



YOUTH  
SPORT  
TRUST

WELL  
SCHOOLS

*Well Culture.  
Lead Well.  
Move Well.  
Live Well.*

## **Steps to Success**

A guide for Well Schools  
and Well School Trusts



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## Introduction

We know that unhealthy, unhappy children don't learn. At the same time schools are being asked to do more with less whilst dealing with a growing physical and mental health crisis. Put simply, our education system needs to adapt and think differently to meet the needs of our pupils and provide the support our educators require.

### What is a Well School?

A Well School still has high expectations, but places just as much emphasis on health and wellbeing as it does on academic performance. It understands that children and young people are more effective learners when they are happy and healthy, and that staff are better educators when they are genuinely supported. Well Schools take care of the health and wellbeing of their pupils and staff to create a culture which allows everyone to reach their potential.

### Why Well Schools?

The evidence shows that there is a clear link between improved physical, social and emotional health, higher levels of wellbeing, academic attainment and other educational outcomes particularly with those pupils facing the greatest inequalities.

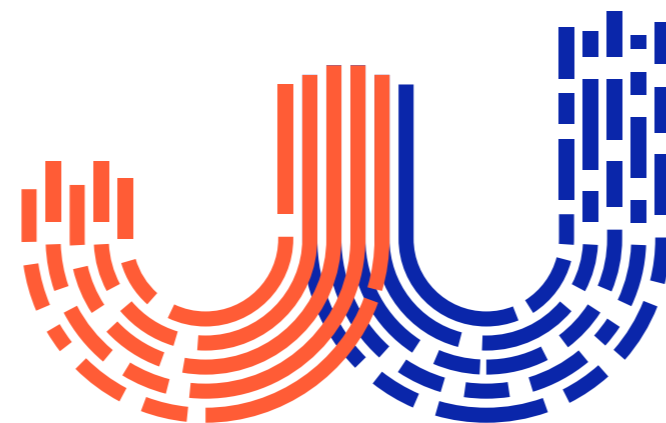
This will result in the following over time:

- Increases in progress and attainment
- Improvements in physical and mental health
- Increased attendance
- Higher self-efficacy
- Increased executive function
- Improved behaviour
- Reduced exclusions
- Improved job satisfaction
- Increased staff retention

Evidence<sup>123</sup> shows that happier teachers and happier children make for better learning environments.

## We face three big problems in the UK that is affecting the education outcomes we want for every child:

1. Poor staff wellbeing and a lack of agency in young people.
2. A significant decline in young people's physical and mental health.
3. Young people not having the essential skills they need for the digital world they live in.



## Steps to Success

The Well Schools Steps to Success are informed by what schools and trusts have done to improve the health and wellbeing of their school communities. It helps the education sector understand what works to impact on the health and happiness of staff and pupils, and achieve positive education outcomes by addressing the health and wellbeing challenges they face.

The guide supports schools and trusts to take action across their school, or group of schools, and how to implement the Well School approach based on their context and needs of the pupils, staff and community.

## A Well School

### Well Culture.

Wellbeing is put at the heart of school life and enables everyone to thrive and achieve their potential.



- ♥ School Leadership
- ♥ Wellbeing Measurement
- ♥ Community Engagement
- ♥ Inclusion and Diversity
- ♥ Physical Environment



### Lead Well.

Staff and pupils are empowered to shape and lead their school

- Staff voice and pupil voice
- Workload support
- Professional development
- Wellbeing governance
- Staff wellbeing



### Move Well.

Every pupil is prepared physically and mentally for learning and for life

- Physical education
- Extracurricular provision
- Daily physical activity
- Competitive opportunities
- Activity delivery



### Live Well.

Every pupil is equipped with the essential skills to thrive in a digital world

- Leadership opportunities
- Volunteering
- Educational visits
- Health and wellbeing curriculum
- Mental health support

# A Well Culture

## Well Culture.

A school that puts health and wellbeing at its heart and creates a culture of belonging



- ♥ School Leadership
- ♥ Wellbeing Measurement
- ♥ Community Engagement
- ♥ Inclusion and Diversity
- ♥ Physical Environment

Establishing a Well Culture requires you to look at the entire school context. A Well Culture is where positive health and wellbeing is supported and promoted through the school's ethos, policies, and curriculum, and it flows out into the wider school community too. A Well Culture is one where there is a strong sense of engagement – all members of the school community work cohesively, guided by a strong sense of purpose, shared values, and common goals.



