



Woodrow First School

Well-being Policy

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Well-being Policy

Introduction

Fostering employee well-being is good for staff, pupils and for the school/academy. Promoting well-being can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals and organisations can thrive. Good health and well-being can be a core enabler of employee engagement, attendance and school/academy performance.

Definitions

Well-being

The Department of Health define **'well-being'** as feeling good and functioning well, which can be measured subjectively and objectively. However, it is often used as an alternative phrase to 'mental health'. Whilst this Policy will adopt a broader definition capturing physical and mental well-being, it will primarily focus on mental well-being.

Higher levels of well-being are associated with positive health behaviours in adults; those people with a healthy diet and who engage in physical activity are more likely to have higher levels of well-being. Well-being can protect against developing illness.

Five ways to well-being are reported* to be:

- Connect
- Be active
- Take notice
- Keep learning
- Give

**Five ways to Well-being – Howarth et al 2011*

Mental Health

Like physical health, mental health can cover a spectrum of moods and wellness from good mental well-being to severe mental health problems. Mental well-being refers to the ability to cope with day-to-day pressures of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. Poor mental health is struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety and mental health problems usually refers to more protracted situations, which affect our ability to function as usual. For example, depression, anxiety, phobias and Obsessive- Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Everyone's experience and coping mechanisms are different. Symptoms can range from mild to

severe. Severe mental health problems include schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, which often require more complex and/or long-term treatments.

Stress

The HSE definition of '**stress**' is 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other demands placed on them' is accepted. However, it is acknowledged that pressures or stressors do not always result in 'stress' and that stress is not a medical condition in itself. We also acknowledge that stressors can be external to the workplace, but the school's primary responsibility will be to address work-related issues. For further details refer to the Stress Management Policy/Guidance.

Emotional Resilience

The ability with which an individual is able to bounce back after periods of stress and adversity and properly adapt to stressors. Key elements include flexibility to change, ability to foster good relationships, to feel a sense of control over work/workflow and the ability to establish a sense of community at work.

Emotional resilience can be learned; employers can build and support employees' emotional resilience to manage stress levels. Structured resilience training and mindfulness programmes can teach employees how to deal with pressure and recognise signs of stress. Mindfulness techniques using meditation and breathing exercises to help focus on the present and reduce stress-inducing thought processes are useful tools to reduce staff mental ill-health.

Mental Resilience

Mental resilience differs from emotional resilience, the focus here is on cognitive thinking and how an individual processes information.

Aim

This Policy has been developed to promote and encourage health and well-being at work. In accordance with the school/academy priorities of supporting and valuing staff, it is acknowledged that staff well-being is of paramount importance and the potential impact work can have on that. This Policy is designed to bring existing staff well-being issues to the fore, whilst seeking to create a culture where negative well-being issues are identified, minimised and managed before they affect the well-being of staff.

The aim will be to develop managements skills to promote mental well-being and manage mental health problems effectively. A supportive culture also impacts positively on recruitment and retention and promotes inclusivity.

Scope

This Policy applies to all employees and prospective employees being recruited. Mental health issues can affect anyone. It includes the promotion of mental and physical well-being, development of management skills to deal with mental health issues effectively and the provision of support to employees who are experiencing or have experienced mental health problems. Reference is specifically made to women with menopausal issues.

Links to Other Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Health and Safety Policy and Stress Management Policy.

Other related policies include:

- Sickness Absence Management
- Alcohol, Drug and Substance Abuse
- Data Protection
- Flexible Working
- Grievance Policy
- Recruitment and Selection

Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the effective implementation of this Policy.

School Leaders

- Lead by example.
- Monitor the school workplace, identify hazards, risks and stressors and take steps to prevent, eliminate or reduce those risks as far as reasonably practicable.
- Ensure the ethos and strategic plans for the school reflects its commitment to building a healthy working environment, supportive of staff well-being.
- Ensure effective communication between school leaders and staff, particularly where there are organisational changes.
- Support sensitively employees who are known to have mental health problems or to be experiencing stress in or outside of work. There will be legal obligations including the requirement to make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities, but more broadly, supporting staff is being a responsible employer.
- Conduct Return to Work meetings following each absence and address any issues that are picked up from the discussion.

- Ensure staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, staff have the necessary training and resources to do their roles and have meaningful development opportunities.
- Monitor workloads and working time to ensure staff are not overworking and monitor holidays for leadership staff and ensure full year staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Ensure all school leaders and supervisory staff are trained in appropriate management skills and have received mental health/disability awareness/ resilience training, to be able to conduct their roles in a manner consistent with the maintenance of good mental health in the workplace. An emotionally resilient manager can hold teams together under pressure.
- Ensuring the governing body regularly reviews and oversees support for staff and staff health and well-being.

Employees

- Maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Be alert to signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves or their colleagues.
- Support colleagues, offering or signposting practical and emotional help.
- Be open about and raise any issues of concern, or flag any difficulties they are experiencing with their line manager in the first instance and seek appropriate help.
- Accept opportunities for counselling or Occupational Health referrals when recommended or relevant training offered.

Occupational Health

- Provide specialist advice and recommendations on physical and mental well-being, including referrals to other specialist agencies as required.
- Recommend school leaders undertake stress risk assessments where appropriate.
- Support staff who have been off sick due to stress or mental health problems and advise on planned returns to work.

Human Resources

- Provide advice and support to school leaders in relation to this Policy.
- Offer training and awareness courses on workplace mental well-being.

Trade Union/Health and Safety representatives

- Support members on any work-related stress issues.
- Consulted on any changes to workplace design that could precipitate stress.
- Involved in any risk assessment processes.

