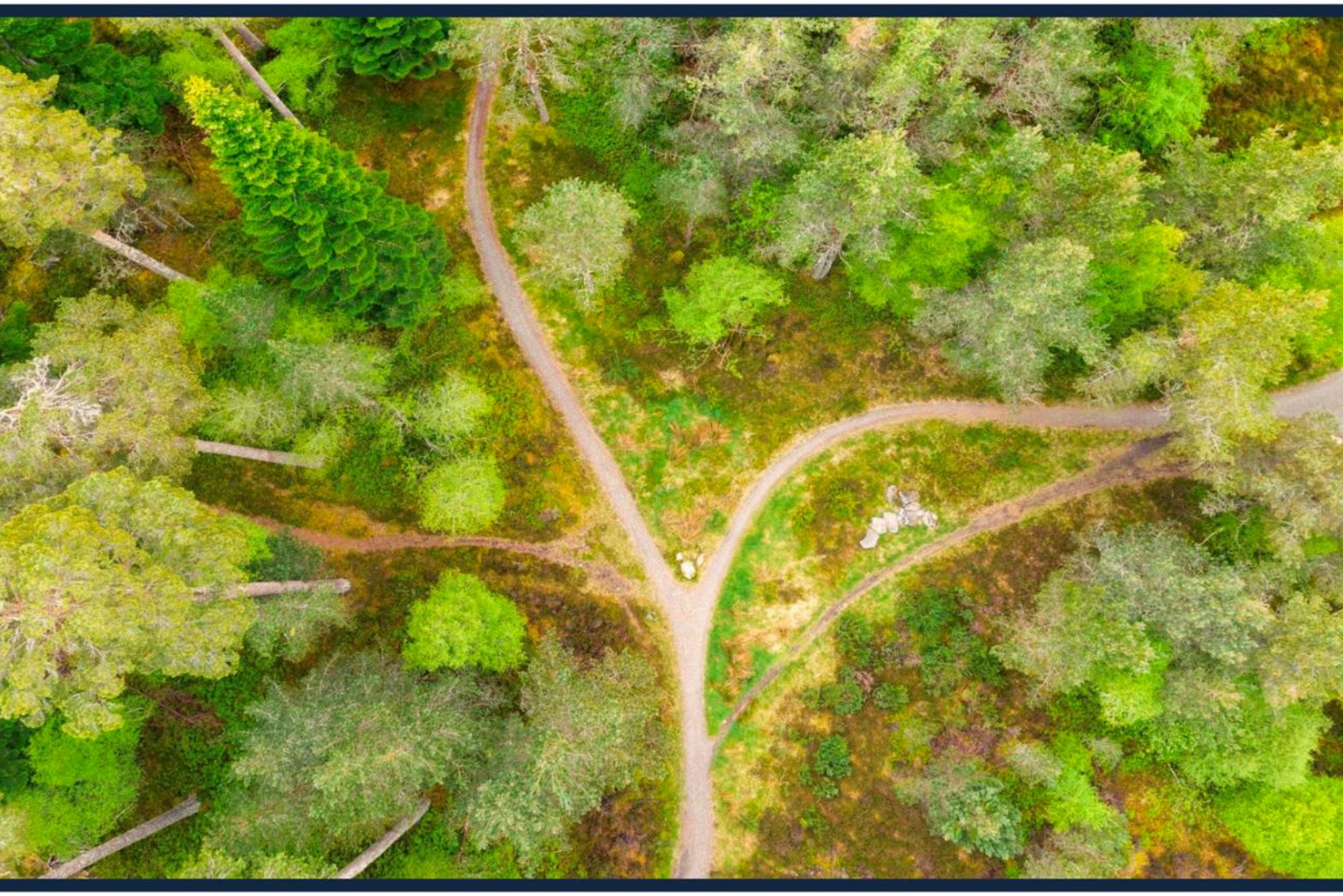
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Teacher Wellbeing

A Guide for Boards and Principals



Teacher wellbeing at work

What school boards need to understand about people at work

Schools are workplaces as well as places of learning, so a Board needs to understand why adults become exhausted, lose interest in their jobs or struggle with professional expectations. Experience in teaching and school leadership is valuable but it does not provide all the knowledge needed to oversee employment matters well.

The study of people at work

Industrial and organisational psychology examines how people behave at work and how their workplaces affect them. Drawing on research across many industries, including education, it helps employers understand difficulties involving an individual, a team or the way an organisation operates (American Psychological Association [APA], 2022).