**Leadership and management** – Senior leaders in schools must be authentic in modelling what good wellbeing looks like as well as leading their schools by example. They understand the importance of a happy, healthy school community on learning and improving outcomes and create a sense of belonging for every pupil. Well Schools are run by emotionally intelligent senior leaders who develop positive relationships with staff, children and their families.

**Physical environment** – Well Schools are safe, inviting and inspiring spaces to learn and enable pupils to move and be active. Space is maximised and facilities made available to support the community and care is given to the physical environments that staff and pupils work in. Well Schools take responsibility for their sustainability and impact on the environment.

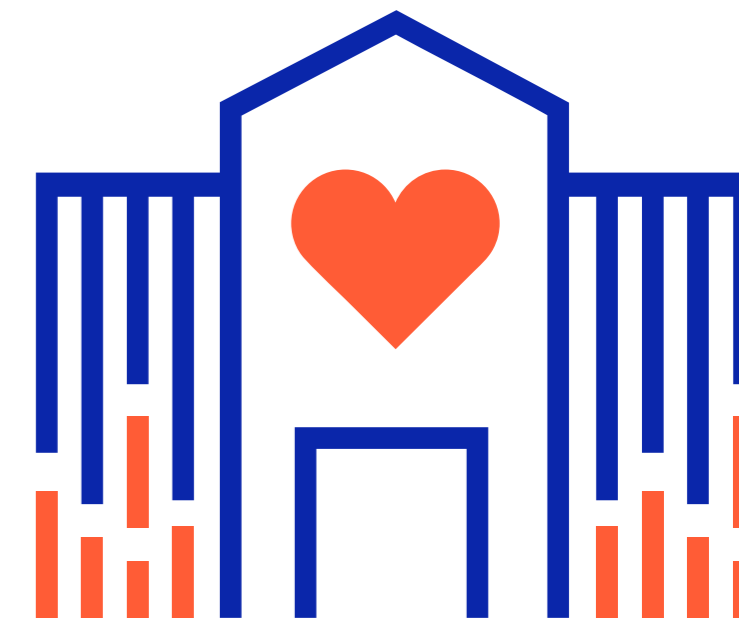
**Community engagement** – Well Schools recognise that they are an integral part of the local community. They understand the needs of their community and demonstrate the importance of wellbeing to parents, carers and governors ensuring that the health and wellbeing support they offer is clearly communicated. Well Schools utilise local services to improve outcomes for young people and their families.

## Wellbeing measurement

A Well School systematically measures the wellbeing of staff and pupils and ensures they take action on the needs of the community. They use this insight as a way of identifying areas for development and what is impacting on learning and forges partnerships with external services to address any challenges.

**Inclusion and diversity** – the ethos and culture of the school promotes inclusion, respect and values diversity.

A Well School ensures that every child is represented in the workforce, curriculum and culture and that everyone feels like they belong and have a sense of identity.



## LEAD WELL



### Lead Well.

Staff and pupils are empowered to shape and lead their school

- Staff voice and pupil voice
- Workload support
- Professional development
- Wellbeing governance
- Staff wellbeing

A Well School or Well School Trust ensures it takes care of the health and wellbeing of every member of staff, individually and collectively. Staff and pupils' voices are heard in decision-making and actions and there are regular opportunities for them to contribute to the design and implementation of these actions. Governing bodies should also have a good understanding of health and wellbeing issues and support the senior leadership team and the wider school community.



**Staff and pupil voice** – Involving staff and students in decisions that impact on them can benefit their mental health and wellbeing by helping them to feel part of the school and wider community and to have ownership. Staff and students benefit through having opportunities to influence decisions, to express their views and to create a positive education environment.

**Wellbeing Governors** – Boards of Governors and trustees understand the impact of poor health and wellbeing on the agenda at their school. It's their role to support a whole school approach to wellbeing and to provide the link between the school and families.

Critically they must support the senior leadership team and pay close attention to the wellbeing of the Head Teacher whilst providing appropriate challenge on the actions they take that affect the health and happiness of staff and pupils.

**Workload Support** – Well Schools ensure that unnecessary work is eliminated wherever possible. Staff are given the right support, time and resources to manage their workload effectively.

There are considerations for flexible working arrangements where possible and tasks that burden effective teaching and staff wellbeing are addressed or removed.

