Psychological safety guide for schools

# Understanding the impacts of workplace factors on psychological safety in schools

This guide is designed to support schools in understanding and managing workplace factors to create a psychologically healthy and safe environment. This guide should be read in conjunction with the [Psychological Safety and Risk Management Procedure](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/psychological-safety-risk-management/procedure).

## Factors that help create a psychologically healthy and safe workplace

Workplace factors can have a significant impact on an employees’ mental and physical health. Addressing these factors effectively can lead to employees thriving at work by improving their experience and engagement. On the other hand, neglecting these factors may result in the opposite, causing anxiety, burnout, job strain and physical discomfort like aches and pains. The effects of poor mental and physical health in employees not only impact individuals but can also have consequences for the organisation.

Workplace factors include, but are not limited to, elements of the work environment, management practices and organisational dimensions.

The following workplace factors and how to manage them are covered in this guide:

### [Organisational Culture](#Organisational)

### [Psychological and Social Support](#Psychological)

### [Leadership and Expectations](#Clear)

### [Civility and Respect](#Civility)

### [Psychological Competencies and Requirements](#Competencies)

### [Growth and Development](#Growth)

### [Recognition and Reward](#Recognition)

### [Involvement and Influence](#Involvement)

### [Workload Management](#Workloadmgmt)

### [Engagement](#Engagement)

### [Work-life Balance](#Balance)

### [Psychological Protection](#Protection)

### [Protection of Physical Safety](#Physical)

### [Managing Exposure to Traumatic Events](#Trauma)

The following table has been designed to support schools in understanding these common workplace factors, why they’re important, changes noticed when they’re lacking, example controls to use to reach more positive outcomes, and supportive resources schools can utilise. The table provides descriptors and associated risks or hazards that can support schools in assessing the workplace factors relevant to the school and to document an action plan to mitigate the risks. Please note, not all of these suggested controls will be relevant to your school. Please consider them in the context of your school.

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## Workplace Factors and Associated Controls

*Control definition: a control refers to a system of work, or a work procedure, that is designed to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury due to an identified hazard (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013, World Health Organisation, 2014).*

