

Andy Mellor

The Wellbeing Effect

How prioritising whole-school
wellbeing can boost achievement
and help your school to thrive



Praise for *The Wellbeing Effect*

Unless children's wellbeing is taken more seriously, attainment will not improve. This is one of the central messages of this excellent, timely and grounded book written by somebody who deeply understands children, schools and deprivation. A must-read for everyone.

Sir Anthony Seldon, Head, Epsom College

A compelling story of real-life school development. Recommended reading for all those about to embark on the restless journey of improving the lived experience of school, on behalf of children.

Dame Alison Peacock, DL, DLitt, Chief Executive,
Chartered College of Teaching

The Wellbeing Effect is a narrative of respect, hope and common sense. It tells the tale of a school in a severely deprived area of England that decided, after many years of trying and failing to raise standards, to take a risk and do things differently. And it paid off.

This book exemplifies what many educators have always known. Wellbeing and school improvement are not an either/or dichotomy but two sides of the same endeavour – and when both are in place, provide a positive spiral upwards, each reinforcing the other. Our kids and their future deserve no less.

In many UK schools, education has been a one-way street with teachers delivering prescribed information in the expectation that kids will take it in – and then regurgitate it at specific times. The prize for this endeavour is a school getting a good or even an outstanding Ofsted report. The unintended consequences for pupils and teachers have, however, been writ large in headlines about absenteeism, behavioural challenges, high levels of anxiety and other mental health concerns, teacher attrition and a widening gap in educational outcomes between different communities. The 'good' and 'clever' kids from supportive, comfortable homes probably do OK academically under this regime, but even privileged students have struggled with a lack of agency, creativity, collaboration and respect. For many children it has undermined a love of learning.

Wellbeing can be an elusive concept in education, but one thing is for sure: it does not exist in a single intervention, however well meant, but in what happens all day, every day for everyone. It is about engaging children as active learners with ideas of their own, acknowledging the strengths and experiences they bring with them but also opening their minds and hearts to challenges. Many who fear failure lack confidence, so mistakes need to be built in as steps to learning. Wanting to get better at things is part of healthy child development and doing things together is much more fun, so it is not surprising that the approaches espoused in this book have seen pupils flourish and fly.

So what did head teacher Andy and teachers in his school do that made the difference? Give yourself a treat and read on.

Dr Sue Roffey, FRSA, FBPsS, psychologist, academic, author,
activist and speaker

In recent years, many people have called for children and young people to become more involved in driving their own learning. However, in a top-down system, that's easier said than done. What's so special about Andy Mellor is that he walks the talk. The ideas in this book are tried and tested, hard won and proven to work within the system as it currently exists. Inspiring, urgent, recommended reading for all teachers and school leaders.

Dr James Mannion, Director, Re-Thinking Education

I have always had the greatest respect for those professionals who choose to work in the most economically and socially challenged communities. Professional life can be challenging, unpredictable and at times uproariously funny.

Andy Mellor devoted a large chunk of his teaching career to leading a primary school in Blackpool and managed to create a very special place of learning and living. He has brought these experiences and insights together in this book. It's based on real life, with the many ups and downs, and embraces these as part of the journey for all schools.

It is rich in academic research (nationally and locally created) and is underpinned by an education philosophy that embraces differences, respect, love and a strong desire to achieve the best.

Throughout, Andy ensures that the school journey includes other professionals and emphasises the part they play in creating a learning environment for all. There are many brilliant colleagues working in some of the toughest areas of our country. This book makes clear just how marvellous they are.

Frank Norris, Education Advisor to Northern Powerhouse and
previously CEO of Co-op Academies Trust

Teaching is not about content. It's about knowing the minds and hearts of the kids who are in front of you. Every student walks through that door with a story – a unique blend of strengths, struggles and dreams. As educators, we need to meet them where they are, see the person before the pupil, and design learning experiences that connect with who they are rather than what the curriculum dictates. When our focus is shifted from ticking boxes to really knowing our students, it creates space for each and every child to feel valued, understood and inspired to realise their full potential. It is a journey to an approach where relationships come first and learning follows.