**Staff Professional Development** – A Well School understands that a workforce that is constantly developed and supported improves schools outcomes and impacts on their wellbeing. It is important to acknowledge the training and CPD needs of staff members that have a responsibility for the physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing of pupils and they are able to progress in their careers where appropriate.

**Staff Personal Wellbeing** – Well Schools provide support to enable staff to reflect on and to take actions to enhance their own wellbeing.

Staff are supported physically, socially and emotionally in the same way as pupils to manage their own needs and given agency to improve the wellbeing of the workforce and have access to targeted support where required.



## MOVE WELL



### **Move Well.**

**Every pupil is prepared physically and mentally for learning and for life**

- Physical education
- Extracurricular provision
- Daily physical activity
- Competitive opportunities
- Activity delivery

Well Schools are active schools and the importance of movement to brain function, mood and learning is understood. Movement breaks are included in the school day contributing to the Chief Medical Officers' recommendation of 60 active minutes a day (20 mins for SEND/ALN). The outcomes of PE are aligned to the needs of ALL young people. All children can access and enjoy extracurricular activities and experience competition.



### **High Quality PE**

A Well School delivers a high-quality Physical Education (PE) curriculum, ensuring each pupil receives a minimum of two hours of structured learning per week. All lessons are inclusive, accessible, and adapted to meet the individual needs of every young person. Every pupil feels a sense of belonging in PE, regardless of their abilities or motivations, fostering a lifelong appreciation for movement. They leave school with a positive experience of Physical Education and equipped with tools to maintain an active lifestyle. Grounded in the 'physical' learning domain, the curriculum also nurtures cognitive, social, and emotional growth, ensuring pupils develop holistically while cultivating essential life skills.

### **Extracurricular Opportunities**

A Well School offers a breadth of extracurricular opportunities – sport, arts (e.g., dance), and physical activities that support development beyond the classroom. Through before-school and after-school clubs, it ensures participation reflects the school community, encouraging all pupils to explore interests, continue physical activity beyond the school day, build connections, and develop life skills.

### **Competitive Opportunities**

A Well School understands and embraces the importance of competition for the development of lifeskills for all pupils; and has a breadth of competitive opportunities designed to meet the confidence, motivations and competence of their young people. They will use youth voice to design appropriate and meaningful competition to ensure that as many young people across the school community have a positive experience pre/during/post the event that improves their physical literacy and engagement in movement, sport and physical activity.

### **Daily Physical Activity**

A Well School provides lots of opportunities for pupils to move for 60 minutes throughout the school day from active travel, active breakfast times, active play and breaktimes and active lessons. They ensure pupils are not sat down for long periods of time and they are providing positive experiences for pupils that have barriers to being active.

### **Activity Delivery**

A Well School provides opportunities for every child to deliver physical activity and sport opportunities to their peers inside and outside of the curriculum. Children and young people that take on activity delivery, officiating and coaching roles with their peer group, build a greater sense of agency, essential skills and wellbeing.



## LIVE WELL



### **Live Well.**

**Every pupil is equipped with the essential skills to thrive in a digital world**

- Leadership opportunities
- Volunteering
- Educational visits
- Health and wellbeing curriculum
- Mental health support

Well Schools equip pupils with essential skills to thrive in the digital world. They offer opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and contribute positively to society. Well Schools support pupils with their mental health, create healthy lifestyle habits through a health and wellbeing curriculum, teaching them about good food, balancing screen time, and sleep.



**Health and wellbeing Curriculum** – Well Schools promote the health and wellbeing of their students by providing a rich curriculum that helps them develop healthy habits. Students have opportunities to learn outdoors which encourages them to be active and connect with the natural world. Good nutrition is taught as a way to maintain a healthy body as well as a healthy mind and health literacy is a key part of the curriculum.

A Well School places significant emphasis on supporting pupils' social literacy, enabling them to navigate issues such as racism, bullying and body image in a world dominated by social media.

**Leadership opportunities** – Children and young people need to develop the essential skills of working well within teams and being able to lead, and be led by others. A Well School provides meaningful leadership experiences, where young people can acquire skills and learn behaviours which develop them as individuals, but also prepares them to be active contributors to society throughout and beyond education.

**Educational visits** – Well Schools recognise that learning takes place everywhere, not just inside a classroom. They prioritise giving their pupils rich experiences outside of school that enhance their academic knowledge, cultural and social capital.