| **Workplace factor** | **Why is it important?** | **What happens when it is lacking (staff indicators)?** | **Proactive controls** | **Positive Outcomes** | **Department resources and further support** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1.** [**Organisational Culture**](#Poor)  A shared set of norms, values, beliefs, meanings and expectations for members of an organisation, that define how to behave and work together. | An aligned culture within an organisation is essential for positive and productive social processes.  Building a positive work culture, including social support, enhances employee wellbeing and psychological safety. It’s important that employees feel safe and supported in their workplace so they can thrive at work. | Culture ‘sets the tone’ for an organisation. A negative culture can undermine the effectiveness of the best programs, policies and services intended to support the workplace. | * Promote and encourage a positive and fair work environment by fairly and consistently modelling and applying policies and procedures. * Organisational values and local culture are explained during induction. * Managers, principals and school leadership teams deliberately role model respectful behaviour and department values. * Employees are informed about decisions that influence their daily work. * Promote an inclusive school community and actively encourage community participation at school events. * Create a culture where people feel like they can openly talk about mental health and wellbeing in the workplace – touch base with staff regularly, formally and informally, and be responsive when issues are raised. * Policies or procedures are fair and applied consistently. * Recognise and celebrate individual and team achievements. | * All people in the workplace are held accountable for their actions. * People at work show sincere respect for others’ ideas, values and beliefs. * Difficult situations at work are addressed effectively. * Employees feel that they are part of a community at work. * Employees and management trust one another. * People feel they can speak up, offer ideas, and ask questions without fear of being punished or embarrassed (psychological safety). | * eLearning Modules (search LearnED)   + Addressing Workplace Bullying   + Equal Opportunity, Human Rights and Responsibilities, Understanding the Department Values   + Respectful Workplaces * [Principals' Page](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/SchoolUpdate/SitePages/Principals-Page.aspx) * [Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning)   + [Health, Safety and Wellbeing for School Leaders](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/health-safety-wellbeing)   + [Dare to lead](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/dare-lead)   + [Lead empower and thrive](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/lead-empower-and-thrive-emotional-intelligence) * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – including Manager Assist for principal-class, business managers and other school leaders or people managers * [Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-safety-wellbeing/policy)   **External resources**   * Healthy workplaces/schools [Achievement Program](#AchievementProgram) * Beyond Blue – [Work and mental health resources](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/work#{BDC9AD5D-78F6-4B08-9143-90831009C596}) * Be You Beyond Blue – [Staff wellbeing](https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/wellbeing/staff-wellbeing) |
| **2.** [**Psychological and Social Support**](#social)  Comprises all supportive social interactions either with colleagues or with supervisors. | Staff that feel they have psychological support have:   * greater job attachment * job commitment * job satisfaction * job involvement * positive work moods * desire to remain with the organisation. | Lack of psychological support from the organisation (including staff working in isolation) can lead to:   * increased absenteeism * withdrawal behaviours * conflict * strain * staff turnover * loss of productivity * increased costs * greater risk of accidents * incidents and injuries * negative impact on student learning outcomes. * Limited opportunities for problem sharing and feedback | * Encourage staff to access the Employee Wellbeing Support Services for addressing both personal and work-related issues. * Staff in management roles are competent in managing the impact of psychosocial hazard exposure by providing regular and ongoing training, feedback and support. * Develop and implement Psychological First Aid or Mental Health First Aid into the workplace (e.g. appoint a mental health and wellbeing champion who has undergone training in this type of first aid). This could also form part of a peer support program. * Develop and implement a local support program for those returning to work from injury in consultation with the Workers’ Compensation and Return to Work Team and the affected workers. Regularly monitor these programs to ensure no new risks emerge. * Identify potential events (e.g. change, incidents) where mental health and wellbeing may be impacted and develop a response process. * Encourage diversity of perspectives in respectful dialogue and proactively manage interpersonal conflict within teams before it escalates. * Encourage a workplace culture that supports open communication where staff are comfortable to discuss issues. * Include wellbeing as a standing agenda item for staff or team meetings. | * Accessing support services early can significantly benefit wellbeing, both at a personal level and workplace level. * The workplace offers services or benefits that address staff psychological and mental health. * Staff feel part of a community and have confidence in their colleagues to fulfill their job requirements. * The workplace has a process in place to intervene if an employee looks distressed while at work. * Staff feel supported by the workplace when they are dealing with personal or family issues. * Staff who are returning to work after a mental health condition or injury feel supported. * People in the organisation have a good understanding of the importance of staff mental health and psychological safety. | * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) * [Conflict Resolution Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/expert-supports) * [[Workplace Contact Officer Network](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-contact-officer-wco-network/overview)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-contact-officer-wco-network/overview) * [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ohs-consultation-communication/policy) * [Workers’ Compensation](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workers-compensation/resources) resources * eLearning Modules (search LearnED)   + [[Return to Work Coordination](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/wcomptraining.aspx)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/wcomptraining.aspx)   **External resources**   * [R U OK? Day](https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask) resources * Mental Health First Aid Training |
