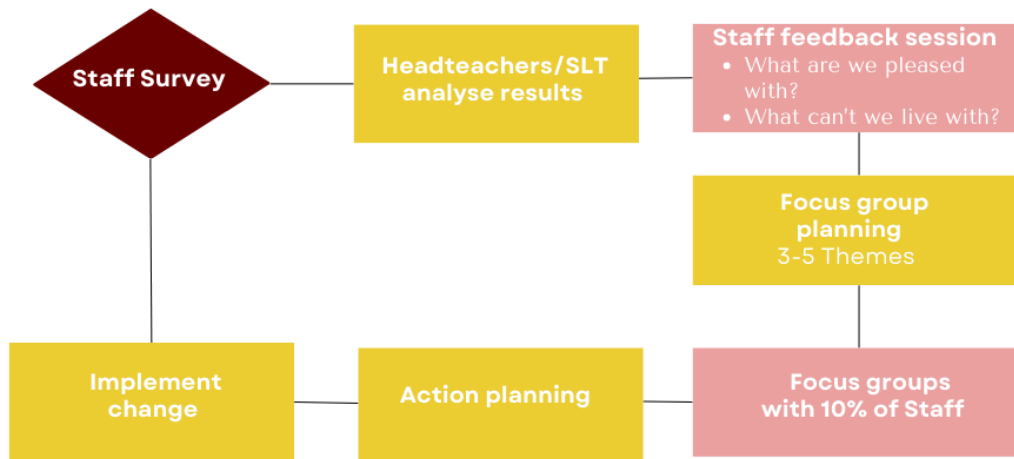


Staff Experience and Wellbeing Survey 2023

Focus Group Guidance Notes

Staff survey process:



Purpose of staff focus groups:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of why staff have responded as they have in the staff survey in 3-5 key areas for desired improvement
2. Listen to staff to understand
3. Explore with staff possible improvement strategies
4. Ensure staff are a continuous part of the process (voice, understanding and change)

How to conduct focus groups:

Focus groups should be undertaken with a minimum of 10% of staff and should involve a small number of people (usually six to eight participants) in each group who are guided through a discussion by a moderator. It is important to have separate focus groups for teaching and professional services staff. A note taker should be present to record key discussion points and actions.

The key to running a successful focus group is in your ability to make the participants feel secure and relaxed. A well-run focus group is able to provide a richer understanding than you may get from a personal one-to-one interview or a survey. The dynamics within a well-run focus group tend to lead to more contextualised and developed answers than participants are likely to share during individual interviews.

Before focus groups take place:

- The headteacher and school leadership team should ensure they have reviewed their Edurio school survey report in full and used the Edurio online platform to interrogate the results further, reviewing additional comments made by staff under each question

- Focus groups should only take place once the school's wider survey feedback session with staff has taken place and areas of exploration have collectively been identified
- Themes identified in the staff feedback session should be considered in conjunction with the areas for improvement highlighted in the survey report to decide on the themes and questions to ask during focus group sessions
- There are, however, four key themes that the trust-wide report shows should be areas of investigation for us: W, X, Y and Z. These may feature as focus areas for your school as well. However, if they don't, we would be grateful if you could hold an additional focus group to look at these themes to help inform any action we should take as a family of schools

Planning for focus groups:

- The template focus group report should be used to plan, facilitate and record the outputs of your focus groups
- In advance of the focus group, identify the three to five key themes for exploration. This should be informed by the areas for exploration identified in your staff survey feedback session - plus anything else you think it's important to understand from your school's staff survey
- For each theme, identify three to four questions to help shape and guide the discussion so you can fully define and understand the issues in full. These questions should help the focus group to:
 - 1) define the theme of the discussion e.g., ask: what do we mean by student behaviour?
 - 2) understand why e.g., ask: why do you think staff would have responded in that way? What's behind it?
 - 3) consider possible solutions e.g., ask: what actions will have the most impact in addressing this?
 - 4) include staff in facilitating change e.g., ask: how can staff be involved in the change process?
- Invite a minimum of 10% of staff to participate and each focus group should be made up of six to eight members of staff, selected at random and representing a diverse cross-section of your staff population. Avoid mixing teaching and professional services staff together
- Focus groups should last c. 30 - 45 minutes depending on the number of themes you want to discuss
- The room should be set up in an inviting way with tables and chairs laid out to aid group discussion
- Say thank you to staff in advance by providing a big box of chocolates or biscuits that can be enjoyed during the session
- A facilitator should be identified to lead the focus group and be fully briefed in advance. Ideally not the headteacher to allow for a more open and honest discussion. Choose a facilitator that you feel confident staff will talk openly with
- A notetaker should be appointed to record the discussion in the focus group report

Running focus groups:

The facilitator should:

- Set the scene and explain the purpose for the session
- Set out some ground rules around listening and be respectful of each other's views
- Provide hard copies of the survey report as a reference tool, remembering to collect these back in at the end of the session
- Explain how the themes have been identified
- Use the themes and questions identified in the focus group report to structure the discussion
- Listen and encourage participation from all the group members
- Be flexible, but ensure that the group is generally on time and focused on the topics
- Challenge and support participants (for example in the event of breakaway conversations)
- Use prompts and probes to identify underlying beliefs, reasoning and experience
- Politely and diplomatically enforce ground rules throughout the session (as needed)
- Summarise the discussion from time to time to check that you are getting a good understanding of the participants' comments
- Thank participants for their input and outline next steps at the end of the session

The notetaker should:

- Record key comments and actions in the focus group report (linked below)

Supporting resources:

- Edurio school staff survey report
- Edurio staff survey online platform
- Template focus group report to help plan, facilitate and record your focus group sessions