Group Employee Wellbeing Policy

Policy Owners: Director of Health and Safety / Group Head of People Operations
Revised: March 2022

Rationale
At ISP the concepts of wellbeing and looking after ourselves and one another are enshrined in our Principles:

> We *treat everyone with care and respect*;
> We *look after one another*, embrace similarities and differences and *promote the wellbeing of each other*.

The health, safety and wellbeing of all our employees and students is our top priority. This includes focusing on our mental health and overall wellbeing with equal importance as our physical wellness and safety, and taking responsibility for looking after ourselves and those around us.

Integral to our success in this, in terms of both identifying and supporting wellbeing in our colleagues, and identifying and sharing our own needs with leaders and managers, is health literacy. In other words, improving our knowledge, skills and understanding to access, appraise and apply health information so that we make and take everyday decisions to look after our health and wellbeing, thereby maintaining and improving our quality of life[1]. With greater health literacy, we are better able to advocate for ourselves and for each other.

Key definitions
'Physical Health' is one dimension of overall wellbeing. Essentially it covers the state of our physical bodies and how well they are operating. Good physical health means we are free from illness or injury and there is a lot we can do to look after ourselves and support our physical health including eating healthily, taking sufficient exercise and getting enough sleep.

Wellness and wellbeing, however, go beyond our physical health.

Gallup defines *'wellness'* as a healthy lifestyle beyond acute illness[2]. It's a state of physical health where we have the energy to do what we want to in life, without chronic suffering. We can support our wellness through healthy habits around eating, sleep and physical exercise.

'Wellbeing' is more of a holistic concept that covers the dimensions of a well-lived life[3]. Gallup's global research has found five elements of wellbeing that contribute to a thriving life. Physical health and wellness is an important part of wellbeing, but it is only one part – as demonstrated by the following diagram.

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[1] https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/190655/e96854.pdf
2 https://www.gallup.com/workplace/340202/wellness-wellbeing-difference.aspx
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The concept of wellbeing has become ubiquitous in educational policy and research over recent years with a vast body of data showing that higher levels of wellbeing are associated with improved learning and educational attainment, greater productivity at work, positive relationships, and better health and life expectancy[4].

Cognitive wellbeing is associated with achievement and success. It includes how information is processed and judgements are made. It is also informed by motivation and persistence to achieve. Cognitive well-being is important for attaining knowledge and experiencing positive learning[5].

'Mental Health' is defined by the World Health Organisation as a state of wellbeing in which we:
- realise our own abilities
- can cope with the normal stresses of life
- can work productively and fruitfully, and;
- are able to make a contribution to our community[6].

Mental health includes how we think, feel and behave – within this, the concept of being able to *cope with the normal stresses of life* is important. We call this 'resilience'.

'Resilience' has been defined as the *mental reservoir of strength that people are able to call on in times of need to help carry them through*. It is what gives people the psychological strength to handle stress and hardship. Resilient people are better able to deal with adversity and even rebuild their lives after significant challenge[7].

Being resilient does not mean that we do not experience difficulties or that we are immune to challenges. Instead, it is about recognising that all of us will experience setbacks and times when life is painful. Acknowledging and understanding what is happening can help us develop the resilience to manage these challenges and setbacks effectively.

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[4] https://hqlo.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12955-020-01423-y

[5] https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/wellbeing-framework-for-schools/cognitive-wellbeing-strategies

6 https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response

7 https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-resilience-2795059

By educating colleagues, students and their families about mental health, the stigma can be reduced; and through promoting positive mental health, students can develop skills and strategies to cope with everyday challenges throughout their school years and beyond into adulthood.

Challenges and setbacks can be personal or they can be something we experience collectively. The global COVID-19 pandemic is an extraordinary event that has caused collective stress and adversity as it has affected all of us in different ways.