| **3.** [**Leadership & Expectations**](#Leadership)  Effective and supportive leadership is vital for a psychologically safe culture. It can be achieved through establishing role clarity, explaining how work contributes to the organisation, prevention of task conflicts, discussions around change and good workplace relationship management. | Leaders can be a key source of psychological support for their staff.  Effective leadership:   * increases staff morale, resilience and trust * decreases staff frustration and conflict * improves wellbeing at work * increases engagement and intrinsic motivation * reduces sick leave.   Clear expectations and role clarity results in staff having a sense of control and clarity in their role responsibilities. | Leaders who do not demonstrate concern for their own physical and psychological health set a negative example for their staff. This can undermine the legitimacy of any organisational program, policy and/or service intended to support staff, leading to:   * increased absenteeism and / or presenteeism * high staff turnover * loss of morale * lack of coordination and teamwork * lack of direction.   Lack of role clarity arises when work objectives, key accountabilities, scope and responsibilities of an employee’s job are unclear.  Role conflict may occur when an employee is required to perform a task within a role that conflicts with their values or expectations.  Relationship conflict may include animosity, social conflict and abusive supervisory styles. | * Ensure there is clarity around roles and expectations for all staff, by providing appropriate, clear and effective communication (e.g. using individual work plans). * Provide an induction to all new staff. * Ensure that all task related information, equipment and resources are available to staff. * Proactively check-in on staff and your own wellbeing. * Leaders actively look for and monitor early indicators of workplace stress (e.g., absenteeism, decline in performance, unusual irritability). * Where possible, leaders accommodate employees who request flexible work arrangements. * Leaders respond in a timely manner to staff concerns or conflicts. * Staff contributions are regularly asked for and incorporated by managers or principals/assistant principals. * Encourage staff participation in team-building exercises, whilst being sensitive to each employee’s comfort zone. * Keep up to date on psychological health policies and any changes in these across the department. * Conduct risk assessments with employees. * Ensure staff are aware of formal and informal confidential complaint handling processes to enable the reporting of inappropriate behaviour. * Lead, promote and support a team culture where employees assist and respect each other and provide support when required. * Leaders encourage employees to attend professional development to upskill in mental health and wellbeing (e.g. psychological first aid training). * Having clear business plans at each level of the organisation (e.g. team, school), and be able to see how they are driven by the broader organisational direction. | * In their jobs, employees know what they are expected to do. * Employees are informed about important changes at work in a timely manner. * Supervisors provide helpful feedback to employees on their expected and actual performance. * The workplace provides clear, effective communication. * The workplace implements a performance feedback system (i.e. Performance Development Plan), where employees receive regular feedback on jobs well done and any areas of improvement. * There is a system in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities (e.g. holding regular team meetings to enable employees to discuss any potential role conflict). | * Victorian [Academy](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning) of Teaching and Leadership   + [Team Coaching for CoP Leaders](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/team-coaching-cop-leaders)   + [Lead, Empower and Thrive with Emotional Intelligence](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/lead-empower-thrive-emotional-intelligence) * [Principal Mentor Program](https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/principal-mentoring-program) * [Respectful workplace resources](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/respectful-workplaces/resources) * [Proactive Wellbeing Support for principal class](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/principal-health-and-wellbeing/advice) * [Health, safety and wellbeing webinars](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/SafetyWellbeing/SitePages/Health-and-wellbeing-webinars.aspx) * [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ohs-consultation-communication/policy) |
| **4.** [**Civility & Respect**](#Civility and Respect)  Present in a work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with clients and the public.  Incivility in the workplace involves low-intensity, inappropriate behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the recipient, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect (e.g. rudeness, sarcasm, mocking, disparaging remarks and the belittling or excluding of others). Incivility can be verbal or in writing, e.g. emails. | A civil and respectful workplace is related to:   * greater job satisfaction * greater perceptions of fairness * a more positive attitude * improved morale * improved teamwork * greater interest in personal development * engagement in problem resolution * enhanced supervisor-staff relationships * enhanced collegial relationships * a reduction in sick leave and turnover. | When civility and respect is lacking in the workplace, and/or incivility is present, employees can experience:   * emotional exhaustion * greater conflicts * job withdrawals * bullying, which is associated with psychological complaints, depression, burnout, anxiety, aggression, psychosomatic complaints and musculoskeletal health complaints.   