Industrial psychology examines the fit between a person and their job, including the knowledge and skills required, recruitment, training and performance assessment. For a school, this helps explain when a teacher needs to develop their practice and what support would be useful.

Organisational psychology examines how the workplace operates, including leadership, culture and systems. It gives a school Board a basis for examining how its own expectations and decisions affect people's ability to do their jobs.

Truly understanding teacher wellbeing requires knowledge from both areas.

Why boards need this knowledge

A teacher who lacks the skills for a task may also be receiving unclear instructions and working with too little time. There are three issues here. Training and clearer instructions can help with the first two difficulties but neither creates more time. Research on job demands and resources helps employers consider the work alongside the time, skills and support available to do it (Bakker et al., 2023). Without this type of understanding, a well-meant response to a wellbeing issue can leave a problem unresolved. Taking over a teacher's work may ease immediate pressure while doing little to develop their capability, just as advice to become more resilient may achieve little when the workload itself is excessive.

The focus of this guide

Occupational wellbeing describes people's experience of their work, including work-related health, engagement and job satisfaction. Boards and principals should focus on this part of wellbeing as employers and leaders, whilst recognising that it is also affected by personal circumstances and national requirements beyond the school's control.

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When a well-intentioned survey raises concerns

A school with 31 teachers completes a wellbeing survey requested by the Board.

Many responses to five questions in particular are especially worrying with high percentages of staff responding "**Strongly disagree**" or "**Disagree**". This prompts the Board to ask the principal how they intend to improve staff wellbeing.

Before deciding what to expect of the principal, the Board needs to understand what lies behind the scores.

The survey statements

Thinking about the past four weeks how strongly do you agree with each statement?

1 — Strongly disagree | 2 — Disagree | 3 — Neither agree nor disagree | 4 — Agree | 5 — Strongly agree

1. My overall wellbeing has been good.
2. My workload has been manageable within the time available for my work.
3. I have received the support I need from our principal and leadership team.
4. I have been able to manage the pressures of my work without feeling overwhelmed.
5. I have been satisfied with my job as a teacher.

What is important is recognising that the data is less important than identifying what sits behind it.

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What might be behind the scores

The five statements can produce low scores for multiple reasons, with more than one explanation contributing to a teacher's response.

Survey statement	Personal circumstances or actions	Structural conditions outside school control	Organisational conditions to investigate
1 Overall wellbeing	Financial worries, illness or family conflict leave some teachers distracted. Caring responsibilities at home leave another exhausted before the school day begins.	Staff shortages lead to combined classes. Delayed specialist assistance and insufficient external language-learning support increase the demands on teachers.	Leaders add unnecessary paperwork, lead poorly organised, frequent and unnecessary meetings dragging on past 5pm and it's widely known that only positive news is well received.
2 Manageable workload	Two teachers struggle with time management, organisation and planning. Three describe perfectionism that makes tasks take longer. Two overseas-trained teachers are still learning local norms and cultural requirements.	Mandated curriculum, assessment and reporting changes add to work demands. Externally set MOE deadlines and the pace of change leaves limited capacity to do anything else.	Induction is poor and does not adequately help teachers new to the New Zealand system; leaders bow to the unrealistic demands of a group of pushy parents which creates additional work demands for teachers.
3 Support from leaders	Some teachers expect students to be removed without examining their own practice. Others experience evidence-based developmental feedback about their planning as a lack of support.	Leaders cannot obtain extra staffing or timely specialist help or change national requirements. Teachers feel unsupported because the needed assistance remains unavailable.	Leaders are not always easily accessible; communication from leadership is poor and often not in advance and some leaders fail to follow through; the Board meddles with day-to-day management issues and too easily listens to whanau complaints in public settings without advising complainants to communicate their concerns directly to the school in the first instance and to then follow the school's complaints policy if they are not satisfied.
4 Managing work pressures	Poor sleep, health difficulties and long commutes reduce some teachers' available energy. One teacher's health or capacity has changed for the worse due to their age.	National change, staffing shortages and external service delays may combine. Teachers face demands that cannot be resolved within the school.	Inconsistent behaviour responses and unclear follow-through leaves teachers feeling exposed; a gap between stated values and practice generates cynicism, including Board decisions which contribute.
5 Job satisfaction	Three teachers have lost their passion for teaching. They need to consider their expectations and whether teaching still suits them and don't understand that it is not their leaders' responsibility to '*make them happy*' by giving them what they want.	National pay settings, the public standing of teaching and limited specialist services reduces some staff's satisfaction with the profession.	Some staff believe they are exposed to limited development opportunities; different rules seem to apply to different people creating perceptions of unfair treatment; in one team there is little to no recognition or validation of teachers' efforts which reduces satisfaction in one pocket of the school significantly.