Supporting Wellbeing at ISP

Our core commitments

1. **Creating a culture of wellbeing:** ISP commits to promoting and nurturing wellbeing by creating a culture that supports the holistic integration of physical and mental health and wellbeing throughout our Group and across each of our school communities.

2. **Supporting through holistic approaches:** We recognise that health issues are not isolated personal problems but are interconnected and systemic and that they are best supported through holistic approaches rather than a patchwork of initiatives and policies.

3. **Working in partnership:** We will work in partnership with our regions and schools to support them in adapting and embedding this framework to ensure a positive, caring approach to physical and mental health and wellbeing throughout our Group. This means encouraging everyone to exercise voice, choice and ownership of their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, listening to one another and taking on board people's views and feedback. Colleagues, students, parents and carers should all be involved in shaping our approach and influencing our decisions.

4. **Responsibility, accountability and action**: There will be responsibilities and actions at Group, regional, school and individual level, starting with the adoption of this policy and some of the simple steps it advocates. Beyond this, the next step for us is the creation of a Wellbeing Steering Committee and a Wellbeing Community Network to harness expertise within and beyond our Group and enable us to:

   - Provide information and raise awareness of mental health issues and establish, share and embed practices and actions that support mental wellbeing
   - Equip our colleagues and our students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to support their own mental and physical health and build individual resilience and empower them to advocate for their own needs
   - Encourage physical activity across ISP
   - Support healthy and balanced eating

Mental wellbeing is relevant to all, which means everyone can play a part in improving wellbeing throughout ISP. By supporting students and colleagues to effectively manage mental health issues, ISP can improve the general wellbeing of all of us, reduce absenteeism and presenteeism, lower employee turnover and decrease the barriers to learning

Promoting physical activity and encouraging healthy eating can help manage stress and weight loss, while also improving concentration and alertness. Those who exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet report less illness and are more likely to recover quickly following illness.
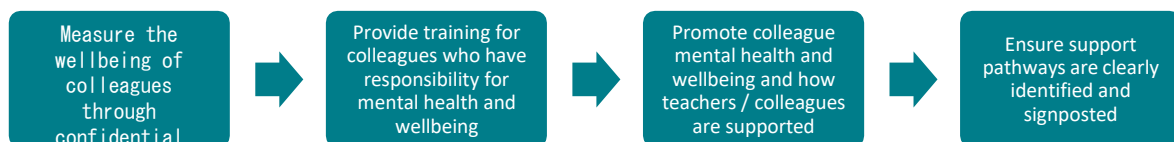
Supporting our colleagues
Workplace wellbeing

Workplace wellbeing relates to all aspects of working life. This includes the quality and safety of our physical environment, how we feel about the work that we do, how our work is organised and the environment and culture where we work. Within these constructs, there are things that each of us individually can influence and areas where we rely on our colleagues and leaders, as highlighted by Jason Kaplan's useful model below.

The Anna Freud Centre has built a five-step framework to support schools in the creation of a school-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing and this includes guidance and advice on supporting employee wellbeing.

We have summarised the advice for employee wellbeing below and you can read more about the framework and download useful resources here. Going forward, we will use our annual survey to help us measure wellbeing.

Measure the wellbeing of colleagues through confidential	Provide training for colleagues who have responsibility for mental health and wellbeing	Promote colleague mental health and wellbeing and how teachers / colleagues are supported	Ensure support pathways are clearly identified and signposted

Supporting leadership and management
Our leaders and managers are responsible for the safety, safeguarding and wellbeing of all employees and all students within their remit. They model and foster a good atmosphere. A good atmosphere is safe, open, caring, collaborative and inclusive. Everyone at ISP is a learner and a good

atmosphere nurtures the wellbeing of its learning community, supporting each member to understand and action our values and the values of our schools through positive relationships.