Tolerance of incivility in the workplace may increase the risk of workplace harassment and bullying. | * Managers, principals and school leadership teams set the tone of the workplace by modelling and promoting the [department values](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Public-Sector-Values.aspx). * Promote the benefits of an inclusive workplace. * Promote communication within and between teams. * Provide training on workplace bullying and conflict to all staff. * Encourage diversity of perspectives in respectful dialogue and proactively manage interpersonal conflict within teams before it escalates. * Employees are made aware of professional standards and the expected behaviours and their importance in contributing to a positive workplace culture. * Examine workplace conditions conducive to encouraging civility and respect as part of training or regular meetings. Group discussion about these conditions may be useful at team meetings or staff meetings. * Establish procedures and action models to deal with violence, abuse and harassment at work, and make the procedures and models known to all managers and employees. * Identify specific behaviour and initiate a frank conversation with an employee or group of employees that will involve provision of clear and supportive feedback. * Clarify team rules of engagement or develop a team charter where relevant. * Managers to provide timely feedback and comments about workplace experiences and situations that link with or reflect organisational values and/or the code of conduct. * Each issue is treated individually and addressed in a fair manner. | * People treat each other with respect and consideration in the workplace. * The workplace effectively handles conflicts between stakeholders (employees, contractors, public, etc.). * Employees from all backgrounds are treated fairly in the workplace. * The workplace has effective ways of addressing inappropriate behaviour by contractors, clients or public (e.g. parents). * People are more engaged and enjoy being at work. | * [Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance — Teaching Service Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints-misconduct-and-unsatisfactory-performance/policy-and-guidelines/part-1-general-1) * [Workplace Bullying Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-bullying/policy) * [Conflict Resolution Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/expert-supports) (team intervention including mediation, facilitated meetings) * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services – Conflict Assist (coaching and support for individuals experiencing difficult interactions)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) * [Workplace Contact Officer Network](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-contact-officer-wco-network/overview) * eLearning Modules (search LearnED):   + Addressing Workplace Bullying   + Equal Opportunity   + Human Rights and Responsibilities   + Respectful Workplaces * [[Respectful Workplaces](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/respectful-workplaces/overview)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/respectful-workplaces/resources) * [Inclusive workplaces](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/inclusive-workplaces/policy-and-guidelines/overview) * [[Workforce Diversity and Inclusion](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx" \l "/app/content/3114/support_and_service_(corp)%252Fhuman_resources%252Fdiversity_and_inclusion%252Fworkforce_diversity_and_inclusion)](https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/diversity-and-inclusion-hr) * [Respect for school staff policy](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=18) * Victorian [Academy](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning) of Teaching and Leadership   + Preventing and managing conflict   **External resources**   * Positive Bystander Training * VicHealth – [‘Stepping in’ Bystander action toolkit](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Bystander-action-toolkit-resource.pdf) |
| **5.** [**Psychological Competencies & Requirements**](#Psychological Competencies)  Present when psychological demands of any given job are documented and assessed in conjunction with the physical demands of the job**.** | A good job fit is associated with:   * fewer health complaints * lower levels of depression * greater self-esteem * a more positive self-identity * enhanced performance * job satisfaction * employee retention. | Employees can experience job strain expressed as emotional distress and provocation, ruminating thoughts, defensiveness, low energy and lower mood levels.  Poor job fit is linked to lack of enjoyment and engagement, poor productivity, conflict, and greater voluntary turnover. | * Provide accessible coaching and supports as required, recognising the potential for complexities of mental health and wellbeing, the unique needs of individuals and the skills needed. * Measure and address the level of job control, physical and psychological job demands, and autonomy of employees. * Support employees to attend professional development to train in skills they require to do their job. * Managers, principals and school leadership teams attend training to build their own professional skills. * Management provides opportunities for staff to feedback regarding their training opportunities and performance. | * The workplace considers existing work systems and allows for work redesign. * The workplace assesses staff demand and job control issues such as physical and psychological job demands. * The workplace assesses the level of job control and autonomy afforded to its employees. * The workplace monitors the management system to address behaviours that impact employees and the workplace. * The workplace values staff input particularly during periods of change and the execution of work. * The workplace regularly reviews its management accountability system that deals with performance issues and how employees can report issues. * The workplace emphasises recruitment, training, and promotion practices that aim for the highest level of interpersonal competencies at work. | * [Principals' Page](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/SchoolUpdate/SitePages/Principals-Page.aspx) * Victorian [Academy](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning) of Teaching and Leadership * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Manager Assist for principal-class, business managers and other school leaders * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Career Assist for all eligible staff. * [Principal Mentor Program](https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/principal-mentoring-program) |
