

HEARTS AT WORK



Why Happy Teachers Create Great Schools

*A Resource Book for Principals, Leadership Teams, and Teachers on
Fostering Teacher Wellbeing, Strengthening Morale,
and Developing Schools of Excellence*



**CHAPTER ALIGNED REFLECTIONS, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENTS,
PULSE SURVEYS AND MORE FOR PRINCIPALS, LEADERSHIP TEAMS,
TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

CHAPTER 7

Cultivating a Positive School Climate

Chapter Summary

- A positive school climate is how a school feels every day, not what it claims to be.
- Safety, respect, inclusion, and recognition shape trust and belonging.
- Measuring climate helps leaders see what is really happening beneath the surface.
- Celebration strengthens morale, while unchecked toxicity erodes trust.
- When principals act consistently, climate improves naturally over time.

Reflection Prompts (For Principals)

- If I were a teacher or student here, how would this school feel emotionally?
- What do our climate data and daily behaviours tell us—do they match?
- Who feels most included in this school, and who might feel invisible?
- How do we celebrate effort and progress, not just results?
- When bullying or toxic behaviour appears, do we respond early and fairly?

Chapter-End Action Steps (Next 8–12 Weeks)

- Conduct a simple climate check-in with teachers and students.
- Identify one inclusion practice to strengthen (voice, visibility, fairness).
- Introduce or refresh a recognition ritual (weekly, monthly, informal).
- Review anti-bullying policies and reporting systems for clarity and trust.
- Model respectful behaviour consistently in meetings and conflict situations.

Activities for Principals

Activity 1: School Climate Walkthrough

Time: 30 minutes. Walk through classrooms, corridors, staff rooms, and playgrounds.

Ask yourself:

- Do people look safe and comfortable?
- Are interactions respectful?
- Is joy visible—or tension?

Write down 3 observations and 1 action.

Activity 2: Climate Conversation Circle

Time: 45 minutes. With teachers or student leaders, ask:

- What makes you feel proud of this school?
- What makes you feel uncomfortable or unheard?
- What's one thing we should protect?

Listen without defending. Act on one insight.

Activity 3: Recognition Mapping

List:

- Who gets recognised often?
- Who rarely gets noticed?

Create one way to broaden recognition beyond high performers.

School Self-Assessment Tool

Cultivating a Positive School Climate

Rating Scale

1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Mostly; 4 = Consistently

A. Defining & Measuring Climate

- We regularly assess how students and teachers feel at school
- Climate data is discussed, not just collected
- Observations support survey findings
- Feedback leads to visible action

B. Inclusivity & Respect

- Expectations for respectful behaviour are clear and consistent
- Diverse voices are invited and valued
- Bias and stereotypes are addressed constructively
- Leaders model inclusive behaviour daily

C. Celebrating Achievements & Milestones

- Teacher effort is recognised regularly
- Progress is celebrated, not just results
- Recognition feels sincere and inclusive
- Peer appreciation is encouraged

D. Bullying & Toxic Behaviours

- Clear anti-bullying policies are known and trusted
- Reporting feels safe and confidential
- Responses are timely, fair, and consistent
- Education and empathy are part of intervention

Overall Climate Reflection

Strongest area: _____

Area needing attention: _____

One immediate improvement action: _____

Leadership Commitment

One climate practice I will personally strengthen this term: _____

How I will review progress: _____

Review date: _____

Student School Climate Survey

(Upper Primary, Middle & Secondary – adapt language as needed)

Purpose:

We want to understand how students experience our school. Your answers are confidential and will help make the school a better place for everyone.

Response Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

A. Safety & Well-Being

1. I feel safe when I am in school.
2. I know whom to approach if I feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
3. Teachers and adults take student concerns seriously.
4. I feel emotionally safe to express myself at school.

B. Respect & Inclusion

1. Students are treated with respect in this school.
2. Differences (language, background, abilities) are respected here.
3. I feel accepted for who I am.
4. Teachers listen to students' opinions and ideas.

C. Relationships & Belonging

1. I feel connected to my classmates.
2. At least one teacher or adult in school cares about me.

3. Students generally treat each other kindly.
4. I feel proud to be a student of this school.

D. Recognition & Encouragement

1. My efforts are noticed, not just my marks.
2. Good behaviour and helpful actions are appreciated.
3. I feel encouraged to try new things without fear of failure.

E. Bullying & Fairness

1. Bullying is taken seriously in this school.
2. I know how to report bullying if it happens.
3. Rules are applied fairly to all students.

Open-Ended Questions (Optional)

- One thing that makes our school a good place to be:
- One thing that could make our school better:

Student Closing Note

Thank you for sharing honestly. Your voice helps improve our school.

Parent School Climate Survey

Purpose:

This survey helps the school understand how parents experience the school environment. Your feedback will guide improvement efforts.

Response Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

A. Safety & Well-Being

1. My child feels safe at school.
2. The school takes student well-being seriously.
3. Concerns related to safety are addressed promptly.

B. Respect & Inclusion

1. The school treats students with respect and dignity.
2. Diversity and differences are valued in this school.
3. My child feels included and accepted.

C. Communication & Trust

1. The school communicates openly and clearly with parents.
2. I feel comfortable approaching teachers or school leaders.
3. Decisions are explained transparently when needed.

D. Recognition & School Culture

1. The school recognises student effort, not just academic results.
2. Achievements and milestones are celebrated meaningfully.
3. The school environment feels positive and welcoming.

E. Bullying & Behaviour

1. The school handles bullying or discipline issues fairly.
2. I trust the school to act in my child's best interest.
3. Behaviour expectations are clear and consistent.

Open-Ended Questions

- One thing the school does well for students' emotional and social well-being:
- One suggestion to improve the school climate:

Parent Closing Note

Thank you for your partnership. Your feedback helps us create a safe and supportive school.

How Principals Should Use These Surveys (Best Practice)

- Administer once or twice a year
- Share overall trends, not individual responses
- Identify 1–2 priority actions, not everything
- Communicate clearly: "This is what we heard, this is what we will do"

Closing Thought for Principals

School climate is shaped less by policies and more by daily leadership choices. When people feel safe, respected, and recognised, morale rises naturally—and learning follows.