Integral to a good atmosphere is a culture where colleagues care, connect and look out for one another so everyone can focus on learning and getting better together. At ISP our leaders and managers work in partnership with other leaders and colleagues throughout their teams to listen to and learn from feedback and to collaborate on action plans and improvement. They ensure that our schools and offices are welcoming, safe, supportive and inspiring places for everyone to grow and develop.

As a Group we are working with our leaders and managers so that the focus is on building positive and trusting relationships with their teams, to equip them with the skills to identify and support colleagues who may be experiencing ill health and to engage them in raising awareness of and prioritising mental and physical wellbeing across ISP and our schools. This approach is embedded in our policies and procedures and underpinned by our leadership development activities for leaders and middle leaders.

Goal-setting and regular one-to-ones
Goal-setting is a powerful process which influences and impacts our overall wellbeing. Clear achievable goals give us a purpose and an outcome to reach for, and help us to:

1) Have realistic expectations of ourselves – by providing direction and purpose, they reduce any ambiguity and consequently help us to manage any anxiety or stress
2) Handle our work and life priorities effectively – they enable us to plan and manage our time and resources, helping us to build resilience
3) Focus and concentrate – we can manage our time efficiently, be in control of our environments and avoid distractions

When employees and line managers partner together to agree goals, this impacts engagement, performance *and wellbeing*. Goals agreed in this way enable us to have greater ownership over our responsibilities and work and greater control over our performance outcomes, our learning and development and our work-life balance and every one of us at ISP is encouraged to include a wellbeing goal when agreeing our goals for the year.

All of us, whatever our role in ISP, should have regular, informal one-to-ones with our line manager. The focus of these should be on collaborative goal setting, checking in on progress and frequent two-way feedback (as set out in our Performance Development Procedure). These regular catch-ups are key to establishing trust and building and fostering an open and honest relationship where employees feel comfortable to discuss their individual circumstances with their line managers. They provide an opportunity for employees to share worries and concerns and for managers to notice and pick up on when something might be wrong.

When someone has or develops ill health
At ISP we support our colleagues who develop ill health. Through our open culture and regular one-to-ones, we encourage people to share any concerns or problems and to ask for help when needed. This will enable us to partner with them to put in place appropriate arrangements and support structures taking into account the specific individual circumstances. For example, this might include breaks to test blood sugar levels for an employee who is diabetic or a reduced workload for someone who has developed a chronic health condition.

We offer support, advice and guidance to any colleagues who have or who develop a mental health issue. This means seeking appropriate expert advice where necessary and supporting their returning to work or school after a period of mental ill health in a manner that is considerate, sensitive and sustainable. This may mean making necessary adjustments to the environment and what is expected in terms of the school day or the particular role and responsibilities.

Where it is an employee who has or has developed a mental health issue, advice should be sought from school and/or regional HR as appropriate and as soon as possible.

We have an inclusive approach to recruitment where applicants are encouraged and supported to let us know of any adjustments that may be helpful in the context of the application, interview and selection process as well as in the workplace.

Summary

This policy sets out ISP's commitment to treating everyone with care and respect, looking after each other and promoting the wellbeing of each other. The adoption and embedding of this policy, together with our Group Employee Wellbeing Policy, are the foundation of a Group-wide focus on wellbeing that brings our regions and schools together in collaboration and coordination via the Wellbeing Steering Committee and Wellbeing Network.

At Group level we will concentrate on the provision of guidance, resources and training which will enable our regions and schools to embed a culture of wellbeing throughout their communities and to track and measure the impact of their approach and activities.

More specific ideas around actions and interventions are included in the table in Appendix 1 and useful resources are listed in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1 – examples of actions and interventions

These suggested examples are not separate, one-off initiatives but should be viewed as part of a holistic approach to improving our wellbeing and fostering and maintaining an open culture and good atmosphere across our Group and schools. We would encourage schools to share what they are working on with each other, both within region and throughout the wider Group.