| **6.** [**Growth & Development**](#growth and Development)  Present in a work environment where staff receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional, and job skills. | Staff professional and personal growth and development increase’s goal commitment, organisational commitment and job satisfaction.  Skill acquisition and career development enhance staff wellbeing. | Staff who are not challenged by their work and not supported to develop their skills will grow bored within their role, which may negatively impact both their wellbeing and performance. | * Managers and principals/assistant principals listen carefully to staff suggestions regarding career development and how their goals can be prioritised and included in Performance Development Plans. * Provide adequate mentoring and coaching to assist employees in developing their careers. * Provide support for staff in new positions to develop their communication and supervisory capabilities and help them adjust to their new roles. | * Staff receive feedback at work that helps them grow and develop. * Supervisors are open to employee ideas for taking on new opportunities and challenges. * Staff have opportunities to advance within their organisation. * The organisation values staff ongoing growth and development. * Staff have the opportunity to develop their “people skills” at work. * Staff have more confidence. | * Performance Development Plan * [Performance and Development for Principal Class Employees](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/performance-and-development-principal-class/overview) * [Performance and Development for Education Support Class Employees](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/performance-development-education-support/overview) * [Performance and Development for Teacher Class Employees](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/performance-and-development-teacher-class-employees/overview) * [Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership](https://www.bastow.vic.edu.au/professional-learning?utm_source=email+marketing+Mailigen&utm_campaign=School+Update&utm_medium=email) * [Principals' Page](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/SchoolUpdate/SitePages/Principals-Page.aspx) * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Career Assist |
| **7.** [**Recognition & Reward**](#Recognition and Reward)  Present in a work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of staff efforts. | Recognition and reward:   * motivates staff * fuels the desire to excel * builds self-esteem * enhances team success * increases engagement * increases employee retention. | Lack of recognition and reward undermines employee confidence in their work and trust in the organisation.  Staff may feel demoralised and resign, leading to higher turnover of staff. | * Recognition can take many forms including, words of appreciation, public acknowledgement and development opportunities. Ask individual staff and teams how they would prefer to receive recognition, as preferences vary. * Make it known to employees that the department is committed to promoting good practice. * Openly praise good work by employees and teams in meetings or newsletters. * Regularly celebrate achievements by your team or school (e.g. have a standing agenda item for this in your team or staff meetings). * Encourage staff to celebrate the achievements of their peers. * Systematically inform workers of the positive outcomes/consequences of their work. | * Manager recognises staff skills. * Manager provides feedback that is prompt, specific, practical and fair. * Recognition and reward systems are meaningful to the workers. * The workplace celebrates shared accomplishments. * The workplace values staff commitment and passion for their work. * Staff are praised for showing initiative. | * Performance Development Plan * [Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning) * [Embedding a culture of recognition - toolkit](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwixh5Gep_CFAxX-d2wGHSx9AqcQFnoECBsQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.education.vic.gov.au%2Fhrweb%2FDocuments%2FRecognitionToolkit.docx&usg=AOvVaw27XUQ_mpaNguSUhBquBx6R&opi=89978449) |
| **8.** [**Involvement & Influence**](#influence)  Present in a work environment where staff are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.  This includes how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation. Change can be related to alterations in individual work conditions (e.g. change of role or the introduction of new technology), or can be related to work-team or organisational level changes (such as mergers or restructures). | Staff are more likely to be engaged, to have higher morale, and to take pride in their organisation when they feel their work is meaningful. | Staff tend to feel a sense of indifference or helplessness.  Job alienation is associated with cynicism, distress, greater turnover, and burnout. | * Provide regular opportunities for informing and consulting with staff about the purpose and goal of pending changes in business operation and work organisation. * Identify any key issues of changes and provide information to staff. * Use feedback from staff (e.g. school staff survey, or consultative committee) to correct procedures and adjust new initiatives if necessary in the workplace. * Put into place feedback systems within your team or school, allowing for staff input and information sharing between levels (e.g. adding a standing item to team or staff meetings, updates posted on noticeboard). Methods of communication are discussed and agreed with staff. | * Staff are able to talk to their immediate managers about their work and how it is done. * Managers are empathetic to any frustration and help with challenges that staff face. * Staff have some control over how they organise their work. * Employee opinions and suggestions are considered with respect to work. * Staff are informed of important change that can impact how their work is done. * The workplace encourages input from all staff on important decisions related to the changes in their work. * The workplace consults with staff about proposed changes that may affect their health and safety. * The workplace communicates with staff and seeks their participation in the change process. * The workplace establishes a communication system (e.g. meetings or emails) that keeps staff regularly updated on developments. * Developments are communicated in a timely manner to prevent the spread of misinformation and therefore enhance sense of job security. | * [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy and Procedure](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-ohs-consultation-and-communication/policy) * [Victorian Academy of teaching and Leadership courses](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning)   + Teaching Excellence Program * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Manager Assist for principal-class, business managers and other school leaders * [Workplace Contact Officer Network](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-contact-officer-wco-network/overview) * [Principal Support Unit](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx#/app/content/3037/support_and_service_(schools)%252Fhuman_resources%252Fprincipal_health_and_wellbeing%252Fthe_principal_support_unit) * [Proactive Wellbeing Support for principal-class](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/principal-health-and-wellbeing/advice) |
