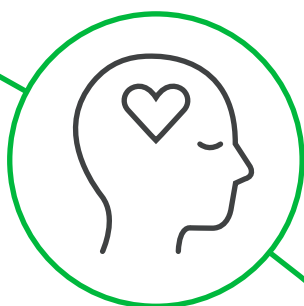


# Ofsted inspections & wellbeing

## A guide for School Business Managers

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**In this guide for School Business Managers and leaders we'll share practical information on how Ofsted inspectors consider the wellbeing and workload of staff, what questions they ask when making their decisions to assess staff wellbeing and what schools need to show they are doing to look after the wellbeing of staff at all levels.**

**We will also dispel common Ofsted myths and offer some stress busting support. We don't want to add to your to-do list. But we do want to give you a new way of thinking about and managing your stress during these tense periods. We will provide you with evidence-based strategies to help you shake off feelings of stress after the inspectors have left.**

## Wellbeing and workload – what are inspectors looking for?

Below we explain how inspectors consider the wellbeing and workload of leaders and staff on inspection as part of the key judgements:

- **On inspection workload and wellbeing will factor into discussions with staff at all levels**
- **Inspectors will often ask staff about workload and wellbeing directly**
- **Inspectors will seek staff views as part of their evidence gathering activities**
- **When speaking to leaders or teachers during a ‘deep dive’ inspectors will usually ask them about their workload and wellbeing**

## Leadership and management

As part of their judgement on leadership and management, inspectors will focus on these questions:

- **do they take into account the workload and wellbeing of their staff?**
- **do they prioritise and pick the actions that will have the most impact and do them well? (Schools are not expected to do everything at once!)**
- **are they realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff workload?**
- **do they engage with their staff and are they aware / take into account the main pressures on them?**

For leadership and management to be judged as outstanding, staff must consistently report high levels of support for wellbeing issues. Workload and wellbeing is also a consideration for a school to be judged as good.

*Can you take a moment to answer the above questions? Are you able to demonstrate each of them as a manager or leader?*

## Ofsted scenario:

A new SBM arrives at a school and realises the whole school administrative systems needs an overhaul as well as the financial strategy. Although they are both necessary, implementing them both at once will mean staff will be stretched too thinly and they will not be implemented as well as they need to be. An inspector would identify the impact of this on staff workload as well as the fact that things might not be improving as well as they could.

### **Leaders and senior leaders**

Inspectors will speak to those responsible for governance about how they support the wellbeing of leaders and consider their workload. Inspectors will also speak to leaders and explore how they are supported by governors. It can help to prepare yourself for this discussion by thinking about some of the ways you are supported as a manager or leader?

### **Staff questionnaire**

The main way Ofsted gather the views of staff is through an anonymous questionnaire. As part of this questionnaire staff are asked:

- **how they feel about their workload**
- **the support they are given**
- **about their wellbeing**

And while Ofsted appreciate staff may have a high workload, they are interested in how that workload is managed by leaders in their school. Inspectors use the responses from this questionnaires when coming to their judgements.

## Ofsted Myth-busting

Some Ofsted stress can be based on assumptions which may have a negative effect on your wellbeing. They may be based on previous experiences, or things you've been told, so it makes sense that you hold on to them. But it's worth re-examining the assumptions that stress you out from time to time.

On the next page we dispel some common Ofsted myths.

*Which of these statements ring true with you? Can you share any more truths?*

## Ofsted myths v truths

Myth	Truth
<i>Ofsted Inspections are worse for teachers. As I'm not a teacher, I have no right to feel stressed.</i>	Ofsted inspections affect the whole school community. It is perfectly natural to feel stressed during this time. You have as much right to feel this way as any other member of staff.
<i>Short notice inspections are designed to catch the school out.</i>	Short-notice inspections are designed to gauge a picture of how your school operates day-to-day. Take a step back, breathe and focus on you and your school's strengths. You've got this!
<i>If I find out Ofsted are visiting, I must stay up all night to prepare.</i>	It's really important to rest and reserve your energy for the next day, this will make you more effective in your role and a better support to your colleagues.
<i>If a colleague shows challenging behaviour it's because they cannot cope.</i>	The stress of Ofsted affects all staff in different ways. And that's okay. Try to understand things from their perspective and if they are more prickly than usual, remind yourself that we all have difficult days. Can you try being curious, to find out what they're experiencing?
<i>If I am struggling I can't ask for help. Others need it more than me. I should be able to handle the pressure.</i>	How you feel is valid too. Don't suffer alone. Why not try reaching out to a trusted colleague, friend or family member in the first instance? Sometimes just talking it over can be extremely helpful.

## Dealing with stress

Have you ever carried feelings of stress from work into your evening at home? If you have, it's because stress is caused by the release of stress hormones in your body. Those hormones don't automatically leave your body when the source of stress has gone. For example, you might get a racing heart when an Ofsted inspector enters your office and it could take a while for it to settle down after they have left.

### Signs of stress or burnout: NHS Every Mind Matters

Stress and burnout can sneak up on you. Keep an eye open for these signs in yourself and your colleagues:

- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Having racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating**
- **Being irritable**
- **Feeling constantly worried, anxious or scared**
- **Feeling a lack of self-confidence**
- **Having trouble sleeping or feel tired all the time**
- **Avoiding things or people you are having problems with**
- **Eating more or less than usual**
- **Drinking or smoking more than usual**

In order to shake off the feelings of stress, you need to take action to tell your body 'you are safe'. Take a look at these **7-evidence based strategies** below to shake off stress before, during and after an inspection. (Nagoski & Nagoski 2019).



### Move

Run, swim, dance  
(Whatever you enjoy!)



### Sleep

A full, uninterrupted night's sleep can be a great tool in the fight against stress



### Social interaction

Talking to colleagues can help boost our mood and reassure us that the world is a safe place to live



### Cry

Crying after a stressful event is proven to help by releasing feel good hormones



### Connect with others

Speaking to someone with whom you share a special connection can make a huge difference to how you feel



### Get creative

Engaging in a creative activity leads to more energy, excitement and enthusiasm



### Breathe

Deep, slow breaths can help regulate the stress response

## Sources

- [1. Inspections and teacher workload - Ofsted](#)
- [2. 15 tips for surviving Ofsted](#)
- [3. Burnout: solve your stress cycle by Emily and Amelia Nagoski \(2020\)](#)
- [4. NEU Appraisal and classroom observation](#)

### Get Support:

**If you are struggling to prepare for an ofsted inspection or feel you're heading for burnout, don't suffer alone. Speak to colleagues, friends, family or call Education Support's free, confidential helpline, staffed by qualified counsellors and available 24/7 on 08000 562 561.**





# Further ways to support staff

**Education Mutual's staff absence protection support's member school and trust staff with a wide range of health and wellbeing services as part of all memberships providing support through Stress coaching, Face to Face counselling, 24/7 GP support, nurse support services as well as school wide mental health first aid training and Occupational health services.**

**Get in touch today to find out more at [educationmutual.co.uk](https://www.educationmutual.co.uk)**





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