

Pupil wellbeing ambassador programmes

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Introduction

A wellbeing ambassador is a pupil representative with a special responsibility for leading and promoting the wellbeing of the school population. Not necessarily an isolated role, a wellbeing ambassador may be part of a wider group of elected students, each with a particular focus, e.g. anti-bullying, mental health, online safety, etc.

Collectively, these pupils may work across the school as peer supporters and wellbeing campaigners – wellbeing ambassadors are at the very heart of a school's wellbeing work.

Organising the wellbeing ambassador programme

- Decide on how many roles are needed in the wellbeing team. Depending on how the ambassador scheme is run, 10 is a fairly good starting point as it means you can have two ambassadors 'on duty' each day of the week.
- Have time-limited, elected positions – this means that pupils need to apply for a role, with the understanding that they will serve for a defined period of time (ideally, a whole school year) before stepping down.
- Ensure the application process involves completing a form alongside a character reference from a teacher. How appointments are made is up to individual schools – you may prefer a school-wide ballot or for candidates to meet with a panel of teaching staff who then decide. Either way, this is an opportunity for pupils to gain real experience of applying for a job!
- Invest in the team. You might want to support them to undertake some basic training in listening skills and spend some time discussing the realities of being an ambassador. External organisations, such as the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust (<http://www.cwmt.org>), may be able to support you with this.
- Make the programme meaningful. Where can the wellbeing ambassadors contribute to the running of the school and feed into decision-making processes? What regular opportunities can they have to meet with senior staff?
- Run surgeries – for example, convert a classroom into a 'wellbeing zone' at lunchtimes, where pupils can pop in and chat to an ambassador if they're worried about something. An example where this has been successful is the Magna Carta School in Runnymede (<http://www.magnacarta.surrey.sch.uk/511/pastoral/wellbeing-zone>). Their wellbeing ambassadors have been trained to listen to the concerns of other students – and when to pass on information to members of staff. Pupils sometimes find it easier to

disclose bullying issues, worries about schoolwork, or health problems to a peer, rather than an adult – a wellbeing zone gives those students a safe space to visit at lunchtimes.

- Take care of your ambassadors – they have school pressures of their own, and undertaking a role like this should enhance rather than harm their time at school. Ensure they have regular contact with a designated member of staff responsible for overseeing their wellbeing.

Additional points

- Ambassadors may be helpful in translating certain school policies into pupil-friendly language.
- A school governor with a particular interest in wellbeing may make an excellent mentor for wellbeing ambassadors.
- If there are particular concerns raised about an issue (e.g. bullying, self-harm, sexting) through a wellbeing audit, then use your ambassadors. Where appropriate, let the ambassadors advise on the realities of those issues from their perspective as young people; their perception of what's needed may differ greatly from yours.
- Share – if you run an ambassador scheme that works, then tell others!

Responsibilities of wellbeing ambassadors

- Undertake an audit of the school to establish what the student body and staff highlight as being the main concerns, to act as a starting point and ensure there are some strong objectives to work towards.
- Contribute to the running of the school by feeding into the decision-making processes for pupil wellbeing areas.
- Help to support others pupils with health and wellbeing issues they are experiencing.
- Lead a range of activities within the school that promote kindness, diversity, respect, good behaviour and provide extra support for pupils who may need it.
- Run surgeries for other pupils to drop into at lunch or break times, and talk to other pupils about their worries.
- Have regular contact with a designated member of staff responsible for overseeing their wellbeing.
- Help to translate certain school policies into pupil-friendly language.
- Advise on the realities of the issues affecting pupils from their perspective as young people.
- Arrange training related to the role.