| **9. Workload Management**  Present in a work environment where assigned tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.  While staff may need challenging tasks to maintain their interest and motivation to develop new skills, it is important that demands do not exceed their ability to cope. Workload and work demands include:   * time pressure * mental demands * physical demands * emotional demands | There is a unique relationship between job demands, intellectual demands and job satisfaction.  Job demands reduce job satisfaction, while intellectual demands or decision-making latitude, increase job satisfaction.  Even when there are high demands, if staff also have high decision-making ability, they will be able to thrive. | Increased demands, without opportunities for control, result in physical, psychological and emotional fatigue, and increase stress and strain.  Excessive workload is one of the main reasons staff feel negatively towards their jobs and employers. | * Review workload expectations. * Plan appropriate deadlines to achieve better distribution of the workload in a reasonable period of time (i.e. provide staff adequate time to complete their tasks). * Encourage regular discussions about workload between principals/leaders and staff. * Reprioritise tasks and negotiate timelines where possible. * Change work process to facilitate the completion of work requirements, for example, by reviewing the distribution of tasks or using innovative approaches and technology. * Match skills to tasks and bridge skill gaps. * Plan, review and adjust present and future workload levels to increase performance and maintain a healthy workforce. * Provide training, mentoring and ongoing feedback on performance. * Provide clear direction, time and support tools for staff to complete the tasks. * Provide sufficient relief staff to cover for staff who are on annual leave or sick leave. * Provide sufficient information to enable staff to perform tasks competently, including support and resources for decision-making. * Ensure emotional demands of a role are captured in a position description and that applicants are informed at the pre-selection stage (e.g. at interview) of the emotionally demanding nature of the role. * Conduct risk assessments with employees. | * Staff have the equipment and resources needed to do their jobs well. * Staff can talk to their supervisors about the amount of work they have to do. * Staff have an appropriate level of control over prioritising tasks and responsibilities when facing multiple demands. * Staff have increased job engagement and motivation. * Staff have more role clarity and autonomy. * Staff can maintain their skills over time. | * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Employee Assist for individual staff and Manager Assist for principal-class, business managers and other school leaders * [Proactive Wellbeing Support for principal-class](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/principal-health-and-wellbeing/advice) * [Workforce management](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/default.aspx) * [Workforce planning](https://www.academy.vic.gov.au/professional-learning/workforce-planning) |
| **10.** [**Engagement**](#Engagement)  **P**resent in a work environment where staff enjoy and feel connected to their work and where they feel motivated to do their job well. Employee engagement can be physical, emotional and/or cognitive. | Engagement leads to:   * greater employee satisfaction * enhanced task performance * greater morale * greater motivation * increased organisational citizenship behaviours (behaviours of personal choice that benefit the organisation). | Organisations that do not promote engagement can see:   * negative impact in productivity * Poor physical and/or mental health * greater employee turnover * employees withholding effort * counterproductive behaviour * withdrawal behaviours. | * Provide employees with feedback on their good work to help them develop a sense of pride and self-esteem. * When informing workers regularly about their work outcomes, convey a sense of collegiality and teamwork. * Make proposals and contributions known to all employees, as well as the results of the implementation of such proposals. | * Staff surveys indicate job satisfaction and enjoyment. * Employees describe work as an important part of who they are. * Employees are committed to the success of the organisation. | * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) – Employee Assist and Career Assist * [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ohs-consultation-communication/policy) |
| **11.** [**Work-life Balance**](#Work-life Balance)  Present in a work environment where there is acceptance of the need for a sense of harmony between the demands of personal life, family, and work. | Work-life balance:   * allows employees to feel valued and happier both at work and at home * reduces stress and the possibility that home issues will spill over into work, or vice versa * allows staff to maintain their concentration, confidence, responsibility, and sense of control at work * results in enhanced employee wellbeing, commitment, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviours, job performance and reduced stress. | Imbalanced work-life can lead to:   * feeling tired and/or disrupted sleep * irritability * reduced self-care * high job stress resulting in dissatisfaction with work and being absent either physically or mentally * negative effects on personal relationships and home life * exacerbation of pre-existing mental health conditions * development of stress-related illness * overall decreased health.   The impact on the organisation can include increased costs due to workers compensation claims, absenteeism, disability and turnover. | * Where possible, take into account the family responsibilities of individual workers when organising meetings and other events. * Make staff aware of the flexible work arrangements via newsletters, team meetings, induction, etc. * Management leads by example, taking their entitled work breaks and limiting correspondence to staff outside of work hours etc. * Encourage staff to speak with their manager when workload becomes unmanageable. * Where possible, consider if staff are required to extensively travel as part of their role and how this may affect their wellbeing. | * Employees feel comfortable taking their entitled provisions (e.g. lunch break, personal leave, etc.). * Employees can reasonably meet the demands of personal life and work. * Staff are communicated and consulted with when designing or changing rosters. * Enough relief staff are present to cover for employees who are on planned and unplanned leave. | * [Flexible work resources](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/flexible-work/overview) * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) * [Achievement Program](#AchievementProgram) * [Proactive Wellbeing Support for principal-class](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/principal-health-and-wellbeing/advice) |