Dave McPartlin, Head Teacher, Flakefleet Primary School

Few people speak with as much authority on transforming outcomes in marginalised communities as Andy Mellor.

Too often, wellbeing and school improvement are framed as opposing forces. Andy dismantles this false dichotomy, demonstrating with conviction that wellbeing is not a barrier to school improvement – it is the catalyst for it. He makes a compelling case that eudaimonic wellbeing – the deep sense of purpose and fulfilment – forms the foundation upon which great schools are built.

This book is as heartfelt as it is practical. Through personal anecdotes and sharp insights, Andy vividly illustrates both the challenges schools face and the opportunities available to those willing to rethink their approach. His unflinching commentary on the corrosive impact of school inspection, particularly in the country's most deprived communities, will resonate deeply with educators and leaders alike.

Yet, this is no counsel of despair. Far from it. *The Wellbeing Effect* is brimming with practical advice and actionable strategies to help

leaders create school cultures where both students and staff can truly thrive. Andy offers a bold vision – a path not yet well trodden but with the power to transform countless lives. For any educator seeking to drive meaningful change, this book is essential reading.

Nick Brook, Chief Executive Officer, Speakers for Schools

Andy Mellor

The Wellbeing Effect

How prioritising whole-school
wellbeing can boost achievement
and help your school to thrive



Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk

First published by

Crown House Publishing Limited
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK

and

81 Brook Hills Circle, White Plains, NY 10605, USA

www.crownhouse.co.uk

© Andy Mellor, 2026

The right of Andy Mellor to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2026.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owners. Enquiries should be addressed to Crown House Publishing.

Cover image © styf – stock.adobe.com. Page 32 figure: Used with kind permission of Child Poverty Action Group © Child Poverty Action Group. All rights reserved. Page 55 figure: Bloom's Taxonomy © Rawia Inaim is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) licence. Page 62 figure: Used with the kind permission of Twinkl Educational Publishing © Twinkl Ltd. All rights reserved. Page 64 figure: Used with kind permission © James Nottingham, 2007. Available from Nottingham, J. A. (2017). *The Learning Challenge: How to Guide Your Students Through the Learning Pit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Page 73 images © drawing lines, MDRIFAT, Arion and Mimi – stock.adobe.com.

Government documents used in this publication have been approved under an Open Government Licence. Please see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3>.

Crown House Publishing has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

EU GPSR Authorised Representative
Easy Access System Europe OÜ, 16879218
Address: Mustamäe tee 50, 10621, Tallinn, Estonia
Contact Details: gpsr.requests@easproject.com, +358 40 500 3575

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

Print ISBN 978-178583743-2
Mobi ISBN 978-178583821-7
ePub ISBN 978-178583822-4
ePDF ISBN 978-178583823-1

LCCN 2026942877

Printed in the UK by
Gomer Press, Llandysul, Ceredigion

Preface

This is a book for all those who lead schools and potentially for policy makers. It's an articulation of the things that hamper progress as well as the things that schools can do to promote progress. It is based on a journey that a few schools made in Blackpool at a time when good seemed to be all you could aspire to, given the low starting points of the children on entry to formal education. It's a book of hope for those who are tired of the perceived wisdom of working staff and students harder and harder and somehow expecting results to improve. I know that when I'm at the gym, the harder I work, the poorer my results are! Many of our staff are on their knees, exhausted and ready to walk away.

This book provides an alternative to the 'work harder for longer' mantra and advocates the building of staff and student autonomy, engagement and an approach to wellbeing that helps all of us to be the best version of ourselves, both in a professional and personal sense. It's a book of hope that there is another way and that the 'wellbeing effect' can help to improve the performance of your staff and their students. It's a book that reflects the journey that many schools have been on but it is challenging and takes courage, determination, perseverance and vision, and is all about your school's context.

I often hear people say that the changes that we made and what we did as a school were brave, but in many ways, having seen genuine progress by the time the original 'Requires Improvement' (RI) judgement arrived, we were already committed to doing things differently. We wanted our staff and students to thrive, to be enthusiastic about learning, to be engaged and see the purpose in learning and work towards being the best version of themselves.

We also knew (and it has become more and more appropriate since 2025 as funding cuts have eaten away at staff and wider school support services) that habitually working double the paid hours and being asked to work harder, with fewer staff to do more work, the job was rapidly becoming undoable, the workload unsustainable.

We now understand enough about wellbeing to know that the current ask of schools and their staff is unsustainable and will lead to ill health in time, whether that be mental or physical. The current ask habitually requires teachers and school leaders to work well beyond their contracted working time of 32.5 hours per week. The Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey reported for the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2024 that teachers and leaders now work 17 and 25 more hours, respectively, than their contractual obligations – in other words, for free.¹ These extra hours to discharge the job aren't a temporary response to increased workload; they become expected and they are on the increase year on year. While I've yet to come across a teacher who refuses to work beyond their contracted hours if the children benefit, we have to draw the line somewhere. Not only is it personal wellbeing but family and social relationships that are being compromised, and that is unacceptable. The Education Support Partnership reported in 2024 that 73% of staff in school say that their job leaves them no time for a personal life.²

We are also seeing the excessive workload resulting in less efficient and effective task completion. The law of diminishing returns states that there comes a point in terms of working harder and longer when our efforts are affected by exhaustion and what might have taken X amount of time takes X times 3, which adds to the time spent working.

While schools regularly prove to be full of curriculum innovators, imaginative educators and tremendous problem solvers, they are now essentially the front door for social care and health services, and are given more and more health and social care issues to solve. The reason for this, as every teacher and school leader will tell you, is that unless we address these external issues, we won't remove the barriers to learning, which is necessary for schools to do their job. There are now numerous examples across the country where the threshold for social care involvement has risen and the gap

1 DfE, *Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders: Wave 2 Summary Report* (2024). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2-summary-report>.

2 Education Support Partnership, *Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024* (London: Education Support, 2024), p. 15. Available at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/ftwl04cs/twix-2024.pdf>.

between work in schools and social care intervention has grown. Similarly, health interventions such as dental hygiene, typically having previously taken place in community settings, are now being driven through schools. Many schools are now providing the sort of community support that social care teams might have done previously, such as washing school uniform and completing referrals to other support agencies. Sometimes there simply aren't the social workers to do this work any longer.

Fewer health and social care services, and gaps between school-based work and access to these services, means that schools inevitably end up problem-solving because schools understand that their effectiveness as places of learning is diminished without those services. This is far more of an issue for schools in challenging or disadvantaged areas, which tend to have fewer resources and less staff time to improve learning.

As the head of a school in a coastal town, and having taught in city schools, I feel that there is a misunderstanding about the challenges that coastal schools face. The concept of parachuting 'hero heads' into coastal schools, first mooted by the Blair government in 1998 and put forward more than once, has thankfully never become national policy, as it fails to recognise that not all schools and their communities are the same and the challenges are in many ways so different from other schools.³

The basis of this book is my experience over thirty-two years in teaching and leading schools in more challenging areas of the country, both in mainstream and special school settings. The book is intended to show that context for your school is vitally important, and understanding your context should be the first step in any school improvement initiative.

The second aim of the book is to show that the perceived wisdom of some national policy makers and politicians that one solution will fit all schools is erroneous and just isn't true. There are alternatives to 'drill and test', where filling learners with knowledge is the only remit of schools. We know that employers want employees who are problem solvers, think flexibly and have self-motivation. Sitting

3 Ysenda Maxtone Graham, Big heads, *Spectator* (20 February 2016). Available at: <https://spectator.com/article/big-heads/>.

children in rows, filling them with content so that they can regurgitate it in a test is not preparing our young people for the world they are to inherit. Our role as educators should be to give the learner knowledge and the opportunities to use and apply it, as well as the opportunities to develop an understanding of themselves, their skills and abilities, and the character qualities that will allow them to be successful in whatever they do.

The third aim of the book is to provide the reader with an understanding of the strategies that we employed which improved wellbeing through agency, autonomy, engagement, mission and purpose, and led to mastery. While these strategies worked for us, this is not a 'pick up and implement' model but an opportunity to reflect on your context and provide some alternatives to better improve learning for the students you serve and give teachers and all school staff a greater sense of mission and purpose.

The approaches we used led to a greater sense of wellbeing for all within the school community and all aspects of school life improved, including learner outcomes and staff fulfilment. It also improved Ofsted outcomes as our efforts have been recognised by Ofsted twice now, under different frameworks, as leading to genuinely outstanding outcomes. However, our focus was on improving wellbeing for all and learning outcomes for our learners. The fact that Ofsted recognised it was great, but we didn't do this for Ofsted.

What follows is a testimony to the spirit, dedication and commitment of all the staff as professionals; to the unwavering support of governors and our parent community; and to the children who provided us with constant reminders of why we do the job, as well as the odd challenge!

Or as one member of staff said just after our RI inspection: 'We are going to create a category above Outstanding called S**t Hot!'

Finally, the book will go into my experience of working with school leaders all over the country and the factors that indicate how thriving in a school leadership position can be achieved. These school leaders have been inspirational in the decisions that they've made about their health and wellbeing and are reaping the benefits. They are ordinary, dedicated professionals with the same workload as any other school leader, but they've built their own self-care regime

based on reflection and what they know about themselves to ensure that they not only can cope with the pressures of the job but work to help their colleagues and students to thrive across their organisations.

There is much to learn from these leaders who have made these decisions about their health and wellbeing, and the book concludes with lessons from their experiences, which should give you some ideas and strategies that could help you to thrive.

Acknowledgements

I want to start by acknowledging the people who have shaped my thinking and resulted in this book coming to existence.

The people I've worked with across my career, but especially those staff at the school where I was head teacher who helped make the journey from RI to outstanding a reality and their commitment to finding an alternative way for Blackpool children.

The staff commitment to getting things right for our children, as well as the support of governors and parents, was pivotal. Having received an RI judgement from Ofsted in December 2013, the staff, governors and parents were of one voice in being resolved to address the situation positively – and, to be fair, we were already on that journey of improvement. I never took for granted their faith in me as a school leader; it was hugely appreciated and it provided me with the confidence to push on with what we knew was right. Hearing parents say that they didn't believe the RI inspection outcome, as what they always saw day to day was a 'good' school, was hugely important to us as a school and to me as head.

Consequently, as we move through the following pages I will endeavour to use the word 'we' as much as possible, and if I do slip into the occasional 'I', please be advised that everything that this remarkable school achieved was done as a team.

I also want to thank all those who I've worked with post-headship in whatever capacity. You've been generous with your time and advice, and your insights have helped me to better understand the concept of wellbeing in schools. I genuinely believe that your insights will help teachers and school leaders moving forwards.

Finally, I want to thank my mum and dad, who have always been there with support and advice both as ex-school leaders and parents. Without their support and guidance, I doubt that I would ever have had the privilege of school leadership.

But most of all to my wife, Andrea, and my two daughters, Eve and Erin.

Andrea has supported me in this venture even though it has meant time away from home to create space to write. She is a constant source of love and support.

But to my girls, I hope this book makes up partly for the time I was at school being a head teacher and seemingly spending more time with other people's children than my own.

