



T&L Times

Edition 4

Welcome

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2020. Having had well being week last week, we start off our newsletter for this week with a quote related to your well being.

“The talent for being happy is appreciating and liking what you have instead of what you don’t have”

Woody Allen

Term Time Thoughts

We are currently consulting about our possible term dates for 2021/22 and would really like your input as to whether we are sticking with a two week October break, changing to another point in the year or falling back in line with Medway and having 5 random staff development days throughout the year. If you would like to take part in the survey (I promise it's just one question!) then please click the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/C8QJCJ3>

The closing date for this survey will be **Friday 7th February at 5pm**

Cracking CPD

The following course are coming up in the next few weeks which might interest you:

<u>Provider</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Course title</u>	<u>Cost</u>
MTSA	10/2/20	4pm	Raising the achievement of white working class boys	£50
New Horizons	28/1/20	PM	SEN forum for teachers	£10
TT Education	28/2/29	9.15-3.30	Raising attainment in maths	£299
Optimus	5/2/20	9-4.30pm	Inclusion and well being	Free
PIXL	27/2/29	9-4pm	English conference	£160

To book any courses then please see your school CPD lead for further details.

Attendance Awards—Amazing or Atrocious?

This week we look at the question of attendance awards and whether they are a good thing or not.

Going to school or work is important, but not as important as mental wellbeing and health. Rachel Wright argues why schools need to stop giving out attendance awards.

‘Four reasons my son won’t be collecting his 100% attendance award’ became a social media viral phenomenon in 2017.

As a blogger and author of a couple of books, I have spent hours crafting and editing words in the hope they resonate and impact people’s lives. It was therefore typical that while curled up on the sofa one Friday night, half watching a romantic comedy, I fired off a couple of hundred words into Facebook that ended up circling the globe and being seen by over four million people. If only I’d sold that many books! The four points of the blog were simple.

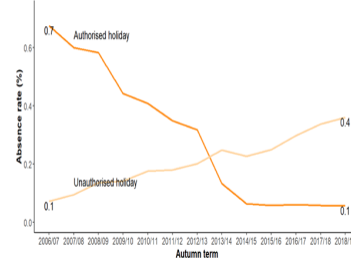
1. We don’t reward luck.
2. 100% attendance awards can demonise the weakest, the most vulnerable and those with disabilities.
3. Children don’t control their attendance.
4. We are taking our son out of school – life is short.

The research

Since I pressed ‘post,’ the story caused controversy around the world, hitting the national press and radio. On the one hand, many felt the merits of attendance awards were abundantly clear. Children who go to school have more chance to learn and live more successful lives.

The government’s own research shows the more children go to school, the better they do in exams, although this particular piece of research is fairly vague on other defining factors. Statistics released earlier this year show the majority of absences are due to sickness, highest in schools with special educational needs, and unauthorised absences continue to rise year on year, despite overall absences going down

Years: Autumn term 2006 to Autumn term 2018
Coverage: England (state-funded primary and secondary schools only)



Parents are responsible, not children

A vital role of schools is to inspire students to view hard work and perseverance as fundamental in making a difference to their lives. Yet attendance awards have the underlying message that pupils are rewarded for things they have absolutely no control over, whether it is a term-time holiday or chicken pox.

If ‘attendance awards’ are being handed out then, like fines, they ought to be targeted at the parents.

Interestingly, the government has always considered parent/carers responsible for children’s absenteeism. Aside from raiding a six-year-old’s piggy bank to pay the local authority’s (LA’s) fine, the government identifies that it is the parent who decides whether a child goes to school, stays home sick or flies off to Spain.

If ‘attendance awards’ are being handed out then, like fines, they ought to be targeted at the parents. A cask of wine, free afterschool clubs or a packed lunch making service are all possible suggestions which might just motivate parents.

Vilifying the vulnerable

Attendance awards have always gone straight from the school bag to recycling bin in our house because our eldest child has severe and life-limiting disabilities. Our family values state we value and support all people. One child is not rewarded for avoiding hospital appointments, medical emergencies or chronic conditions. It is important my children know any physical or emotional vulnerability they have does not single them out, rather it is an opportunity for us to adapt, support and nurture.

There are stories of children missing out on end of year trips because chemotherapy treatment reduced their attendance percentage. Infant school pupils sitting in class watching their peers play on a bouncy castle put on for the children who achieved their ‘attendance target.’

There are schools who treat their staff with the same contempt by promoting attendance rewards on teachers too.

Attendance awards suggest showing up is good enough – is that the message senior leadership teams want to place on their staff and pupils?

Going to school or work is important but it isn’t more important than health, grief or mental wellbeing. The underlying toxic message of attendance awards is that strong is good, healthy is best, sickness and fragility should be avoided, minimised and marginalised. For a community of staff and pupils to thrive it needs the opposite of these values. A nurturing community values the teachers and students over productivity, fosters kindness, facilitates hard work and celebrates diversity.