**Volunteering** – Well Schools understand that to empower their pupils to face an uncertain and constantly changing future with confidence, they need to be provided with opportunities to positively impact the world and contribute to the community they live in.

**Mental health support** – Well Schools have strong systems and resources in place to support students in school who may be struggling with poor mental health. They can act quickly to support the student and their family, but have an equal eye on how the school can equip pupils to manage their own emotions and mental health.



## Working as a Group

Becoming a Well School is something that should be a decision for each setting and is easily achievable as a single school. However, there can be benefits of undertaking this journey as part of collaborative group – such as a MAT, local cluster, federated group or as a group of schools with aligned values.

These include:

- Create a local collaborative network
- The ability to easily 'share and compare'
- Benefit from local face-to-face delivery
- Cost efficiencies – e.g. shared CPD, resources etc
- Ability to co-create a local offer
- Ability to moderate and challenge each other
- Increased local capacity and flexibility.

**Multi-academy Trusts have already been considering that their Well School Trust model looks like, as a group of schools.**



## What is a Well School Trust?

**Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) are responsible for setting the culture and climate across multiple schools based on a clear vision and value set. A Well School Trust is a MAT that explicitly prioritises the contribution of improved health and wellbeing to its strategic and improvement plans. It puts PE, sport and play at the heart of positive action across the schools it serves, as part of the improvement journey to be a strong Trust.**

**It understands that to deliver on the principles of a strong Trust there is a need to support and retain a resilient workforce that is healthy and well, in order to deliver high quality education, including for disadvantaged children and children with SEND, that addresses the physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing needs of pupils.**

### Why is a strong Trust a Well School Trust?

It acts on working quickly to improve standards within all its schools, particularly transforming previously under performing schools by:

- Supporting senior leaders, trustees, parents and staff to understand the connection between happy, healthy children and successful learning.
- Setting out a plan for how this will be achieved through:
- Effective central leadership teams
- Strong school leadership and teaching, and evidence-based curriculum design
- Its civic role within its communities.

As a foundation:

- It understands and can demonstrate the power of placing PE, sport and play at the heart of its strategic and improvement plans and
- It supports each of its schools to become a Well School within its individual contexts and communities.

You can find guidance on approaches to building strong Academy Trusts through a Well School approach [here](#) and case studies exploring practice in Academy Trusts [here](#).



As our sector increasingly focuses on what it means to be a strong trust – high quality education, strategic governance, efficient and effective operations, workforce resilience and wellbeing, public benefit, and civic duty – it is clear that the Well School Trust principles have the potential to underpin so much of what can make a good trust great.

**LEORA CRUDDAS  
CEO, CONFEDERATION  
OF SCHOOL TRUSTS**



## WELL TRUST VISION AND VALUES

Well schools (Lead Well, Move Well, Live Well)



## STRONG TRUST OUTCOMES

Improved health and happiness

Improved wellbeing and learning

Improved progress and achievement

Improved teacher retention and quality



Physical and mental health

Personal development and social mobility

Improved brain function and cognition

## CONTRIBUTION OF PE, SPORT and PLAY



## Getting started

The Well School journey of every school and Trust will be different and there isn't a single approach to follow. You will find some 'quick-wins' on the next page but it is important to note that a whole-Trust and school approach to wellbeing takes time to embed.



## Top ten tips to get started

### 1. Embed in your vision and values

#### MAT

Ensure the importance of wellbeing in education is understood by all, including trustees and leaders, school staff, pupils and families, and this is reflected in your trust's vision and values, improvement strategies and curriculum.

#### SCHOOL

Consider a long-term vision and what the steps are to getting there. Consider how your community understands the meaning and importance of health and wellbeing and clearly articulate its place in your vision statement and curriculum.

### 2. Self-assess against the Well School Pillars

#### MAT

Use the Well School framework and Check as a benchmarking tool to identify trust-wide areas for development and establish clear milestones and performance indicators as part of improvement plans.

#### SCHOOL

Reflect on where you can improve and understand where you are doing well. It will help you create a plan across your school and trust and consider what support you need.

### 3. Measure Wellbeing

#### MAT

Consider the measures of success that can be captured over time in a consistent way across the Trust, and how you are including the voices of trust leaders and governors, staff and pupils, as well as the wider trust community (such as families).