I love you all and thank you. I couldn't have done this without you.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vii</i>
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: What if?	3
Chapter 2: Current context in education	7
Chapter 3: What is wellbeing, why is it so misunderstood and what role can it play in school improvement?	13
What is wellbeing?	14
Personal wellbeing	17
Building professional/occupational wellbeing	19
Chapter 4: School context is everything!	25
Chapter 5: Trauma and its impact on learning	31
Stress and amygdala hijack	31
Prolonged exposure to cortisol, stress and anxiety, and its impact on health	35
Chapter 6: Ofsted and the impact on wellbeing, autonomy, dignity, mastery, purpose and integrity	37
Chapter 7: The traditional model of school improvement and why it is doomed to mediocrity	43
Autonomy?	47
Ofsted	49
Structures – local authorities or trusts?	49
Chapter 8: One school's journey to school improvement through wellbeing	51

Chapter 9: The classroom and whole-school strategies that supported this journey	57
Links to the current inspection handbook	58
Hot 'n' spicy learning access points	60
Mistakes as a critical part of learning	62
Building the language of class discussion	66
Self- and peer assessment	68
Growth mindset and a can-do attitude, creating resilient learners	71
Strategies for engagement and inclusion	74
Cooperative and collaborative learning – Kagan Structures	76
Aspiration and Primary Futures	78
Summary	82
Chapter 10: Who and what is education for?	87
Chapter 11: Teacher and school leader health and wellbeing ..	95
Chapter 12: Summary	107
<i>Bibliography</i>	115
<i>About the author</i>	123

Introduction

For a long time I subscribed to the belief that 'in a town like Blackpool', 'good' in Ofsted terms was as good as it got for schools. Outstanding was a term reserved for schools with more privileged communities where children came into school with a level of parental support and school readiness which meant that making average progress would see these schools hit national expectations at the end of primary school.

These weren't the sort of schools I worked in. The system seemed to be stacked against my kind of schools and indeed it is, or at least the type of education system often referred to by policy makers at a national level is stacked against my kind of school. Unless we do education differently and don't play by the conventional wisdom of policy makers!

I have to admit that as a teacher and school leader I subscribed to the view that as an educator you had to work excessive hours, compromising family and social life, and be comfortable with that. After all, isn't that what we all do in education? Thriving as a concept was for other people. How can you thrive in a school when the negative impact of working 60–70 hours a week strips you of the capacity to have a 'normal' life?

This book explains how:

- Schools can teach and children can learn differently so that they thrive and are the best versions of themselves, resulting in hugely improved wellbeing and higher educational standards.
- As an educator you can thrive in your role, maintain your physical and mental health, and act as a catalyst for higher outcomes for your learners.

None of this is easy and it takes considerable effort and reflection, and what some will call 'personal indulgence' but I call 'self-care'.

We put the children first in everything we do, but if we are to provide for them to the best of our ability, we need to put our own

health and wellbeing first. It's the old oxygen mask analogy: 'Look after yourself so that you're able to look after others.'

We need to be doing this so that we give our schools and our families the best of us and not what is left of us.

Over the last five years, as National Director of Wellbeing for the Schools Advisory Service, I've worked with over 100 school leaders as a wellbeing leadership consultant. The majority of these leaders have a wellbeing deficit each week, which is unsustainable in the long term. However, there are a small group (about 15%) who are thriving. I am fascinated by this group, and as we go through the book you'll see why they are thriving.

These 15% tend to be the same type of school leaders as the other 85%. They have the same pressures, work in similar schools, and yet they are managing the pressures of the job and thriving.

But don't for one moment assume that this is easy. Most of the 15% have gone through fairly life-changing events that have shocked them into making decisions about their health, wellbeing and relationship with family, friends and the job, but some have simply taken time out to think about what they want for their lives and have taken steps to put things in place in a non-negotiable sense and stick to these decisions.

I was working with a head teacher from the 15% fairly recently who summed up the position perfectly. She started to explain her understanding of wellbeing and then checked herself. This is what she said: 'Wellbeing is easy really, isn't it? Actually let me rephrase: wellbeing is simple – it isn't easy.'

What she meant by this is that we all know what we need to do for our own health and wellbeing, for the good of ourselves. But putting into practice what we know we need, and sticking to it, is much harder.