Key Principles and Actions

This Policy forms part of the school's general Health and Safety Policy arrangements and contributes to the promotion of good health and prevention of poor health.

It is recognised that many conditions, including mental-health problems may not be visible. For example, neurodiverse conditions such as Asperger's and dyslexia and conditions such as diabetes and ME. Also, staff may not have clear diagnoses and could experience a variety of symptoms, which may not always be prevalent. There may be a continuum of health through to ill-health which may vary from time to time and therefore staff abilities and performance may also be changeable. Reasonable adjustments may be required.

It is recognised that work-related stress can have a detrimental effect on well-being and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. Work stress risk assessments will be conducted as appropriate. Further details regarding managing work-related stress can be found in the separate **Stress Management Policy/Guidance**.

With an increase in female workers of an age where they may be experiencing the menopause and given the significant time span over which employees may experience associated symptoms, we acknowledge the importance of employer's support. Whilst not all women will have any difficulties, some women may need support with unwelcome symptoms. They should be able to raise any difficulties without fear of discrimination or any reprisals.

The school will commit to the following actions:

- To develop a culture based on trust, support and mutual respect; where mental health is normalised and employees are able to talk openly about their work and any mental health problems and report any difficulties, without fear of discrimination or any reprisals.
- To provide support and assistance for employees experiencing mental health difficulties. Also, to ensure that they are treated fairly, consistently and confidentially. Staff will be encouraged to seek support from their own GP, referred to Occupational Health and offered access to counselling as appropriate. Signposted to Education Support (<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk>). Reasonable adjustments will be considered.
- To positively encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems and ensure recruitment and selection procedures are fair, non-discriminatory and adjustments offered. We recognise that with appropriate

support, most people who have experienced or who have ongoing mental health problems can continue to work successfully.

- Encourage Wellness Action Plans to be drawn up with staff (model template below and guidance available at: www.mind.org.uk/workplace). These are personalised and practical tools to remind staff and their managers what they need to do to stay well on an individual basis, how best to practically support them in their role, captures any stress triggers and responses and any health needs.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed *annually* and will be monitored regarding its effectiveness to embody the aim and key principles. Key Performance Indicators which may be used: working hours; accidents at work; absence levels and reasons; staff grievances; turnover; use of OH/counselling services; employee surveys and exit interviews.

Useful References and Contacts

- **Education Support (previously Teacher Support Network)**
Website: www.educationsupport.org.uk or by calling the Support Line on 08000 562 561 (provides confidential telephone counselling and coaching) *offers practical and emotional support services to teachers and other staff in education*
- **Mind**
Website: www.mind.org.uk with FAQs Infoline on 0300 123 3393 or email info@mind.org.uk
Charity providing advice and support to empower anyone with mental health problems - campaign to raise awareness and improve services

Mind Workplace: www.mind.org.uk/workplace consultancy and training
- **The Samaritans**
Website: www.samaritans.org call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org
Worcester Office: 10 Sansome Place, Worcester, WR1 1UA
someone to talk to who will give you support - open 24 hours a day
- **Saneline**
Website: www.sane.org.uk or call 0300 304 7000

- **Mindful Employer**
Website: www.mindfulemployer.net
- CIPD/Mind 'People Managers' Guide to Mental Health' (2018)
- 'Thriving at work: the Stevenson/Farmer review of Mental Health and employers Review' (Independent government review) (2017)
sets out core principles and standards for employers to commit
- 'How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem'
Mind Workplace: www.mind.org.uk/workplace (Resource 4)
- Howarth et al (New Economics Foundation) – 'Five Ways to Well-being'
- Liggy Webb – 'Emotional Resilience: How to cope when everything around you keeps changing' (2013)
Website: www.liggywebb.com
- ONS (2013) – 'Measuring What Matters: Understanding the Nation's Well-being' and 'Personal Well-being in the UK'

Appendix 1 - Encourage Wellness Action Plan template

WELLNESS ACTION PLAN

A WAP reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work and details what our line managers can do to better support us. It also helps us to develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these to our manager.

In cases where someone has had to take time off as a result of a mental health problem, a WAP can be used as part of the return-to-work process to set out what steps you and your manager plan to take to support recovery.

The information in this form will be held confidentially and regularly reviewed by you and your manager together. You only need to provide information that you are comfortable sharing and that relates to your role and workplace. This form is not legally binding, but it will help you and your manager to agree, together, how to practically support you in your role and address any health needs.

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that data gathered in this form will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the permission of the member of staff.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

(for example taking an adequate lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, light and space in the office, opportunities to get to know colleagues)

2. What can your manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work?

(for example regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments)

3. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you? (for example conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan)
4. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work? (for example you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, have difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion or headaches)
5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health? (for example changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues)
6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact? (for example extra catch-up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising workload, flexible working patterns, consider reasonable adjustments)
7. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of? (for example a preference for more face-to-face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time prior to meetings or creative tasks, negotiation on deadlines before they are set, having access to a mentor for questions you might not want to bother your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear deadlines if you have a tendency towards perfectionism or overworking a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon)
8. If we notice early warning signs that you are feeling mentally unwell, what should we do? (for example talk to me discreetly about it, contact someone that I have asked to be contacted)

9. What steps can you take if you start to feel mentally unwell at work? Is there anything we need to do to facilitate them? (for example you might like to take a break from your desk and go for a short walk, or ask your line manager for support)
10. Who would you like us to contact if we have concerns about your well-being?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Employee signature:

(print name)

Date:

Employer signature:

(print name)

Date:

Date to be reviewed: