

Wellbeing Interventions for Schoolteachers

April 2025



With special thanks to Dr. Magdalena Balica, Dr. Jennifer Merriman, Dr. Jose Marquez, and the Wellbeing Research Centre team at the University of Oxford.

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Research from the Centre has been published in leading academic journals such as *Management Science*, *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, and *Psychological Science*. From 2024, the Centre is responsible for the publication of the World Happiness Report, in partnership with Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.



The **International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)** is a global leader in international education – developing inquiring, knowledgeable, confident, and caring young people. Our programmes empower school-aged students to take ownership in their own learning and help them develop future-ready skills to make a difference and thrive in a world that changes fast.

Cite This Report

Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., DeBorst, L., & De Neve, J-E. (2025). *Wellbeing Interventions for Schoolteachers Working in Childhood and Adolescence: Summary Document*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

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Executive Summary

This report underscores the importance of teacher wellbeing, as it affects teacher performance and student outcomes.

Despite the global prevalence of poor teacher wellbeing, empirical studies on interventions are limited compared to those on student wellbeing.

The report suggests a multifaceted approach to interventions, including mindfulness, exercise, professional development, and whole-school strategies, tailored to each school's context.

Key recommendations include promoting autonomy, context-specific design, group collaboration, professional guidance, and regular reinforcement.

Further research is needed to measure teacher wellbeing outcomes and explore interventions in diverse educational contexts.

“The report suggests a multifaceted approach to interventions ... tailored to each school's context.”



Introduction

The International Baccalaureate Organization and the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford have worked together on a series of reports focused on wellbeing in schools.

We suggest readers first explore the foundational reports, 'Wellbeing in Education in Childhood and Adolescence' and 'Wellbeing for Schoolteachers' before reading this series of reports on wellbeing interventions.

In schools, wellbeing is often used as a catch-all term for anything that sits outside of academic attainment. This makes it difficult for schools to measure and implement changes, because the parameters are so broad and intangible.

Wellbeing science is an established area of academic research, and we employ insights from the empirical science of wellbeing to inform these reports.

In our published reports exploring the wellbeing of young people and schoolteachers, **we focus on subjective wellbeing, which refers to an individual's perception of their own wellbeing.**

In school settings, wellbeing is often misunderstood as simply the opposite of mental ill health or happiness.

