and months with the children using loops for learning. This engaged the children far more and improved curriculum coverage along with attitudes to learning immediately.
* Working walls? The children felt the loops on the wall were far more valuable alongside some permanent reference material such as phonics, key vocab for maths and spelling rules etc.
1. I used to have a Headteacher who liked to have a **‘chat by the fireside’** and I took that with me into my first headship. This is when you take the time to just sit and catch up with staff. I’m not talking about an appraisal or directly asking them how their wellbeing is, but taking the time to take an interest in them, their plans, future, vision for themselves and are you as their leader doing all you can to support them in their future plans? Are you aware of their hobbies and interests? Relationships with staff are key. To know their names and job role is not enough, we need to get under the skin of what makes them happy, what their interests are and what triggers stress in them! We do this with the children to maximise their wellbeing, safety and potential. Why not the staff? What is going on in their lives right now that may be a barrier to them reaching their potential? Can you help?
2. When we know what staff would like to do, could have done, or should have done with their careers we can use coaching to support them to reach their potential. **Coach staff** in dealing with those barriers so they can give 100% to their work and life. Don’t just address their job barriers but all barriers. I coach staff on personal finance, relationships at home, personal characteristics as well as aspirations in their career. They are all interlinked and must all be addressed together to really have a high impact. Coaching allows staff to meet at least 10 times more targets per year than any appraisal but also feeds into building relationships.
3. Look at the PPA time. Is it in bits and pieces? Can a teacher really address a research project, subject management or even classroom management with slots of 1 hour or less? No! Sit with your SLT and start from the beginning. Looking to September, imagine you are starting your school from the first day of opening and create a **timetable that works for staff.** Such as each teacher having a day a fortnight off and working from home – much more productive and no travel interference. I have found that when I offer this some teachers want a day, and some teachers want one afternoon a week that does not feed into the staff meeting! Ask your staff how they work best. Those who wanted a whole day I gave them a Monday or Friday to extend their weekend. It was more productive and better for wellbeing.
4. Build in **character development** into your whole school approach. Teachers join the profession as they believe they are building the future, not preparing a child for a test. When they are teaching about character attributes and giving the children the opportunities to practise those skills and adopt them, your staff will feel purposeful, valued and have job satisfaction beyond all recognition – and your children gain attributes they will need for life – win/win situation!
5. **Look at your policies.** Are there any you can amend to help with people in your school feeling valued, respected and heard? For example the behaviour policy for children can be written by them, mine was. The children were firm but fair and then policed it. They were very keen that behaviour become an area to learn just like subjects in the curriculum with compassion, opportunities to make mistakes, learn from them and celebrate the growth. They felt being given an opportunity to ‘put it right’ was more valuable than punishment. This turned behaviour around in my school. I also adopted a Staff Anti-bullying policy to focus on those sneaky little remarks from one member to another in staff meeting, speaking over others as though their opinion doesn’t matter, dismissing ideas from teachers who are young in their career and everyone having a valued voice.
6. When you have built rich relationships with staff think of that one person who has the skills and attributes to lead staff wellbeingin your school. Invite them to be the **Staff Wellbeing Ambassador**, checking in on staff daily, making sure the staffroom is inviting, listen to what the staff feel frustrated by and relay that information back to SLT. Hold staff meetings around wellbeing and stress busting strategies. Organise some socials and simply make sure there is always milk in the fridge and coffee in the jar! A birthday card, get well card or thank you card sent. Someone would thrive doing this role and the staff will feel valued. Ensure there is a Wellbeing Governor to support this member of staff and look after their wellbeing too.
7. Many staff can have lots of sporadic days off and much of this can be because of stress. Often a Monday or Wednesday and a clear cry for support. **Invest in a counselling service** for your staff where they can use the service free of charge without coming to leadership for permission. Send out a reminder letter every term to staff to let them know it is available with all the contact details. Put posters up in the staff room, business cards in their wallets!
8. **Trust your staff!** They came into this job because they love children, they love to see them learn and grow. If you have staff who complain a lot, do little work, show little effort or belittle others who put the work in, then address this. They have lost their love of the job and it is down to the leader to find out why. What has school done to achieve this? What can you do to bring their love of teaching back? If the staff are happy in their work, getting things done and are on top of their game, then stop micro-managing them and trust them. They are intelligent professionals who can work to a deadline, a goal, a whole school aspiration, they just need you to believe in them, give them the resources they need, coaching, the time and encouragement and let them get on with it!
9. I’m going to end with another most important one….**ask the staff!** What do they want? What would make their lives in your workplace more pleasurable, more purposeful and make them feel valued? How often do you ask them? From staff meetings where you are open to challenge or anonymous questionnaires, give everyone a voice, a valued opinion on how to change or adapt the environment so everyone feels happy, well and productive.

And I would even go on to say, ask the children as they can be very insightful and extremely compassionate about caring for the staff and each other.

It is possible to create a school where there is no absence, happy staff, excellent behaviour, love and compassion…so why wouldn’t you want to?

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