However, wellbeing is an investment, just as paying into your pension is an investment. We put away now so that we can draw down on our investment later.

Chapter 1

What if?

What if there were an alternative to the 'raising standards in schools' agenda that didn't involve damage to the mental health and wellbeing of students, loss of purpose among staff, and the anxiety and stress that it currently causes?

What if that approach not only left students and teachers feeling more empowered and motivated but was also recognised by the inspection system?

And if that approach raised standards by up to 20% rather than the 2–3% gains brought about by the 'drill and test' approach that is the current system, you'd expect policy makers to be all over it, wouldn't you?

Actually, very few schools are doing this work, quite simply because they don't know about it. This book intends to blow the cover off a system of working with students that not only improves their mental health and wellbeing and drives greater staff motivation but also raises standards. This book is intended to give you an alternative to the high-stakes drill and test method, which is the predominating model for school improvement and which, in my opinion, adversely affects the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students.

It stands to reason that staff are more fulfilled when they are teaching children and young people the skills to learn for themselves beyond the classroom rather than simply delivering content to facilitate the accountability system. Similarly, we know that student mental health was deteriorating before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has simply accelerated the situation.

The challenge to schools wanting to adopt an alternative approach is that there is a sense that the current system of drilling is the model that the inspectorate almost inevitably expects to see.¹

1 Drilling is a model that simply sees teaching and learning as the transmission and retention of knowledge with the express intent of passing a test or exam, and in this sense the exam becomes more important than the learning.

If I'm honest, it was the approach that I felt compelled to follow as a young head as there didn't seem to be an alternative. However, in 2012 we broke away from this model and started to work with our learners in a different way. The impact was almost immediately tangible, and we started to see improvements in staff wellbeing and some pupil outcomes. But then we were inspected under a framework that didn't allow credit for direction of travel and simply looked at current data, and we ended up with a judgement of RI.

We all know what the implications can be for heads who preside over schools deemed to be continually failing. It was a time to hold our nerve and I felt that if I was going to lose my job with a double RI, I was going to do it doing what I believed in.

Those of you who were trained with an understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy will know that the deeper, more prevailing and sustainable learning that allows connections with other learning comes from creating, justifying, synthesising as well as understanding.² In my experience, those more nuanced concepts aid remembering and understanding but they are done in a far more consensual way that respects student wellbeing and their part in the learning process. They also create neural pathways and connections between aspects of learning that lend relevance to the content being learnt. Students get the point of learning if they can use and apply it in a range of ways.

It also allows teachers to be engineers of learning opportunities where the skill of the teacher is to redirect, redefine and challenge depending upon where they find themselves within a lesson. Teaching is so much more than just following a lesson plan!

The problem with the silver bullet form of school improvement is that it suggests there is a prescribed form of improving standards, but in the words of Dylan Wiliam, 'everything works somewhere, and nothing works everywhere'.³

2 Benjamin S. Bloom (ed.), Max D. Engelhart, Edward J. Furst, Walker H. Hill and David R. Krathwohl, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain* (London: Longmans, 1956).

3 Dylan Wiliam, *Assessment: The Bridge between Teaching and Learning*, *Voices from the Middle* 21(2) (2013): 19. DOI: 10.58680/vm201324461.

This book sets out an approach to teaching and learning that establishes the wellbeing of staff and students as the underpinning foundation for learning. It is common sense that those involved in teaching and those involved in learning produce better results if they feel better.

Over the lifetime of the schools inspectorate since its inception in 1992, inspection frameworks have varied on the extent to which knowledge acquisition is valued. However, since 2010 we have seen a far greater emphasis on the delivery of knowledge as opposed to the development of skills. The debate on social media between 'progressives' who want to see a greater emphasis on skills development and 'traditionalists' who want to see a greater emphasis on knowledge acquisition has raged for some time, and in many cases has become quite toxic and views have polarised.

