



## PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Wellbeing during Distance Learning Guidelines for Private Schools* is to ensure all schools are well informed to develop and implement policies that address the wellbeing of students, parents, and teachers in a distance learning setting.

## INTRODUCTION

In its simplest form, wellbeing is the ability to feel good and function effectively. It gives students, teachers, and parents the resources to navigate the highs and lows they all experience in their lives, while enabling all too intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically 'flourish'. As a result, everyone is more resilient and has more energy; we are healthier, happier, and more productive.

Wellbeing is personal and multifactorial but typically associates with stakeholders being socially connected, feeling a sense of direction and belonging, experiencing satisfaction with personal achievements, and feeling low levels of anxiety. By aligning approaches regarding the wellbeing of teachers, parents and student's wellbeing, schools have the opportunity to bring about lasting improvements for the whole school community.

Distance learning can potentially place increased emphasis and strain on parents supporting and monitoring their child/children in the home as well as teachers who are coping with a new working environment. Many teachers are parents too; therefore, it is of critical importance that schools recognize the potential strain on teachers in a distance learning setting. Additionally, this new learning environment may bring increased workloads and anxiety for students who are navigating a new system and way of learning without the typical interactions and support they receive from school staff and their peers in a non-distance learning environment. Consideration to the impact that the new working approach has on all stakeholders is something that is essential to support the needs of all.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Support schools in ensuring the wellbeing (social, emotional and physical) of all students in a distance learning environment;
- Increase awareness of the importance of establishing/refining policies, procedures and training for staff;
- Increase awareness of wellbeing in a distance learning environment for students, teachers, and parents and their responsibilities in ensuring collective wellbeing;
- Ensure all staff are aware of the importance of students having manageable workloads and enough quality time to connect with their peers;
- Ensure our school is aware of responsibility to support teaching staff in a learning environment that can potentially create extra pressures and demands on teachers; and
- Ensure parents have relevant information and awareness of wellbeing to support their child/children in a distant learning environment.





## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. School Principal

- 1.1 The school principal and senior leaders' teams are encouraged to contemplate adopting a whole school approach to wellbeing that encompasses students, teachers, and parents.
- 1.2 The school principal and senior leaders' team should have a clear vision of what they expect in regards to the wellbeing of students and staff in a distance learning environment.
- 1.3 The school principal and senior leaders' teams are encouraged to ensure there is a wellbeing policy that addresses the needs of all stakeholders in a distance learning environment and that it is regularly reviewed and communicated to relevant persons.
- 1.4 The school principal and senior leaders' teams are encouraged to appoint a staff member as the school's wellbeing lead/coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the school's approach to wellbeing, and ensuring that it remains a priority.
- 1.5 The school principal and senior leaders' team should ensure that teachers and staff receive individualized support from school leaders and management in times of difficulty or during a personal crisis.
- 1.6 The school principal and senior leaders' team should ensure that teachers have, at a minimum, a lunch break of 30 minutes per day, during distance learning in addition to taking shorter regular breaks.
- 1.7 The school principal and supporting senior leaders' team should consider developing resources to encourage student awareness of wellbeing, facilitate peer support, and provide clear, quick and appropriate follow-ups to student concerns.
- 1.8 The school principal and senior leaders' team might endeavor to offer a sensitive, personalized and empowering approach for the school community. Support may include, but is not limited to: awareness-raising and prevention; information, signposting and advice; reasonable adjustments; anxiety mentoring; online personal coaching; and external referrals to a network of health professionals if required.
- 1.9 The school principal and supporting senior leaders' team are encouraged, over time, to develop curricular activities to promote student's physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.
- 1.10 The school principal and senior leaders' team is encouraged to take a sympathetic and pragmatic approach to parents and families who experience difficulties paying school fees.

### 2. Teachers

- 2.1 Teachers are encouraged to regularly communicate with parents.
- 2.2 Teachers should be the initial contact for any wellbeing concerns raised by students, and this process should be communicated to students and parents. The teacher should then discuss the student's concern with the school's wellbeing leader.
- 2.2 Teachers are encouraged to be mindful of the fact that there may be an increased level of stress for parents during distance learning.
- 2.3 Teachers are encouraged to devise manageable workloads for students in a distance learning environment and take into account the constraints placed upon students and parents during a school day.
- 2.4 Teachers are encouraged to be mindful and empathetic regarding support for students of determination and students at educational risk and their families.





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- 2.5 Teachers responsible for curriculum and timetabling should advocate that students participate in regular physical activity at home during the school week.
- 2.6 Teachers should recognize that individual students have different needs at different times. Those at higher risk, and with additional needs, may require more specific and targeted support.
- 2.7 Teachers should, through their ongoing support and assessment of students, identify those students who may be considered "at-risk" in a wellbeing context and identify any needs that may be actioned.
- 2.8 Teachers are encouraged to use the school's existing learning management system to record, monitor and manage all student concerns as and when they arise.
- 2.9 Teachers should endeavor to develop curriculum and learning activities that do not just require students to work online. This differentiation will ensure that students have sufficient time away from their screens, further promoting student wellbeing.
- 2.10 Teachers should reinforce, especially during live sessions, the need for students to maintain good posture, take regular breaks, and drink water regularly.

### **3. Parents**

- 3.1 Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child/children have sufficient sleep and that their sleeping patterns are not different from what would be expected in a traditional school setting.
- 3.2 Parents are encouraged to support their child/children through following a healthy balanced lifestyle that includes diet, nutrition, and exercise. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy food and avoid processed foods or foods high in sugar content where possible.
- 3.3 Parents should ensure to the best of their ability that their child/children aim for at least 20 minutes of cardiovascular activity three times per week.
- 3.4 Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child's screen time is managed effectively.
- 3.5 Parents should endeavor to support their child/children to establish a daily routine that provides a balance between schooling and other non-schooling activities such as hobbies like art, writing or sports.
- 3.6 Parents are encouraged to give their child/children sufficient time to interact online with their friends and peers outside of school hours.
- 3.7 Parents should be aware of their child's online conversations with their peers to keep alive to signs of cyberbullying or communications that are likely to impact negatively on a child's wellbeing.
- 3.8 Parents are encouraged to discuss with their child's teachers any concerns that they have regarding their child's wellbeing.
- 3.9 Parents should contact the school should there be any change in job status or employment circumstances.





## Useful Links

<https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/federal-governments-strategies-and-plans/national-strategy-for-wellbeing-2031>

The national programme for happiness and wellbeing

<https://www.hw.gov.ae/en/news/hh-sheikh-saif-bin-zayed-al-nahyan-launches-child-digital-safety-to-enhance-children-safety-and-quality-of-digital-life-1>

<https://www.hw.gov.ae/en/news/250-new-schools-join-the-well-schools-network-to-enhance-positive-education-and-wellbeing-principles>

UAE happiness and wellbeing

<https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/government-of-future/happiness/>