The organisational column identifies conditions that the Board and school leaders can change through their own decisions.

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Making sense of the results

The results give the Board grounds for concern but do not establish whether the principal is failing to support staff, teachers are struggling with their working habits or other pressures are contributing.

More than one cause

Workload might involve a national requirement that creates tasks, a duplicated school record that adds more work and perfectionism that makes every task take longer. The school can remove the duplicate record while the teacher works on preparation habits, but the national requirement remains outside either person's control.

Support needs equally careful examination because a teacher receiving considerable help from colleagues may still be waiting for an essential specialist service. Their low score could look much like that of a colleague receiving little useful help at school.

What the school can change

Boards and principals can change school arrangements within their authority, including governance, leadership, priorities and support (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Although they cannot control national requirements or take over teachers' private lives, they should consider how risks originating elsewhere interact with work and respond supportively when staff raise them (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2025).

Choosing a response

Each response needs to address the difficulty it is intended to resolve: better communication will not remove a national deadline and training will not remove duplicate records.

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Which wellbeing are we discussing

The first survey statement asks about "*overall wellbe*ing", leaving teachers to decide whether to think about money worries, school systems or something else. The following table adapts SAMHSA's eight-domain framework and includes psychological wellbeing as a further area for discussion (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2016).

Domain	What it covers
Occupational wellbeing	Experience of work, including work-related health, engagement, purpose and job satisfaction.
Physical wellbeing	Physical health, sleep, movement, illness and bodily functioning.
Emotional wellbeing	Understanding and managing feelings and coping with emotional experiences.
Financial wellbeing	Money pressures, financial security, debt and ability to meet financial needs.
Social wellbeing	Supportive connections, belonging and participation in social life.
Spiritual wellbeing	Meaning, values, beliefs and a sense of purpose or connection.
Psychological wellbeing	Maintaining balance, resilience and satisfaction in thoughts and actions.
Intellectual wellbeing	Learning, curiosity, thinking and opportunities to develop understanding.
Environmental wellbeing	The safety and quality of the physical surroundings in which a person lives and works.

Name the type of wellbeing whenever it is discussed as a Board or with staff so that everyone knows whether the concern is occupational, financial, emotional or another kind of wellbeing. Leaving the word unqualified risks making the employer appear responsible for every aspect of a teacher's life.

Where the employer's responsibility sits

Occupational wellbeing is the employer's focus, with the other domains helping explain the pressures people bring to work rather than becoming outcomes the school must deliver.

Some concerns overlap with work: *noise* at school can affect physical health and mistreatment can affect emotional wellbeing. The employer must examine its contribution to those difficulties.

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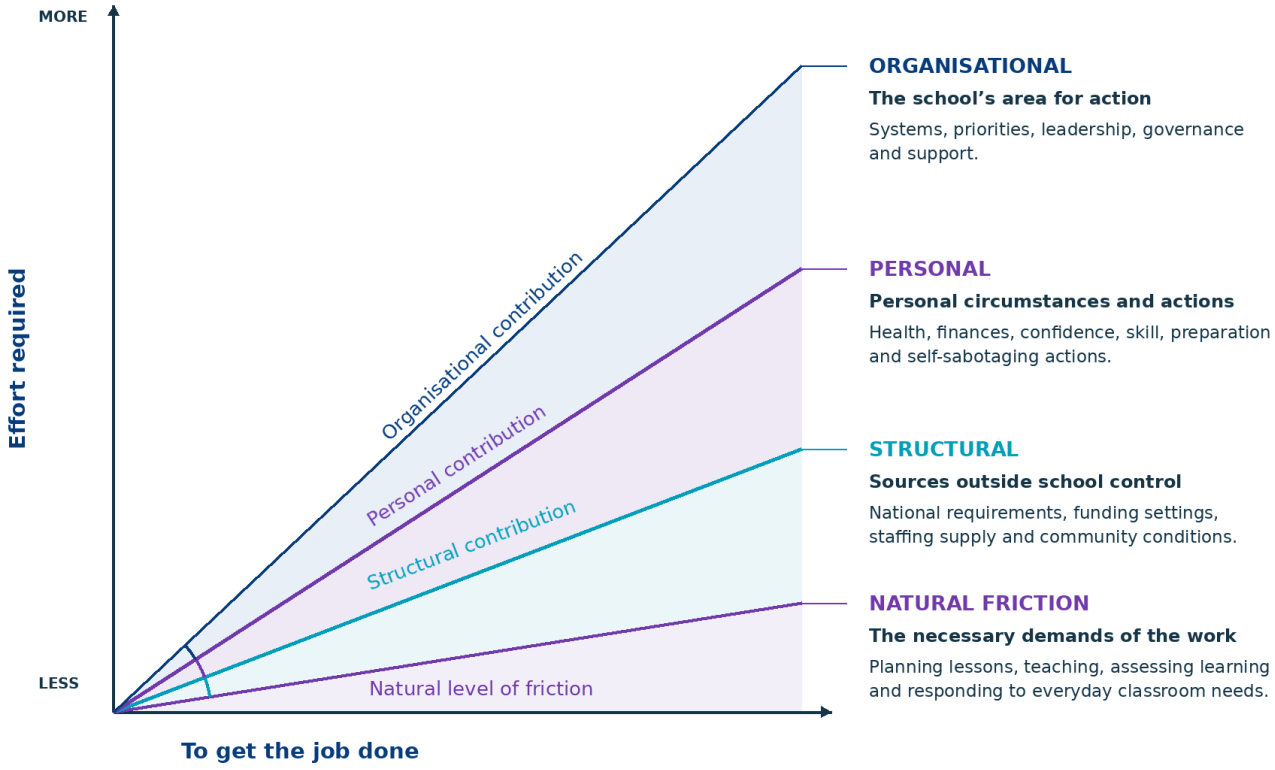
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Why some work takes more effort