Mental health and wellbeing	• Information on mental health issues to raise awareness • Non-judgmental support to anyone experiencing mental health issues • Mental health first aid training for colleagues • Mental health first aiders within schools and regional offices • Mental health included within 'Start the Year Safely' • Information and ideas and activities for colleagues and students to support their own mental wellbeing e.g. stress-buster activities, social events etc. • Implementation of flexible working hours where practicable • Remote working advice and support • Considerate approach to working hours • Efficient and effective conflict resolution via our policies processes to ensure schools and offices are safe spaces, free from bullying, harassment, racism or discrimination and where we feel comfortable to raise any concerns • Clear role profiles and responsibilities together with realistic / achievable goals and training and support to develop and get better • Positive communication throughout ISP • Mental health first aid training for key colleagues ensuring that they have the skills to manage mental health appropriately • Recruitment training so HR and hiring managers are aware of mental health issues and any relevant country legislation
Stress and resilience	• Stress recognised as a health and safety issue • ISP stress guidance and processes implemented throughout ISP schools and offices • Identify all workplace stressors and conduct regular risk assessments to eliminate stress and/or mitigate the risks from stress. • Training in good practice relating to stress and building resilience • Appropriate resources to support regions and schools with the implementation of this guidance • Relevant support through the provision of counselling or qualified mental health first aiders
Physical activity	• Information on the benefits and importance of physical activity – from a mental health and physical health perspective • Guidance and resources on the ways that physical activity can help manage stress and musculoskeletal issues, as well as improving mental alertness, concentration and resilience • Practical activities at both Group and regional level to promote and maintain physical activity • Information on local gyms, classes and sports activities • The encouragement of different physical activities within schools and offices e.g. running clubs, team games, walking meetings etc.

Healthy eating	• Information, guidance and resources on how healthy eating can contribute to mental health, for example, increasing levels of concentration and the ability to cope with everyday stresses • The appointment of healthy-eating champions to create a workplace health eating programme • Information and guidance on the benefits of healthy eating • Annual healthy eating month across the Group • Provision of healthy eating recipes • School menus that meet a minimum standard of healthy eating with clear communication and literature on the health benefits to colleagues, students and families.
General support	• Working conditions and ISP policies that have a continuously positive effect on mental and physical health and wellbeing • Appropriate support in place for students and colleagues with mental health issues • Students and colleagues with mental and physical health issues are treated fairly and without judgement • An open and supportive culture where students and colleagues are encouraged to talk to the relevant people and seek advice and support about mental and physical health issues • HR professionals that are trained equipped to support colleagues returning from long term sickness • All matters relating to mental and physical ill health are treated in the strictest of confidence and information is only shared with the prior consent from the individual concerned • A positive attitude to employees and applicants with mental health issues, including having positive statements in recruitment literature

Appendix 2 - useful resources

We have collated a list of resources below that you may find helpful in promoting and supporting wellbeing in your regions and schools.

Each bullet is linked to the relevant resources / website.

Group

- ISP Wellbeing Resources for Schools
- Thrive Global
- Contextual Wellbeing
- Gallup
- Wellbeing in Schools: Three Forces That Will Uplift Your Students in a Volatile World (2021)
- Student Wellbeing Hub (including free School Wellbeing Check/Audit tool)

UK
- Ann Freud
- UK Education Staff Wellbeing Charter
- Place2Be
- Young Minds
- PSHE Association
- Stem4
- Education Support
- Mind

Iberia
- *TBC*

USA and Canada
- US Department of Education
- National Institute of Mental Health
- MentalHealth.gov
- SchoolSafety.gov
- Edutopia
- The Educator's Room
- School Mental Health Ontario
- Ontario College of Teachers Supporting Mental Health
- Workplace Well-Being - Canada.ca
- Home - Ontario Workplace Health Coalition
- CDC Youth Mental Health

Malaysia
- TBC

Vietnam and Thailand
- TBC

Middle East
- TBC

Europe
- TBC

South America

- TBC

MexCA

- TBC