| **12.** [**Psychological Protection**](#Psychological Protection)  Present in a work environment where employees’ psychological safety is ensured. Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when employees feel able to ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job, or their career. | Employees who are psychologically protected demonstrate:   * greater job satisfaction * enhanced team learning behaviour * improved performance * increased participation * fewer grievances, conflicts and liability risks. | Employees who are not psychologically safe experience:   * demoralisation * sense of threat * disengagement * strain.   Employees may perceive workplace conditions as ambiguous and unpredictable.  Employees may undermine public confidence in the organisation. | * Ensure appropriate and timely post critical incident support such as referrals to Employee Wellbeing Support Services for affected staff. * Ensure there are appropriate policies, procedures and risk assessments in place to deal effectively with hazards/situations that can threaten or harm employees (e.g. sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, violence, aggression, stigma, family violence etc.), * Ensure employees are aware of where and how to access these policies and procedures. * Encourage diversity of perspectives and for staff to speak up when they can see potential errors or risks. * Encourage an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities rather than failures. | * Managers and principals/assistant principals encourage staff to express their views and opinions. Diverse perspectives are encouraged. * Staff are encouraged and feel safe to raise issues affecting staff’s psychological health and safety. * The workplace highlights policies to prevent harm to employees from harassment, bullying, discrimination, violence and stigma. * Employees would describe the workplace as being psychologically healthy. * The workplace deals effectively with situations that can threaten or harm employees (e.g. harassment, bullying, discrimination, violence, aggression, stigma, domestic violence etc.). | * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) * [Workplace Bullying Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-bullying/policy) * Sexual Harassment Policy * [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ohs-consultation-communication/policy) * eLearning Modules (search in LearnED)   + Family violence module for managers and principals   + School Community Safety Order Scheme * [Workplace Contact Officer](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/WCONet.aspx) Network * [Family Violence: Information for employees](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/famviolence.aspx) * [Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance — Teaching Service Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints-misconduct-and-unsatisfactory-performance/policy-and-guidelines/part-1-general-1) |
| **13.** [**Protection of Physical Safety**](#Protection of Physical Safety)  Present when an employee’s psychological, as well as physical safety, is protected from hazards and risks related to the employee’s physical environment. | * Employees feel more safe and secure. * Leads to lower rates of psychological distress and mental health issues. * Safety is enhanced through minimising hazards, training, responding to incidents, and the opportunity to have meaningful input into the workplace policies and practices. | * Staff feel verbally, physically or sexually assaulted. * Employees could be injured or develop illnesses. * Employees feel less secure and less engaged. | * Preventative controls including risk assessments and safety plans are in place and communicated across the organisation. * Provide a workplace culture that supports open communication so all staff feel comfortable to discuss and report issues/hazards. * Conduct regular OHS inspections of your workplace to ensure security measures are in place * Respond to OHS reports in a timely manner and ensure that responses/outcomes are communicated to staff. * Encourage the reporting of all incidents through eduSafe Plus by providing training in how to use eduSafe Plus and allocating time for staff to enter reports. * Ensure employees are trained in responses that prioritise their health and safety following a traumatic incident. | * The workplace cares about how the physical work environment impacts psychological health. * Employees feel safe (not concerned or anxious) about the physical work environment. * The way work is scheduled allows for reasonable rest periods. * All health and safety concerns are taken seriously. * Employees asked to do work that they believe is unsafe have no hesitation in refusing to do it. * The employer assesses the psychological demands of the jobs and the job environment to determine if it presents a hazard to employee’s health and safety. * The physical environment is as comfortable as possible and designed specifically for the tasks being undertaken (e.g. make changes to the workstation, tools or equipment, or the way a job is done where needed). | * eLearning Modules (search in LearnED):   + Health, Safety and Wellbeing for Employees   + Manual Handling and Ergonomics   + Slips Trips and Falls Prevention   + Sexual Harassment   + Addressing Workplace Bullying * [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management in Schools overview](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/ohsmgtsystem.aspx) * [OHS Risk Planning and Management Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ohs-risk-management-planning/policy) * [Employee Wellbeing Support Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/employee-wellbeing-support-services) * [Department Workplace Inspection Procedure](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/hazardmgt.aspx) * [Department OHS Issue Resolution Flowchart](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/ohscomms.aspx) * OHS Advisory Service: 1300 074 715 * [Medical Advisory Service](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/medical-advisory-service/overview) * ISOC (emergency incidents) 1800 126 126 * [eduSafe Plus](https://services.educationapps.vic.gov.au/edusafeplus) for reporting * [School Community Safety Orders](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-community-safety-orders/policy) * [Emergency OHS Contacts](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-safety-wellbeing-management/guidance/useful-contacts) * [Work-related violence in schools policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/policy) * [Sexual Harassment policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/sexual-harassment/overview) |