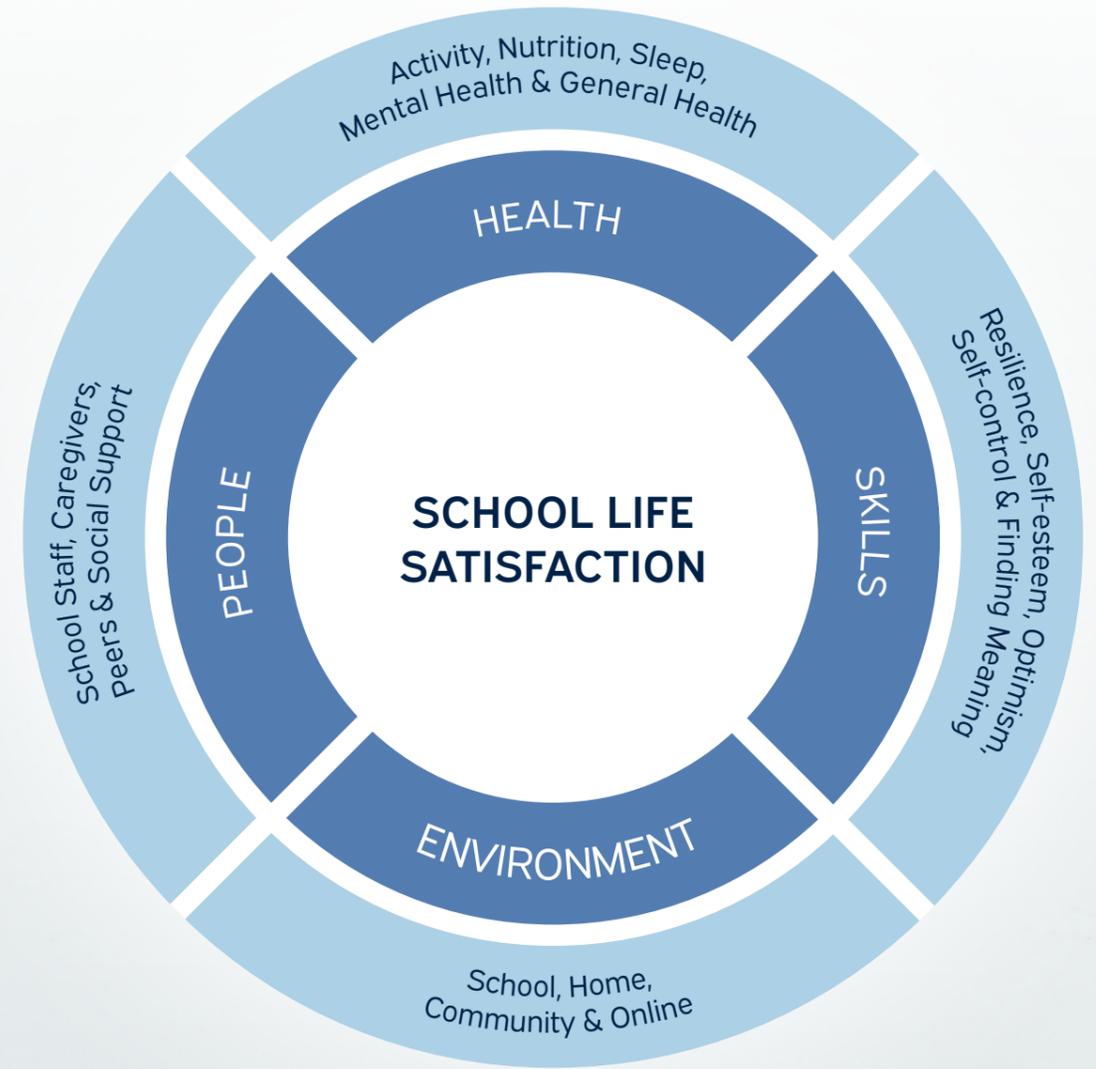
However, in the 'Wellbeing in Education in Childhood and Adolescence' report, we clarify the differences between these concepts and how schools can use these definitions to decide which aspects of wellbeing to measure and impact.

FIGURE 1: COMPONENTS OF WELLBEING

LIFE SATISFACTION	This element captures young people's satisfaction with their lives, their perception, and experience.
AFFECT	The feelings, emotions, and states of a young person at a particular timepoint, including both positive affect (e.g., joy, happiness, pride) and negative affect (e.g., sadness, depression, anxiety).
EUDAIMONIA	Whether young people feel their life is worthwhile or has purpose and meaning (this can include autonomy, capabilities, competencies, and other areas of psychological functioning).

Critically, the definitions we recommend in the report remove the drivers of wellbeing (like resilience, mental health, family, peers, teachers, etc.) and focus on **the three key areas of subjective wellbeing: life satisfaction; affect; and eudaimonia.** These are presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 2: THE PUPIL WELLBEING FRAMEWORK



Context of Framework

The Pupil Wellbeing Framework covers health, people, environment, and skills, with 18 drivers of wellbeing identified across these categories.

Their impact on students varies based on age, individual differences, and environmental factors inside and outside school.

The framework is flexible and can incorporate new insights over time, ensuring adaptability to changing circumstances and new insights.

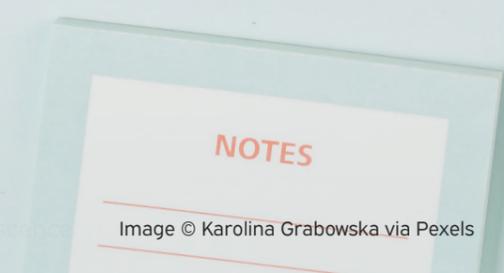
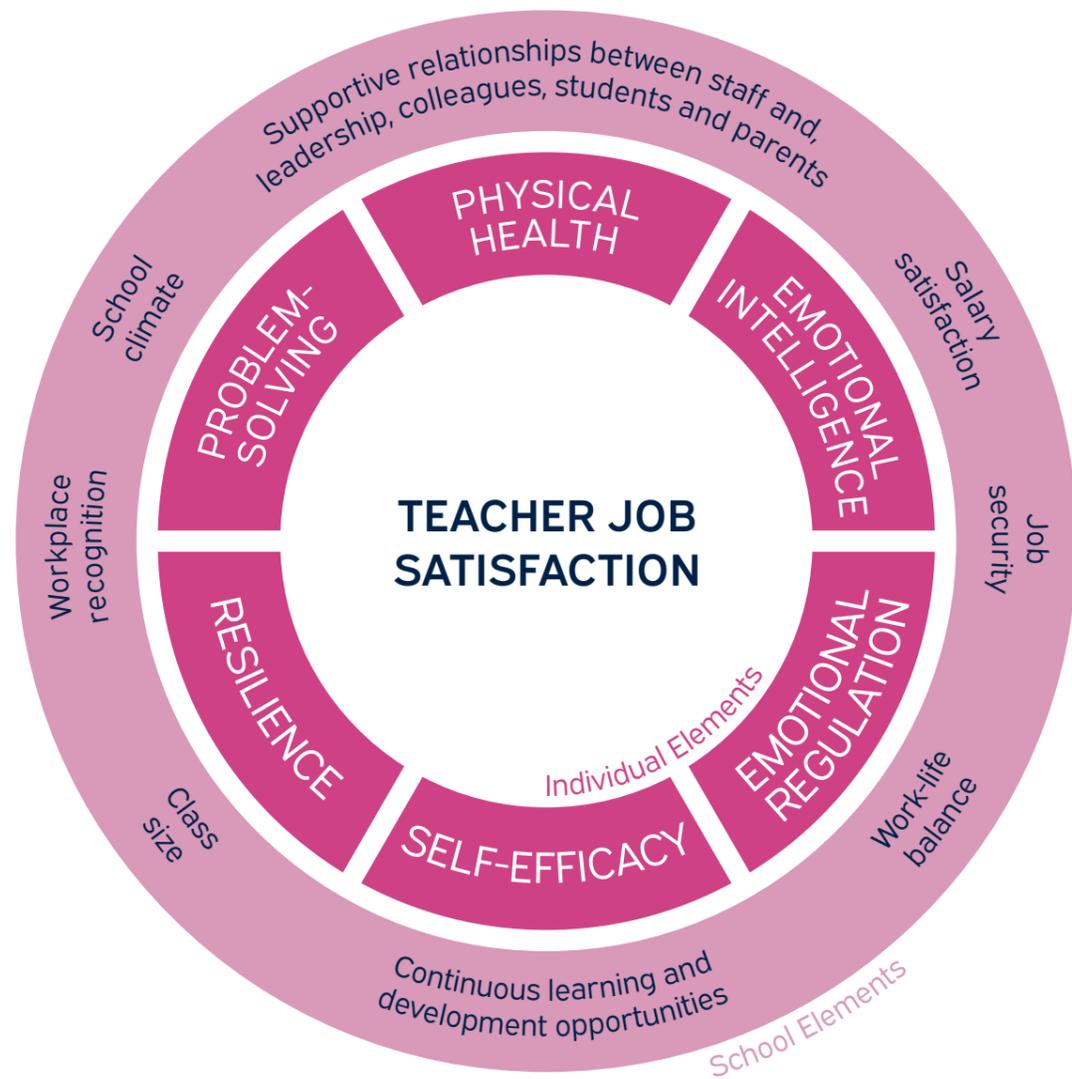


FIGURE 3: THE TEACHER WELLBEING FRAMEWORK



Context of Framework

The Teacher Wellbeing Framework identifies potential drivers of teacher wellbeing based on emerging literature, **acknowledging that research in this area is less mature compared to student wellbeing**. It categorises these drivers into individual and school-level elements, recognising that **their impact varies depending on each teacher's context**.

The framework is presented as a starting point for schools to discuss specific wellbeing drivers (things that improve or worsen wellbeing) for schoolteachers. As the evidence base is limited, and each school setting and population is unique, the framework should be used as

a discussion point to stimulate thinking around which drivers may be significant in your school setting and if there are any additional drivers which are important to your context that are not in the framework.

While these frameworks predominantly reflect Western cultural influences due to the majority of research being conducted in Western populations, they acknowledge the importance of cultural diversity.

As research expands into other cultural contexts, the frameworks can be updated to provide a more globally inclusive approach to pupil and teacher wellbeing.

The Importance of Teacher Wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing is not only important for the individuals concerned as an end in itself, but also for the impact it has on their professional performance and student outcomes.

It affects teacher productivity, creativity, relationships with others, mental and physical health, as well as rates of teacher absences and turnover.

Poor teacher wellbeing has been associated with suboptimal teaching performance, influencing student learning outcomes.

For further details, refer to the Wellbeing for Schoolteachers report (Taylor et al., 2024, p.16), which delves into the current state of teacher wellbeing and its impact on the broader educational community.

Understanding the determinants and impacts of teacher wellbeing is crucial for shaping the future of education. This report outlines empirically studied teacher wellbeing interventions and methods for measuring teacher wellbeing.

“Understanding ... teacher wellbeing is crucial for shaping the future of education.”

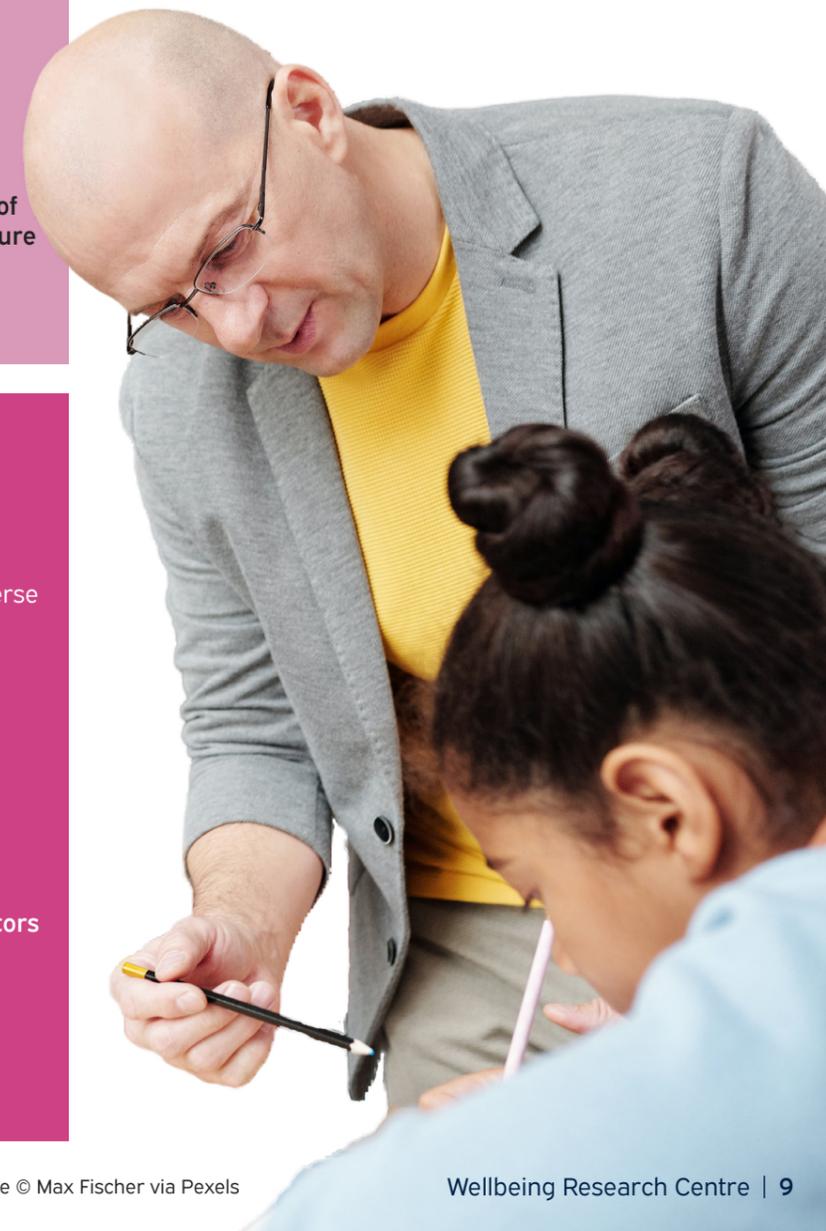
Definition

Teacher wellbeing measurement lacks universal standardisation in the literature, resulting in diverse approaches to conceptualising it.

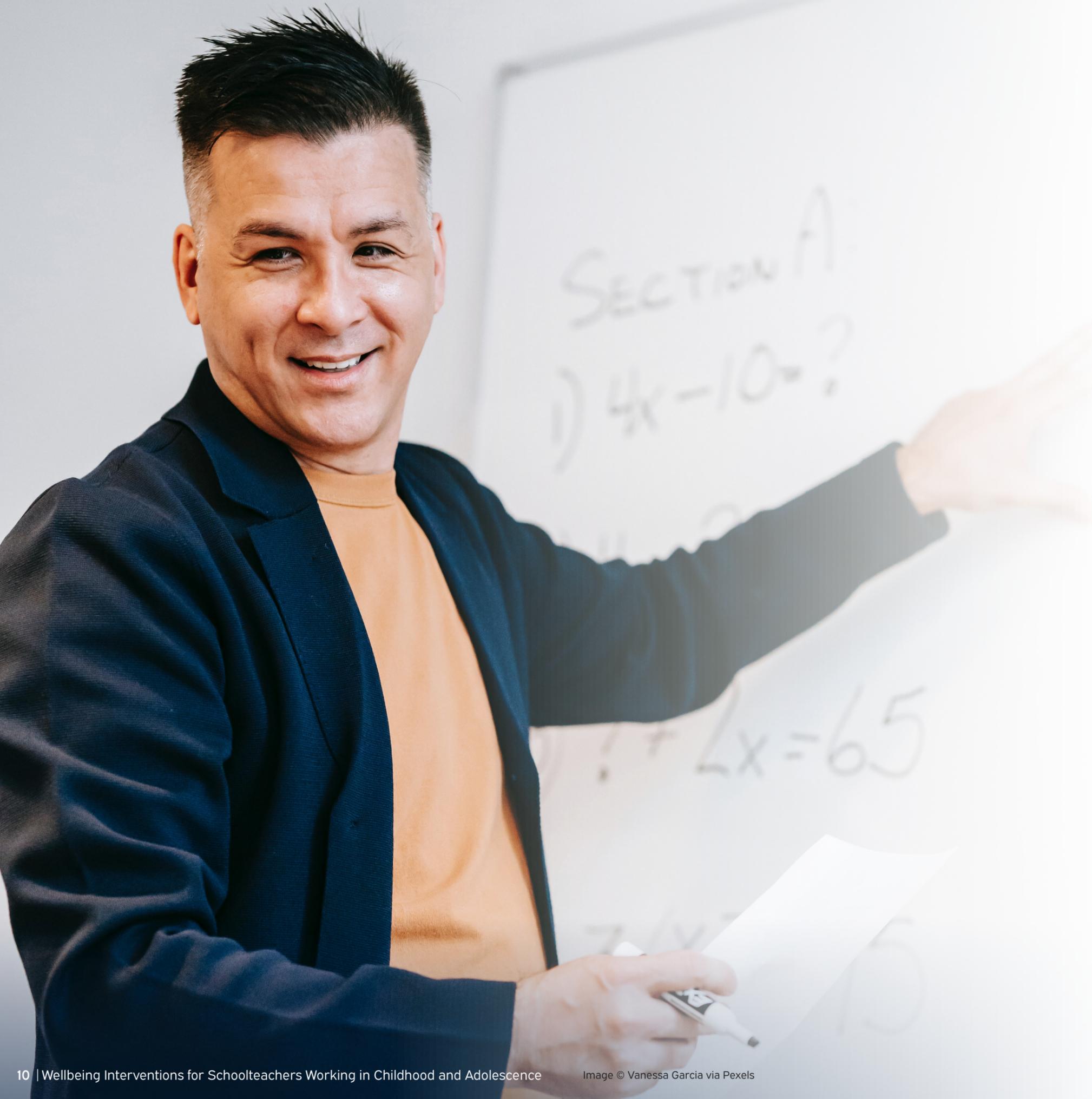
This variation influences the development and study of teacher wellbeing interventions. These interventions involve consciously implementing initiatives to foster behavioural and cognitive changes among teachers.

Given the nuanced nature of teaching, stakeholders must critically evaluate interventions, considering the multitude of factors influencing individual wellbeing.

Schools should adopt a bottom-up approach, incorporating input from both teachers and students, **recognising each school as a unique ecosystem.**



Determinants of Teacher Wellbeing



Determinants are the drivers influencing changes in teacher wellbeing. Understanding them requires recognising the interplay between workplace and personal wellbeing. These determinants fall into four classifications:

1 Individual-level factors, including personality traits and personal experiences, influence teacher wellbeing and shape the ethos, policies, and practices within a school community.

2 Role-level determinants are tied to the inherent responsibilities and functions of a teacher's role, such as self-efficacy and motivation. These factors directly influence a teacher's overall wellbeing by shaping their daily professional experiences.

3 School-level determinants include physical and socio-relational aspects within the broader school context, like leadership quality and school climate. These factors significantly impact teachers' wellbeing by defining the environment in which they operate.

4 Outside school factors encompass elements beyond the physical school environment, such as societal expectations and community support networks. Understanding these external factors is crucial for comprehending their interaction with other determinants and their role in shaping teacher wellbeing.

These categories provide diverse perspectives on determining teacher wellbeing, reflecting a wide range of influences.

Understanding these determinants is vital for developing a Teacher Wellbeing Framework to inform interventions aimed at improving teacher wellbeing. For detailed insights, see the Wellbeing for Schoolteachers report (Taylor et al., 2024, p.26).

Teacher Wellbeing Interventions

Teacher wellbeing interventions broadly fall into two categories: individual-level approaches targeting specific aspects like stress management, and holistic-level approaches considering systemic changes like school climate.

Due to limited empirical research on teacher wellbeing interventions, studies exploring related concepts or drivers as outcomes have also been examined.

For further detail on individual interventions, readers are encouraged to read companion report Wellbeing for Schoolteachers (Taylor et al., 2024, p.56).

Individual-Level Interventions

Individual-level teacher wellbeing interventions focus on employees as individuals and target their perceptions, actions, or behaviours. The empirical

evidence discussed below pertains to various individual-level interventions, including mindfulness, physical exercise, and professional development.

Mindfulness and Positive Psychology

Research on individual-level teacher wellbeing interventions has primarily focused on mindfulness and positive psychology. **These interventions aim to develop self-regulatory skills, enhance awareness of one's present state, and foster acceptance of these states.**

teacher wellbeing, productivity, student wellbeing, and student performance.

However, **further research is necessary** to understand their impacts across different cultures and contexts. Readers are encouraged to explore more of these interventions in detail in the full report (Boyle et al., 2024, p.12).

Reviews of such interventions, particularly targeted at teachers, have demonstrated improvements in

Physical Activity

The field of physical activity research suggests that physical activity can enhance wellbeing by boosting blood circulation in brain regions associated with stress and emotional reactivity, potentially leading to engagement in other positive behaviours like building social relationships.

While physical activity interventions in schools have typically targeted students, **more research is needed on their effects within teacher populations** before evidence-based recommendations can be made.

Reviews show that **physical activity positively impacts various aspects of teachers' lives**, including social, emotional, and physical health.

Moreover, existing physical activity levels amongst teachers might influence the findings in physical activity intervention studies.

Professional Development

Empirical evidence highlights teacher self-efficacy, burnout, and work-related stress as **crucial determinants of teacher wellbeing**. Consequently, interventions targeting these factors could enhance teachers' ability to manage their professional responsibilities.

However, **research on the influence of teacher professional development programs remains limited**. Still, given the significant role of self-efficacy in teacher wellbeing, more studies are needed to evaluate the impact of professional development programs on teacher wellbeing.

Holistic-Level Interventions

Holistic interventions encompass organisational and whole-school approaches, extensively discussed in the companion Wellbeing for Schoolteachers report (Taylor et al., 2024, p.66).

complex interactions driving teacher wellbeing.

Organisational interventions focus on institutional decision-making processes, while whole-school approaches promote the widespread implementation of interventions across the school community, emphasising democratisation of wellbeing initiatives.

These interventions target systemic factors beyond individual-level approaches, acknowledging the

Organisational Approach

Organisational approach interventions focus on systemic and institutional decisions impacting the teaching role, such as national curriculums and workplace expectations.

Studies highlight that constrained work environments and bureaucratic curricula can elevate stress levels among teachers, challenging their autonomy and contributing to emotional distress.

While research acknowledges their influence on teacher wellbeing, **few intervention studies have measured their effectiveness in improving teacher wellbeing outcomes.**

However, **more research is needed** to understand the efficacy of organisational-level interventions in addressing teacher wellbeing.

Whole School Approach

The Whole School Approach to teacher wellbeing interventions considers the school's physical environment, culture, organisation, and integration of policies in influencing teacher and community wellbeing. It emphasises inclusivity and democracy to foster belonging and cohesion.

measuring teacher wellbeing outcomes in Whole School Approach interventions, highlighting the need for further research to understand their impact comprehensively.

Despite their effectiveness, **there remains a gap in**

Such integrative and collaborative approaches are vital for sustainable improvements in school wellbeing.



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Recommendations of Teacher Wellbeing Interventions

Existing interventions (listed in detail in Boyle et al., 2024, p.10), while empirically grounded, **often lack diversity in settings and sample sizes, limiting their generalisability across different populations and contexts.**

This underscores the need for tailored interventions that **consider the unique dynamics of each school environment.**

Additionally, most studies focus on identifying factors that negatively impact teacher wellbeing rather than directly targeting wellbeing itself.

To address these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for large-scale, longitudinal research that directly assesses the effectiveness of various interventions in improving teacher wellbeing across diverse contexts.

Understanding the specific circumstances, societal dynamics, and cultural nuances within each school environment is crucial for developing tailored intervention strategies that are relevant and effective.

Meta-analysis studies offer insights by identifying common components among interventions, which can inform the design of effective interventions. The reviewed interventions highlight several key elements that contribute to their effectiveness in promoting teacher wellbeing.

1 Promoting Autonomy

Giving teachers the **autonomy** to choose their level of participation and offering multiple methods for engagement enhances intrinsic motivation and engagement. **This approach empowers teachers by allowing them to customise interventions according to their preferences and needs.**

2 Context-Specific Design

Tailoring interventions to meet the specific needs and circumstances of teachers and schools **increases their relevance and effectiveness.**

Designing interventions that align with **the unique challenges and wellbeing needs of teachers within a particular school context** enhances motivation to adopt wellbeing-supporting skills.

3 Group Format

Implementing interventions in a group format **fosters connections** among teachers, promoting **shared experiences, mutual support, a sense of belonging, and positive relationships** – all of which contribute to improved wellbeing.

4 Professional Knowledge

Involving skilled professional instructors who bring theoretical and experiential understanding to the interventions enhances their overall effectiveness. **Expertise, particularly in mindfulness-based programs, ensures high-quality and impactful interventions.**

5 Regular Meetings

Holding weekly meetings consistently throughout the intervention **reinforces learning, strengthens relationships** between participants and instructors, and **facilitates consistent engagement** in wellbeing practices.

By incorporating these elements into the design and implementation of teacher wellbeing interventions, schools can effectively support the wellbeing of their educators and create environments conducive to professional growth and fulfilment.

A systematic review of 98 studies highlights the positive correlation between teacher wellbeing and social relations, emphasising factors like social support and teacher-student relationships.

Mindfulness-based interventions show promise in reducing stress and improving psychological wellbeing among teachers, but further research is needed to fully understand their impact.

Schools are encouraged to adopt holistic approaches to enhancing teacher wellbeing, involving all members of the school community.