#### SCHOOL

Have a baseline measure of wellbeing of staff and pupils and then track wellbeing to see changes over time. Give your community a voice and embed in your improvement plans.

### 4. Put it in your Improvement Strategy

#### MAT

Ensure your ambition and actions for developing Well Schools is outlined in Trust-wide improvement plans. Ensure this is reflected within each school as part of their improvement journey.

#### SCHOOL

All of your plans and actions should be aligned to whole school priorities and embedded in your plans for improvement.

### 5. Identify a strategic lead

#### MAT

Identify a strategic lead for the Trust with capacity, expertise and credibility to drive your Well Schools plans forward, working effectively across the Trust to achieve agreed actions. Consider how you will provide the necessary resource needed for the role.

#### SCHOOL

This is key to making change happen, bearing in mind it isn't just down to one person. This role is vital in driving the vision and must be a senior leader. It is key that it is not seen as an add-on to 'the day job' and an overarching umbrella that supports school improvement.

### 6. Form a Well School Team

#### MAT

Build an effective team to support your Trust's strategic lead for driving Well Schools forward. Consider who is best placed centrally and in each school to work together to deliver on actions as part of Trust-wide improvement plans.

#### SCHOOL

Made up of a cross section of staff (and should include students and governors) that will be responsible for driving the changes needed to become a Well School.

## 7. Prioritise and plan

### MAT

Use the insight from the Well Check in each school to inform your Trust-wide action planning. Prioritise actions in alignment with your Trust's strategic direction and the needs of your staff and pupils, based on insight and what two, or three key actions will be most achievable and have the greatest impact.

### SCHOOL

Identify three to five key areas where you want to focus. Ask yourself: does it feel important? Is it easily achievable? Do we have the people to tackle this? Does it require support or resources that are not available in your school or trust.

## 8. Monitor and evaluate

### MAT

Define your Trust-wide measures of success and how are you going to demonstrate impact and agree your processes for capturing the impact of actions you are taking centrally and in each school.

### SCHOOL

Regularly monitor how the changes are going and if they're having the desired impact. Give things time to embed but don't be afraid to make changes if they're needed.

## 9. Consider your community role

### MAT

Ensure Trust leaders recognise that health and wellbeing is fundamental to delivering on your Trust's civic responsibilities within the communities you serve. Involve parents, governors/trustees and community partners to form the Trust's priorities and approaches.

### SCHOOL

Parental and community engagement is key to school development plans with trustees and local governors being part of the journey. There is a need to think about how you are communicating the needs of your staff and pupils to those agencies that can help support your priorities through the sharing of data and insight from wellbeing surveys.

## 10. Celebrate your commitment

### MAT

Communicate your commitment to wellbeing as part of your Trust's vision, values and strategic direction. Launch Well Schools across the Trust, build a pledge across schools and families, and support your schools to access Well Schools Accreditation to demonstrate success.

### SCHOOL

Let your staff, pupils and parents/carers know that you have pledged to put wellbeing at the heart of school life through newsletters, website and by accessing the Well Schools Accreditation demonstrating your commitment.

## Taking your first steps

Your journey to becoming a Well School has begun. By now you will have identified the areas in which your school or MAT are strong, the areas that are developing and some areas that will be a brand new venture. Remember that all Well Schools are a continuous work-in-progress – responding to the ever changing educational landscape and ever evolving community that your school is part of. The most important aspect of becoming a Well School is taking those continuous steps towards improvement.

### The Well School Movement

Your school can become part of a large, growing and supportive movement of schools and trusts. The Well School concept exists to address the growing inequalities in children's health and education and helping every child with a positive experience of going to school. Well Schools show there is a different way and together we can create the change we need for today's child.

You can register for the free Well Check and start your journey here – [www.youthsporttrust.org/school-support/well-schools](http://www.youthsporttrust.org/school-support/well-schools)





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Founder of Teachappy

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#### **Powered by Youth Sport Trust**

The Youth Sport Trust is a children's charity working to ensure every child enjoys the life-changing benefits of play and sport. We are passionate about improving the life-chances of every child.

We support the education sector with the development of children's physical, social and emotional development, and addressing the inequalities this generation faces.

We do this by working in partnership with schools, charities and other organisations with complementary expertise.

To find out more about what we do please visit [www.youthsporttrust.org](http://www.youthsporttrust.org).