The Effort Is Visible.
The Conditions Usually Aren't.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING AND THE CONTRIBUTING ANGLES

Leadership teams influence occupational wellbeing, but do not control every factor that shapes it.



The friction diagram shows why the effort required to get *the job done* can vary. Some effort is inherent in teaching, while additional demands *can increase the work or re*duce the resources available to meet it.

N**atural friction** is the effort needed to meet reasonable expectations and fulfil professional responsibilities, even in a well-run school. All organisations have a natural level of friction.

Structural friction comes from external conditions such as national requirements, funding settings and community circumstances. Boards and school leadership are unable to control or influence these factors.

Personal friction may arise from individual circumstances, working habits or capability and **organisational friction** comes from the school's governance, leadership and systems. It is here, at the organisational level, where boards and principals can act directly.

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Sources of friction

The examples in each domain help locate possible causes of a concern such as *unmanageable workload*.

NATURAL FRICTION	STRUCTURAL FRICTION	PERSONAL FRICTION	ORGANISATIONAL FRICTION
Necessary demands of competent teaching	**Externally set demands and conditions**	**Individual circumstances, capabilities and actions**	**Conditions and practices within school authority**
01 Planning for learner needs	01 Mandated curriculum changes	01 Personal finances, debt and money worries	01 Clarity of Board and principal roles
02 Preparing teaching materials	02 Mandated assessment and reporting	02 Family care responsibilities	02 Board conduct and principal support
03 Teaching and explaining new learning	03 Externally set deadlines and change pace	03 Personal health and disability-related needs	03 Clarity of staff roles
04 Adjusting teaching when learners struggle	04 National funding and resource limits	04 Personal mental health difficulties	04 Reasonable and consistent expectations
05 Assessing learner understanding	05 National staffing entitlement formulas	05 Sleep and recovery outside work	05 Local priorities and their sequencing
06 Giving useful learning feedback	06 National pay and agreement settings	06 Where they live and commute times	06 Allocation of duties
07 Recording learner progress	07 Teacher and specialist supply shortages	07 Personal networks, values and spirituality	07 Coordination of meetings and deadlines
08 Establishing classroom routines	08 Registration and certification rules	08 Resilience when facing setbacks	08 Timetables and release arrangements
09 Responding to everyday behaviour	09 Legislative and regulatory obligations	09 Optimism about future possibilities	09 Duplication in school records and plans
10 Supervising learners safely	10 External agency eligibility thresholds	10 Hopefulness and routes towards goals	10 Useful and accessible procedures
11 Connecting respectfully with learners	11 External specialist waiting times	11 Self-efficacy in teaching tasks	11 Allocation of teaching resources
12 Communicating essentials to whānau	12 Community poverty and hardship	12 Teaching and subject knowledge	12 Timely and clear communication
13 Collaborating on shared teaching	13 Local housing costs and instability	13 Teaching skill and adaptability	13 Staff input into relevant decisions
14 Preparing for professional discussions	14 Community employment patterns	14 Behaviour management knowledge and skill	14 Timely coaching and support
15 Learning improved teaching approaches	15 Transport and geographic isolation	15 Personal time management	15 Suitable professional development
16 Reflecting on teaching impact	16 External connectivity infrastructure	16 Personal planning and organisation	16 Induction and role transitions
17 Judging with incomplete information	17 Population and enrolment pressures	17 Self-sabotage through delay or avoidance	17 School-wide behaviour support
18 Managing ordinary interruptions	18 External property approvals and rules	18 Blaming others without self-examination	18 Fair conflict and complaint processes
19 Handling differences respectfully	19 Severe weather and natural disasters	19 Willingness to learn and accept feedback	19 Support and fair accountability
20 Sustaining attention and emotional control	20 Public health events and restrictions	20 Professional commitment and follow-through	20 Review and action on local risks

A concern may involve several domains even though providing a workplace response gives the school no control over the original cause.

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Who is responsible?

The Board

Board decisions can add to the pressures teachers and leaders experience, particularly when staff repeatedly report serious behaviour and believe families' wishes receive more attention than their safety. Resentment or cynicism may follow if decisions appear unfair or leave staff without effective protection and support. Where a student remains at school, teachers need confidence in the plan for managing the risks.

Other examples include:

- **Ineffective Board meetings and blurred responsibilities.** A presiding member who cannot keep discussion focused or manage dominant voices may allow one or two members to hold the Board's work hostage. If governance and management become blurred, because that board member does not have clarity over the difference, meetings can turn into prolonged examinations of daily decisions requiring the principal to keep preparing explanations or revisiting matters already addressed. Conflicting direction makes leadership harder and leaves less time to support teachers, with consequences for the principal's job satisfaction and occupational wellbeing.
- **Adding priorities without removing work**. When the Board approves another initiative without additional time or resources, teachers must absorb it alongside existing commitments.
- **Requesting excessive reporting.** Frequent requests for new data, written explanations or reassurance create work that takes time away from teaching and preparation.
- **Promising families support the school cannot resource.** Commitments about individual attention, communication or programmes become obligations teachers are expected to fulfil.
- **Underfunding classroom support**. The Board expects inclusive provision while declining available resourcing options that could help teachers meet learners' needs.
- **Failing to address parent aggression.** Teachers are expected to tolerate abusive communication because the Board wants to preserve community goodwill.
- **Reaching conclusions before hearing the teacher's account.** A complaint leads to criticism or demands for change before the facts have been examined.
- **Not following school policies or processes.** Board members listen to parental complaints in public settings and move to act on them rather than informing complainants to go directly to those concerned, and if no satisfactory action is taken, to formally complain using the school's agreed upon processes and documentation.
- **Overriding agreed procedures under pressure.** Exceptions made for persistent families leave teachers uncertain whether established expectations will be upheld.
- **Allowing inconsistent treatment of staff.** Some teachers receive exemptions or favourable arrangements while colleagues quietly carry the additional work.
- **Approving poorly timed change.** A discretionary school initiative is introduced during an already demanding period without considering the combined workload.

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- **Delaying decisions**. Unable to decide or agree on a budget prevents the principal advertising for new teachers too late to attract high quality candidates. Uncertainty about staffing, resources and school priorities prevents teachers from preparing and creates avoidable last-minute work.
- **Collecting feedback without following through.** Staff repeatedly identify the same organisational problems but receive neither action nor a clear explanation of the constraints.

Boards must examine its own contribution alongside the principal's leadership and teachers' responsibilities when considering the occupational wellbeing of its employees.

The principal and leadership

School leaders should examine how the following management practices affect teachers' occupational wellbeing.

- **Unclear expectations.** Teachers can spend considerable time guessing what is required, redoing work or seeking reassurance when leaders have not explained what good work looks like or distinguished essential requirements from personal preferences.
- **Too many competing priorities.** Even worthwhile initiatives can create an unmanageable combined workload, so leaders need to identify what will stop or receive less attention when something new begins.
- **Unnecessary paperwork.** Duplicate planning, assessment records and reporting processes consume preparation time unless leaders regularly check what each requirement contributes to teaching, learning or a necessary obligation.
- **Poorly organised meetings.** Meetings add frustration when they take time without helping teachers make progress, particularly if dominant voices repeatedly derail discussion or decisions remain unresolved.
- **Late decisions and avoidable urgency.** Teachers may work longer to compensate for delayed information, last-minute requests or poorly coordinated deadlines that make preparation harder.
- **Inconsistent behaviour support.** Teachers can feel exposed when agreed procedures are not followed or requests for help receive unpredictable responses, making clear responsibilities and dependable classroom support essential.
- **Making commitments without consulting those who must deliver them.** Promises to families about communication, individual programmes or additional support can create substantial work, so leaders need to check feasibility before committing teachers' time.
- **Failing to protect staff from unreasonable conduct.** Teachers need clear boundaries and reliable leadership support when dealing with aggressive parents or repeated personal attacks.
- **Avoiding difficult professional conversations.** Leaving concerns about practice or conduct unaddressed can require colleagues to carry extra work or manage the consequences, increasing pressure on them to keep one person comfortable.
- **Repeatedly rescuing rather than developing capability.** Taking over planning, communication or classroom problems may provide immediate relief without resolving the teacher's difficulty. Agree what the teacher will do, what support is available and when progress will be reviewed.

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- **Treating every difficulty as a personal weakness.** Before recommending resilience or time management, leaders need to examine whether school systems are adding unnecessary work alongside any contribution from the teacher.
- **Providing unsuitable or poorly timed professional development.** Training can become another demand when it does not address an identified need or teachers have little opportunity to practice and receive feedback afterwards.
- **Uneven workloads and inconsistent accountability.** Leaders should check whether reliable teachers are routinely receiving extra responsibilities while others receive repeated exemptions, leaving the same people to carry an unfair share.
- **Responding defensively to concerns.** Teachers may stop raising difficulties if leaders dismiss them, personalise criticism or promise action without following through. A considered response is needed even when the answer cannot be the one requested.
- **Allowing work to extend without clear boundaries.** Expectations about evening messages, weekend responses and constant availability can leave teachers uncertain when they can switch off, especially where leaders' own habits appear to establish the standard.
- **After work emails and texts.** Although emails may explicitly state the sender works different hours from the receiver, and it states the receiver should respond, it nevertheless prevents recipients from cognitively switching off and implicitly sets expectations others may not be able to meet

These factors should be examined alongside the teacher's own contribution and the Board's.

Teachers

Teachers' knowledge, working habits and professional commitment affect how they experience work, so these need consideration alongside the conditions provided by the school.

Teachers are responsible for preparing adequately, maintaining professional knowledge and meeting reasonable expectations. Support and development opportunities can help but their usefulness also depends on the teacher's participation and follow-through.

- **Personal time management.** Anticipating predictable demands and allocating time accordingly can reduce avoidable deadline pressure. Although effective time management is associated with wellbeing and performance (Aeon et al., 2021), it cannot compensate for an unreasonable workload.
- **Planning, preparation and organisation**. Keeping materials, records and commitments organised can reduce the extra effort created by poor preparation, including classroom problems that could have been anticipated.
- **Perfectionism and difficulty judging what is sufficient.** Teachers need to distinguish tasks requiring close attention from those that need to be accurate and fit for purpose, otherwise routine work can consume time needed for essential preparation and recovery.

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- **Professional knowledge and skill.** Gaps in curriculum knowledge, assessment or teaching practice can make ordinary tasks more demanding, which is why recognising a gap and seeking development remain responsibilities throughout a teaching career.
- **Willingness to adapt.** When an approach repeatedly fails to help learners, teachers need to examine its impact, try suitable alternatives and assess whether those changes improve the situation.
- **Openness to feedback.** Teachers should consider the evidence behind developmental feedback and act on justified concerns, while being able to challenge inaccuracies through a respectful professional process. Treating feedback as a personal attack can prevent that discussion.
- **Reflection and personal accountability.** Alongside student behaviour, family circumstances and school systems, teachers need to examine how their own instructions, routines and responses contribute to classroom difficulties. Repeatedly blaming others may leave an important part of the problem untouched.
- **Participation in professional development**. A course or meeting needs to be followed by practice, feedback and sustained application if the learning is to improve teaching.
- **Psychological resources.** Hope, resilience, optimism and confidence in one's ability are often grouped as psychological capital and associated with work attitudes and performance (Avey et al., 2011). Teachers can consider how they respond to setbacks and seek support to develop these resources.
- **Addressing difficulties with colleagues.** Raising concerns respectfully and seeking clarification can prevent misunderstandings or resentment from growing, with appropriate assistance where the people involved cannot resolve the issue themselves.
- **Timely communication with whānau.** Necessary conversations about progress or behaviour can become harder when delayed, so teachers should use agreed school processes and seek leadership support where a situation is sensitive or unsafe.
- **Seeking and using suppor**t. Teachers need accessible ways to raise concerns and a willingness to use suitable help, since leaders cannot respond effectively to every difficulty they do not know about. If the support is unhelpful, explaining what remains difficult allows the response to be reviewed.
- **Following through on commitments.** Raising difficulties early allows a workable response before missed deadlines or incomplete tasks create extra work for colleagues.
- **Personal commitments, commuting and recovery.** Long journeys, additional employment and other commitments can reduce the time and energy available for work and rest. Where teachers have choices, they need to consider whether their arrangements remain sustainable and what changes are reasonably possible.
- **Career expectations and commitment to teaching.** When enthusiasm has gone, a teacher needs to examine whether school conditions, changed interests or career expectations are contributing. Leaders can help with the discussion but cannot supply another adult's passion.

Avoiding preparation, rejecting useful feedback or leaving disagreements unresolved can increase the pressure a teacher wants reduced. The term s*elf-sabotage* should describe those actions and their consequences without becoming a judgement about character or obscuring illness, disability or excessive demands.

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Support or work adjustments should be agreed promptly, with clear responsibilities and a review of their effect on the teacher and colleagues' workloads.

When **personal** pressures affect a teacher, a trusted colleague can provide valuable support by listening and helping them think through their options. Research links emotional support with better wellbeing and job satisfaction, although its usefulness depends on the circumstances (Mathieu et al., 2019). Offering that support does not make the listener responsible for resolving the **personal** difficulty.

The happiness trap

Boards can fall into the happiness trap when they assume that looking after staff wellbeing means making teachers happy. Once that expectation takes hold, an unhappy teacher can become evidence in the Board's eyes that the principal has failed.

Making people happy should not be a leadership key performance indicator because feelings are subjective and reflect personal circumstances and career expectations as well as work. Adults have responsibility for their choices and pursuit of happiness, although that does not mean they can simply choose how to feel. A principal cannot control every influence and a happiness score cannot fairly assign responsibility to them (Fisher, 2010).

Learning new practice or receiving honest feedback can feel uncomfortable even when it is worthwhile. Some pressure is experienced as **eustress**: a positive, beneficial form of stress that occurs when perceiving a challenging situation as manageable, exciting and an opportunity for growth rather than **distress**, which describes demands experienced as threatening, overwhelming or beyond one's ability to cope. Standards and expectations drop if Boards misinterpret eustress as distress and respond by removing reasonable expectations whenever they cause discomfort for teachers. In this way teachers can become enabled to be more self-entitled and self-absorbed.

A worthwhile challenge can still become harmful when demands continue without adequate support or recovery. Research finds that demands classed as challenges are still associated with strain, and because the same demand can affect teachers differently, neither label establishes whether the work is reasonable (Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019).

Employee engagement and **job satisfaction** provide a more useful focus for the workplace. Engagement concerns the energy, involvement and dedication people bring to work, while satisfaction concerns how they judge the job and its different parts (Fisher, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Both can remain strong through difficult days or challenging feedback.

Boards can examine whether expectations and workload are matched by suitable resources, alongside conditions leaders can improve such as clear communication, efficient systems and opportunities to grow. Consistency between stated values and daily practice matters (Brooks, 2025), and teachers must remain able to question unreasonable demands and raise leadership concerns within a workplace that allows honest discussion of teaching practice (Edmondson, 1999).

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Common Board mistakes

Use the following checks before deciding how to respond to a staff concern.

1. **Expecting the principal to restore lost passion.** Find out whether school conditions or a change in career interests is contributing before making renewed enthusiasm a performance expectation for the principal.
2. **Treating unhappiness as proof of poor leadership.** Examine the decision, its effects and how it was communicated before concluding that an unhappy reaction means the decision was unreasonable.
3. **Mistaking repeated or forceful complaints for the whole picture.** Hear quieter staff and the principal while checking who is affected, since a small group may identify a serious problem even though neither numbers nor strength of feeling settles its cause.
4. **Turning every personal difficulty into a school obligation.** Acknowledge personal pressures and investigate any contribution from work without making the school responsible for resolving the private difficulty.
5. **Confusing discomfort with harm.** Check the expectation and how it was communicated, addressing disrespect or unreasonable demands while retaining fair professional expectations.
6. **Rewarding avoidance by repeatedly taking over.** Agree the teacher's participation and review whether support is developing capability or leaving them dependent on others.
7. **Holding leaders responsible for national demands.** Separate school implementation decisions from requirements the school cannot change so that action addresses work-related risks within school authority.
8. **Treating a survey score as a verdict.** Use low scores to investigate possible causes and handle identifiable complaints through a fair process.
9. **Buying an activity or a consultant before defining the problem.** Agree the concern before choosing a provider or activity so that the work addresses it and its effect can be evaluated (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017).
10. **Protecting teachers by overloading the principal.** Check what support requires from the principal and colleagues, then allocate time and resources rather than transfer an unmanageable burden.