Measuring Wellbeing of Teachers

Frequently Used Measurements

Teacher wellbeing is commonly assessed through subjective wellbeing, including life satisfaction, eudaimonia, and affect, with various measurement instruments available in the literature.

While **there is no globally standardised measure of teacher wellbeing used across all intervention studies**, a table within the full report (see Boyle et al., 2024, p.15) presents a variety of commonly administered measures from general adult wellbeing, occupational wellbeing, and teacher-specific assessments.

These measurements provide valuable insights into different aspects of teacher wellbeing, allowing researchers and practitioners to assess and address **the multifaceted nature of wellbeing within the teaching profession**.

Outcomes of Wellbeing

Research supports the notion that **worker wellbeing significantly influences job attrition and career choices**.

Moreover, employee-rated workplace wellbeing has been positively linked to company performance, suggesting that **happier employees contribute to better organisational outcomes**.

However, given that multiple factors may influence teacher retention decisions, **school stakeholders should consider local contextual factors** such as school leadership, organisational culture, and community dynamics when interpreting retention data.

In so doing, schools can gain valuable insights into teachers' wellbeing and develop supportive policies accordingly.



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“Happier employees contribute to better organisational outcomes.”

“Using consistent measures is essential.”

Recommendations for Measuring Teacher Wellbeing

To ensure direct comparability of findings across different studies, **using consistent measurements is essential**.

While this report conceptualises wellbeing as subjective wellbeing (including life satisfaction, eudaimonia, and affect), there are multiple ways to measure it based on different theoretical interpretations.

The listed measurements provided in the full report (Boyle et al., 2024, p.24) offer school stakeholders a diverse range of choices, allowing them to **select based on their priorities**.

When selecting measurements for school wellbeing, educational institutions should consider factors such as:

appropriateness and **validity** of potential measurement tools for their specific teacher population;

alignment of measurement constructs with the institution's wellbeing-related goals;

feasibility of data collection and analysis;

relevance for all members of the school community;

and specific contextual conditions and **unique needs** of the school population that may influence the suitability of instruments.

One comprehensive measurement approach for school stakeholders involves incorporating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), core measurements, and tailored questionnaires.

Using this multi-pronged approach to measurement allows school stakeholders to build a picture of the wellbeing of the staff in their school. The KPI used in the Teacher Wellbeing Framework is job satisfaction. This mirrors the Pupil Wellbeing Framework KPI of pupil school life satisfaction.

For discussion of the KPIs, core measurements and recommended existing measures see Wellbeing in Education in Childhood and Adolescence (Taylor et al., 2022, p.94) and Wellbeing for Schoolteachers (Taylor et al., 2024, p.71).

Summary

The exploration of teacher wellbeing is less developed compared to student wellbeing literature, resulting in diverse conceptualisations and measurements.

Various interventions have been studied, but **definitive conclusions about their effectiveness are lacking due to limited replication and sample diversity**. While mindfulness-based interventions show promising moderate effects on teacher wellbeing, their generalisability and cross-cultural validity remain uncertain.

Tailoring interventions to specific school contexts is crucial, considering factors like appropriateness, alignment with goals, cultural conditions, and resource availability.

Involving school staff in intervention development ensures relevance and buy-in. Sustainable impact requires organisational change and community investment, alongside targeted interventions.

Continued research, including large-scale and longitudinal studies, is **essential** to refine wellbeing promotion strategies.

Holistic approaches that empower teacher voice, cultivate supportive leadership and culture, and prioritise collective wellbeing should be considered by schools as part of their wellbeing journey.

“Holistic approaches ... can create flourishing school environments.”



Further reading

Taylor, L. J., De Neve, J-E., DeBorst, L., & Khanna, D. (2022). *Wellbeing in Education in Childhood and Adolescence (Report No. 1)*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

Taylor, L., Zhou, W., Boyle, L., Funk, S., & De Neve, J-E. (2024). [Wellbeing for Schoolteachers \(Report No. 2\)](#). International Baccalaureate Organization.

Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., & De Neve, J-E. (2025). *Wellbeing Interventions for Schoolteachers: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

References

For a full list of references used in this report and access to additional supplementary materials, visit wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk/schools.

