



Nourishing Retention

Cultivating a Culture Where Everyone Stays

Retaining your staff shouldn't be by accident. Resignations cause upset within the school and cost valuable time and money that could be spent on other projects. But it also doesn't have to be hard. This guide will show you many easy things that are free or low cost to implement so you can take action now and then work on a retention strategy for the longer term. Think back to when you started in the profession and what made you feel valued and welcome. How the small things mattered and made a big difference to you.

It's important to see all your staff as vital cogs in the wheel that drives pupil outcomes. In a typical school over half of its staff are non teaching. Those that support your pupils, those that keep the systems and process running smoothly and who ensure the facilities are working for everyone are all just as important as those who stand in front of your pupils.

Radical recognition

There is nothing radical about the ideas below, the radical thing is doing it consistently, meaningfully and intentionally.

Don't stop the quick 'thank you' or 'well done', just let that be the start of something bigger and better. And once you start doing this intentionally it will ripple out and the culture of appreciation will build in your school amongst staff as well. Lead the way!

- Public praise. Build in praise of staff to the way you usually praise pupils. In assemblies, on social media, in newsletters. When you talk in a positive way about staff, it builds respect from all angles of your school community.
- Hand written note. Encourage SLT to use postcards and write them out as they see wonderful things happening around the school. "That classroom was in such a mess after art class, thank you for everything you did to clear it up!", "Thank you for doing gate duty in the pouring rain yesterday, I hope you warmed up quickly!", "Thank you for your patience whilst the IT issues were fixed, I know it made your day a lot more stressful."
- Peer to peer. Have nomination forms (use on online system or a paper one) for staff to sing praises or say thank you to other staff members. Recognise someone every week with small gifts or time off.

The key to making this into a strategy is prioritising the time for it. Put notes in your diary to remind you.

Environment and belonging

We work hard to ensure pupils feel that they belong in our schools as we understand the value that has, so ensure that it extended to staff. And all staff.

- Staffroom. Ensure there is a comfortable, clean space where all staff are welcome. Small touches like newly donated soft furnishings or high-quality coffee can change the morning mood. It shows you value them and their time.
- Standardised Perks. If teachers get a "Wellbeing Day," ensure the non teaching staff do too. Inequality in "perks" is a fast track to resentment.
- Perks that work. If you have staff perks in place - well done! But ensure that staff know about them and they are used. What was working and valued 5 years ago may be obsolete now or new staff may not be aware of what is available to them. See my resource on creating a staff charter [here](#).
- Values matter. A longer term project is looking at your school's values. Are they relevant to staff as well as pupils? If not, consult your whole school community and work on new ones that everyone can work within and towards, increasing their sense of belonging.
- Spread the word. Not everyone that is impacted by decisions are in the meeting or email loop.. Let people know about what matters to them.

www.nourishtheworkplace.com
nourishtheworkplace@gmail.com

Quick win

Celebrate birthdays. In a smaller school you could send birthday cards out to all staff. For larger communities, email birthday wishes to individuals or do a monthly birthday shout out in briefings. Don't forget to include everyone, not just teachers. This may take time, but remember that how you make people feel matters.



Nourishing Retention

Cultivating a Culture Where Everyone Stays



Boundaries over balance

People often strive for a work/life balance but I believe that is not achievable. If we work towards boundaries that give us work/life happiness, that is much more realistic. What does that look like on a day to day basis?

- Email policy. I personally prefer a flexible strategy that has a footer explaining no response time expected but others prefer a no emails after 6pm strategy. There is a whole resource on this [here](#).
- WhatsApp policy. This platform is becoming increasingly popular and often used to bypass the email policy. Discuss this with your staff and set expectations.
- Meeting audit. If a meeting can be an email, make it an email. Every meeting should have a clear purpose, not just because you always have a meeting at that time.
- I've got your back. Whether it's a disregulated pupil, an angry parent or a frustrated colleague, showing people you are there to provide support helps prevent stress building and protects their time too.

Quick win

Ask 5 members of staff today - "What is making your job harder than it needs to be?"

Have fun!

People spend the majority of their day at work, and if they enjoy it they are more likely to stay (as well as being more effective). Having fun at work doesn't undermine respect, it actually builds it.

- Leader board. Send an online weekly quiz (ask me for suggestions) or an online game like Wordle.
- Games. Organise a game of Traitors, have board games and puzzles in the staffroom.
- Music. Have the radio on in the offices and staffroom (if other staff want it).
- Smile! Stop being so serious. Your wellbeing will improve as well as other people's.

www.nourishtheworkplace.com
nourishtheworkplace@gmail.com

Know your staff

This is part of belonging, appreciation, workload reduction and so much more. Getting to know your staff on a professional but also a personal level will help in so many ways.

- Professional. Where do they work, what were they before this role, what are their aspirations, what does their job involve? Do you know the answer to all of these? Set yourself a target to find out more about 5 staff members each week.
- Personal. How long is their commute, what family commitments do they have, are they neurodivergent or have medical issues, do they prefer email or face to face communication? These aren't prying, they are knowing enough to be able to support them well enough so they can do their jobs well.

Include, don't exclude.

To make everyone feel valued and part of the team we need to ensure that people are intentionally included instead of accidentally excluded.

- Spaces. Can everyone get to the staffroom in the times they have for breaks? If not, provide some mini fridges and kettles in other areas of the school. A large, spaced out school can make people feel isolated so provide opportunities to come together.
- CPD. This can often be very pedagogy and teacher centred. Ask your non teaching staff what training they need to be able to do their jobs well and then provide that. This doesn't have to mean paying out for expensive training, utilise the skills within your team, internal skill sharing is very powerful and empowering.
- Voices. Ensure everyone has a voice in decisions that affect them. Working parties that have representation from all sectors of the school can be used for workload reduction, wellbeing strategies, policy updates, health and safety and so much more.

Quick win

Get out of the office. Walk around with no agenda, just to say hello to as many people as you can.

NOURISHthe**WORKPLACE**™

helping you, your staff and your school work at their best