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Using a survey or external consultant

A useful survey helps the Board understand which work conditions contribute to staff concerns, with follow-up discussion where existing results leave important questions unanswered.

Agree the purpose

Agree the occupational wellbeing concerns to investigate with staff, including which organisational conditions are open to change.

Check explanations against the work

- Ask teachers how workload, interruptions and role clarity affect their work, then explore what contributes to satisfaction and engagement.
- Consider whether teachers have the resources, information and collegial assistance they need, together with fair treatment and opportunities to develop.
- Where workload is a concern, examine mandated tasks and school requirements alongside planning habits.
- Where support is a concern, establish what was offered, what was used and which external services remain unavailable, collecting only the personal information needed for that inquiry.

Protect a fair process

- Before collecting responses, explain who will see them and how the findings will be reported, including any limits to anonymity in a small school.
- Keep identifiable complaints separate from general findings so staff can raise concerns safely and the principal has a fair opportunity to respond.

Choosing a provider

Experience in education alone may not provide the expertise a review requires, so check the provider's knowledge of work design, occupational wellbeing and industrial and organisational psychology.

Agree the following before appointment:

- Purpose: the concerns to investigate and the boundaries of the review.
- Method: the measures to be used and how the provider will examine possible causes.
- Process: how staff and the principal will be heard and confidentiality protected.
- Recommendations: actions within school authority, their resource requirements and unresolved external constraints.
- Review: how progress will be assessed and any extra workload checked.

The provider should leave the Board with decisions it can implement and review, taking account of the setting and how changes will be introduced (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017).

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Practical steps for boards and principals

Before approving a plan, return to the survey concerns and establish what is known about their causes, where further inquiry is needed and what action can now be agreed.

1. Understand the concern before assigning responsibility.
2. Establish what is happening, who is affected and how often by examining all four layers, while addressing any immediate risks promptly.
3. Act on organisational friction within school authority.
4. Remove avoidable duplication and coordinate school priorities and deadlines, identifying the time and resources needed whenever work is added. Record external requirements the school cannot change so they are not mistaken for local choices.
5. Match support with clear professional expectations.
6. Agree what the school will provide and what the teacher will do, whether that involves coaching, a workable planning format or another form of support. Include a clear expectation that the teacher prepares and follows through.
7. Protect recovery and watch for worsening patterns.
8. An exhausted teacher may work longer yet take more time to finish because concentration suffers. High demands can also make recovery harder just when it is most needed (Sonnentag, 2018). Examine workload and working habits together when deciding what needs to change.
9. Include the principal in every check.
10. Review Board reporting requests and the extra work each proposed action creates for the principal and colleagues, allowing time for implementation.
11. Keep accountability respectful and concerns welcome.
12. Give specific feedback about actions and effects while hearing explanations and following fair procedures. Staff need to be able to raise genuine concerns and remain accountable for reasonable professional expectations.
13. Review whether the change actually helps.
14. Agree who will act, the resources required and a review date, then examine whether the cause has changed. Less duplicate work or more reliable behaviour support provides evidence alongside survey scores but check whether the burden has simply shifted to someone else.

Keep responsibility clear throughout the plan so that support and professional expectations are understood by everyone involved.

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InterLEAD was established in 2001 with a vision that continues to guide us: *Great Schools - Great Country*.

Our name means *Interpreting Leadership*, reflecting our commitment to helping people understand leadership and put it into practice. From one person, we have grown into a team working across the North and South Islands, working exclusively in education, from early childhood through to tertiary settings. We believe leadership development earns its place when it improves professional practice and makes a difference for learners.

Our point of difference lies in where we draw our ideas and research from.

Alongside education, our work draws on organisational and industrial psychology, human development and behaviour, group dynamics, systems thinking, organisational learning and adult learning. Research into motivation, leadership and organisational change also informs our approach. We apply these disciplines to educational settings to create distinctive and powerful developmental pathways, shaped around the people we work with and the challenges they face. These perspectives help leaders examine familiar assumptions, understand what may be holding progress back and develop practical ways forward.

Most of our work takes place within schools and centres, where we tailor the learning to priorities and circumstances at no additional cost.

We listen carefully to participants and build on their experiences through thoughtful facilitation, relevant resources and opportunities to practise and apply what they are learning.

We are grateful that many clients return and recommend us to others, allowing us to build lasting professional partnerships. We stand behind our work and take seriously the trust schools place in us.

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