More recently it has felt as though teachers were being asked to be couriers of knowledge in a purely transactional way, delivering parcels of knowledge to children rather than equipping them with the skills to become lifelong learners. Clearly, knowledge is important, but how you apply that knowledge and can use it, as well as developing a lifelong thirst for knowledge and learning, are vital skills.

For me as a head, I was only really bothered about the quality of learning, and the transactional model of teaching presupposed learners were switched on and excited by this approach. In reality, the children I worked with, who lived in some of the most disadvantaged wards in the country, weren't switched on by this transactional model – they wanted to know why this learning was important, especially when learning and schools had not been the passport for prosperity and happiness for previous generations around them who remained unemployed.

The idea that all learners came to school skipping with the excitement and anticipation of the learning that 'Sir' or 'Miss' was going to give them was at best naive, and at worst spoke of the more privileged background of ministers and their advisers, and the assumption that context played no part in the learning process.

Context is everything! I'll come on to that in a moment.

In reality, schools have changed very little in the 140+ years since compulsory education was first introduced in the 1880 Education Act. A child transported from 1880 to 2026 would find warmer classrooms with more colourful displays and would be mind-blown by the technology. However, they'd recognise the teacher-led learning, which often still sees children sat in rows being told to behave. Nowadays, suspension and isolation replace the outlawed corporal punishment to ensure compliance.

'Listen and learn', 'seen and not heard' were key phrases in the 1880s, and although the language has changed, some of this practice still exists. The purpose of this book is not to criticise that approach but to provide an alternative to the prevailing model.

I made a decision as a head that I would never openly criticise another head as it is the most difficult job, and everyone has their own way of doing it and knows their school best. However, we developed a model that raises standards in 'disadvantaged areas' while improving wellbeing, recruitment and retention, and sense of professional purpose – and Ofsted liked it.

Given all of this, it seems churlish not to share it – as part, or all, of it might work for you.

Create a culture where wellbeing drives learning and learning drives success

Traditional approaches to teaching that prioritise academic achievement above all else can leave both teachers and students disengaged, stressed and disconnected. This often results in teacher burnout, poor student behaviour and classroom disruption. Andy Mellor argues for another way: one where wellbeing sits at the heart of school culture.

Drawing on his extensive knowledge of schools that have embraced this approach, he shows that prioritising wellbeing enables teachers to teach with flair, personality and passion, inspiring students to engage more deeply with learning.

Packed with practical strategies and honest insights, *The Wellbeing Effect* challenges the myth that raising standards and supporting mental health are competing priorities. Instead it demonstrates that wellbeing is the foundation for stronger academic outcomes and better behaviour, and enables both teachers and young people to flourish both in school and beyond.

A must-read for everyone.

Sir Anthony Seldon, Head, Epsom College

A compelling story of real-life school development.

Dame Alison Peacock, DL, DLitt, Chief Executive, Chartered College of Teaching

The Wellbeing Effect is a narrative of respect, hope and common sense.

Dr Sue Roffey, FRSA, FBPsS, psychologist, academic, author, activist and speaker

Inspiring, urgent, recommended reading for all teachers and school leaders.

Dr James Mannion, Director, Re-Thinking Education

For any educator seeking to drive meaningful change,
this book is essential reading.

Nick Brook, Chief Executive Officer, Speakers for Schools

Andy Mellor is National Wellbeing Director for Schools Advisory Service and was previously the Strategic Lead for the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools at Leeds Beckett University. He served as the National President of NAHT in 2018/19. He has been the Independent Chair of the Blackpool MAT CEO group, and was a member of the Blackpool Opportunity Area Board. He was previously the head teacher of St Nicholas C of E Primary School in Blackpool, where he implemented a programme of change that prioritised improving the wellbeing of the teachers and children in the school, with remarkable results.



www.crownhouse.co.uk

ISBN-13: 978-178583743-2



9 781785 837432

Educational administration and organisation
Teaching staff/educators