When a reward becomes shaming

Attendance awards have the potential for a more sinister side in the playground, especially with the infamous ‘weekly class attendance award.’ I have walked alongside children at school discussing their frustration that a particular child in their class prevents them from ever receiving the end of week class attendance certificate because they are frequently sick.

If the majority of children receive an award for attendance, with the struggling select few left without, the impact is shame. If the collective fail to receive an award because of the vulnerable or disadvantaged, it is toxic to the community and has the potential to perpetuate bullying.

Attendance awards, particularly 100% attendance awards, are the antipathy of a community founded on equity, diversity and inclusion.

What are the other options?

In every other aspect of school life, targets are expected to be SMART. Yet school attendance is presented to children as a blanket target which is anything but SMART. Attendance strategies which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely are much more likely to be successful. Most importantly, targets need to be *specific* to the child and their family, not the school or Ofsted.

Ofsted identifies co-production with parents as an essential aspect of an outstanding school. A passion for bridging the gap between parents and professionals has resulted in the development of CPD accredited training for schools who want to communicate effectively and work co-productively with parents and carers.

“Attendance awards have the underlying message that pupils are rewarded for things they have absolutely no control over”

Digestible Documents

This week we present you with a blog which might give you something to reflect on about Why discretionary effort is bad for our wellbeing

If you're someone who always goes the extra mile, you could be doing yourself more harm than good. John Dabell explains why we shouldn't make it a habit.

Teaching requires bags and bags of energy because it is non-stop give, give, give. The job demands being on top of your game and being battle-ready.

However, there is an unhealthy 'sink or swim' mentality in many schools and many teachers struggle to cope and keep going. This isn't surprising as the workload pressures are huge and stress levels are commonly bouncing around in the red zone, especially when teachers don't feel valued. According to the latest 2019 Teacher Wellbeing Index, the wellbeing of education professionals is lower than the general population and stress levels have increased for the third consecutive year. Are you well?

After years and years of neglect, wellbeing is high profile and riding the crest of a wave. Many school leaders have finally woken up to the fact that the mental and physical health of their staff is important and schools that focus on wellbeing secure the best possible outcomes for their pupils.

There are a whole raft of ideas and initiatives that schools have now implemented to help their staff stay energised, focused and positive throughout the school year. These range from mindfulness, yoga sessions, mental health first aid training and lunchtime salsa classes to abolishing marking and email curfews.

Various interventions to facilitate resilience, energy or stress management are up and running and schools are keen to improve the emotional and psycho-social quality of life of their staff.

Discretionary effort can be bad for

wellbeing because it can deplete resources, contribute to stress and lead to work or family conflicts

The implications for schools that focus on employee wellbeing are substantial, and they can expect a considerable return on their investment: staff are happier, they feel better about themselves and happy teachers make happy pupils.

Almost, that is. A curious negative side-effect of treating everyone well within a supportive culture might be the unintended outcome of staff giving more of themselves and making the work-life balance worse.

One of the key recommendations of the Teacher Wellbeing Index is:

'Overwork has become normalised across education. Healthy working practices and boundaries need to become the new, celebrated norm. With improved levels of health, teachers will be more physically and emotionally present to learners.'

Overworking is inevitable in the pressure cooker of a school and not easy to control or put a lid on, especially at key points in the year such as the run-up to Christmas.

However, teachers are notorious for doing too much and sometimes need telling to stop. At the very least they need to trim and self-edit their workloads to keep healthy. The role managers play in reducing workload is crucial and it is something the Teacher Wellbeing Index makes very clear.

Discretionary effort

When staff feel valued, they become more attached to the community of the school and this loyalty displays itself as discretionary effort. They start going the extra mile and are happy to do so. They have a strong sense of commitment with genuine buy-in and go above and beyond. In fact, when people have oceans of motivation, they can end up drowning in their own goodwill.

School leaders want their staff to be healthy and happy and if people are happy to do more and volunteer more of their time, brainpower and energy then what's the problem?

The problem is that discretionary effort can be bad for wellbeing because it can deplete mental, emotional and physical resources, contribute to stress and can lead to work or family conflicts. Overworking is killing us and let's be clear - this is unpaid overtime.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady states:

'It's not okay for bosses to steal their workers' time. Lots of us are willing to put in a few extra hours when it's needed, but too many employers are taking advantage.

Overworking staff hurts productivity, leaves workers stressed and exhausted and eats into time that should be spent with family and friends.'

An early grave

Staff can quite simply work too hard and they need to be gently reminded that there is a cut-off point and there are no brownie points for digging themselves an early grave.

If not managed with care and discretion, discretionary effort could lead to stress, burnout, staff becoming unwell and, sometimes, never to return.

Of course, communicating this is far from easy as staff who give want to keep on giving. Employee engagement is key to any organisation and lots of managers elsewhere will be desperately trying to unlock the potential of discretionary effort. For them, getting people to give more is an uphill struggle.

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But not in schools. Many teachers go the extra mile and beyond the call of duty. They naturally build emotional connections with their classes and school and they naturally give more than minimum effort. They do this because they put children first and exert extra effort to produce extraordinary results.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the full article