| 14. Managing Exposure to Traumatic Events  Traumatic events in the workplace are events of a severe nature that may immediately or over time affect staff emotionally and/or physically. Trauma can occur from a once off occurrence of an event, or as a result of multiple events (cumulative trauma). Events may be traumatic for some staff and not others. These events could include:   * workplace accidents * being verbally or physically assaulted (work-related violence) * acts of violence (e.g. robbery) * death of a member of the school community * ongoing bullying * natural disasters * events that may be triggering from past experiences * repeated exposure to adverse details in reports | The exposure to traumatic events can be quite challenging and vast as it can be the result of exposure to events both directly and indirectly. It is important to have resources available to support staff and respond effectively, to mitigate further harm.  If staff are exposed to trauma in a work environment with poor support and response processes, staff can experience high levels of stress, which can affect performance and wellbeing.  A person is more likely to experience an event as trauma when the person considers the incident to be:   * unexpected * something they were unprepared for * unpreventable * uncontrollable * the result of intentional cruelty   A person can also be impacted indirectly or vicariously where they are exposed to stories or experiences of others. There can be a cumulative impact of empathetic engagement with other peoples’ trauma. | * Staff withdrawal. * High stress levels in staff. * Excessive and/or unusual patterns of sick leave. * Behaviours that are inconsistent with their usual characteristics (an outgoing staff member who often contributes, suddenly becoming more withdrawn and reserved). * Staff stress/anxiety may manifest in physical symptoms, such as fatigue, lightheadedness, nausea, panic attacks. | * Proactively checking in on staff wellbeing, through regular supportive conversations and discussion at staff meetings. * Identify potential events where mental health and wellbeing may be impacted and develop a response process. * Include wellbeing as a standing agenda item for staff or team meetings. * Provide accessible coaching and supports as required, recognising the potential for complexities of mental health and wellbeing, the unique needs of individuals and the skills needed. * Accessibility and awareness of crisis support contact and resources. * Redesign work wherever possible, particularly in situations where work roles involve repeated exposures to traumatic experiences. * Monitor where repeated high-risk exposure to distressing experiences is a necessary part of the role and implement additional risk controls which could include reducing workload, increasing breaks, and recovery time, implement systematic health screening to identify trauma stress responses, and implement annual health assessments. * Rotating roles or activities to have adequate breaks from roles which are likely to involve exposure to distressing events. * Working in pairs or teams of teachers where appropriate. * Appropriate levels of supervision. * Appropriate and timely post-critical incident support such as referrals to Employee Wellbeing Support Services for affected staff. | * Staff feel supported by the workplace when they are dealing with personal or family issues. * People in the organisation have a good understanding of the importance of employee mental health. * Difficult situations at work are addressed effectively. * Staff who feel supported are likely to have better job performance * Staff feel that they are part of a community at work. * If staff feel supported and cared for, they are more likely to feel psychologically safe. | * [Managing Trauma Guide (PDF)](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/SchoolsSecure/Shared%20Documents/Managing%20Trauma.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=wXZmC) * [Managing Trauma online modules (LearnED)](https://edupayelm.eduweb.vic.gov.au/psc/ELMPPRD1/EMPLOYEE/PSFT_LM/c/LM_OD_EMPLOYEE_FL.LM_FND_LRN_FL.GBL?Page=LM_FND_LRN_RSLT_FL&Action=U&KWRD=trauma&PortalActualURL=https%3a%2f%2fedupayelm.eduweb.vic.gov.au%2fpsc%2fELMPPRD1%2fEMPLOYEE%2fPSFT_LM%2fc%2fLM_OD_EMPLOYEE_FL.LM_FND_LRN_FL.GBL%3fPage%3dLM_FND_LRN_RSLT_FL%26Action%3dU%26KWRD%3dtrauma&PortalRegistryName=EMPLOYEE&PortalServletURI=https%3a%2f%2fedupayelm.eduweb.vic.gov.au%2fpsp%2fELMPPRD1%2f&PortalURI=https%3a%2f%2fedupayelm.eduweb.vic.gov.au%2fpsc%2fELMPPRD1%2f&PortalHostNode=ELM&NoCrumbs=yes&PortalKeyStruct=yes). * [Principal Health and Wellbeing Initiatives:](#PrinHWBInitiatives) (Proactive Wellbeing Supervision, Early Intervention Program, Principal Health Check) * [Department workshop: Building resilience - thriving through challenge and change](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/school.aspx#/app/news/detail/2424/) * Complex matters support team * [Protective Intervention Training](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/guidance/professional-development-0) * [Workplace Bullying Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-bullying/policy) * Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) can be contacted for trauma reporting support and early compliance checks |
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## Related references:

*WorkSafe Victoria, 2021.* [*Preventing and managing work-related stress*](https://content-v2.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/ISBN-Preventing-and-managing-work-related-stress-guide-2021-02.pdf)*: A guide for employers.*

*Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013.* [*Psychological health and safety in the workplace*](https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/national-standard/) *- Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation.*

*World Health Organisation, 2014. Mental Health: a state of well-being.* [*www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\_health/en/*](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/)