



**Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT)**  
**Company Number 10847279**

**Staff Wellbeing Policy**

**"Every child matters and no child is ever left behind..."**

***"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."  
Luke 18:15-17***

Policy Reviewed and Adopted by Board of Directors: 20/09/23 (as part of staff handbook review)

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Responsible Officer:COO

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## **Vision Statement**

**At the heart of our vision is our commitment to ensure all of our schools are places where children and young people develop and thrive academically, socially, culturally and spiritually. The drive for excellence and effectiveness in our schools is paramount, but not merely because the Government says so. The enabling of every child to flourish in their potential as a child of God is a sign and expression of the Kingdom and is at the heart of the Trust's distinctive mission.**

## **Statement of intent**

**The Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT)** is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. Preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of the school's staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, the school understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of the school and staff members in supporting wellbeing and promoting mental health, and to advise employees on how to deal with mental health issues and prevent stress.

The school's Christian vision and associated values underpin relationships at all levels in the school community, enabling staff to live well together and flourish. Leaders ensure that there are effective systems for the early identification of issues connected to mental health and wellbeing. Staff should feel confident to express their views and concerns and feel that are listened to.

The DNDLT has signed up to the DfE staff workload charter (appendix 1)

## **1. About this policy**

- 1.1. The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all the staff who work in our Academies. We recognise the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the work at an Academy within the Trust, can adversely affect the wellbeing of staff at work.
- 1.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's "Stress at Work Policy" at 4.3 of this Staff Handbook.
- 1.3. The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of the Trust and staff members in supporting wellbeing and promoting mental health, and to advise employees on how to deal with mental health issues and prevent stress.
- 1.4. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.
- 1.5. The Trust has overall responsibility for this policy, including keeping it under review.
- 1.6. Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

## **2. Who does this policy apply to?**

- 2.1. This policy applies to all employees, workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency / supply workers, and volunteers.

## **3. Who is responsible for this policy?**

- 3.1. The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2. Any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this policy should be referred to your line manager in the first instance.
- 3.3. This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

## **4. Legal obligations**

- 4.1. The Trust has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised in our Academies.
- 4.2. This policy takes account of our obligations under:-
  - 4.2.1. the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
  - 4.2.2. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
  - 4.2.3. Employment Rights Act 1996;
  - 4.2.4. Protection from Harassment Act 1997;

- 4.2.5. Working Time Regulations 1998;
- 4.2.6. Equality Act 2010; and
- 4.2.7. DfE (2019) "workload reduction toolkit".

## **5. Understanding stress and mental health**

- 5.1. Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
- 5.2. Mental health is a term to describe our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.
- 5.3. There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress and undermines mental health.
- 5.4. Pressures outside of work, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal pressures of working in an Academy within the Trust.
- 5.5. We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person. We will adopt a case by case approach, following the approach set out below.

## **6. Our approach to mental wellbeing in the workplace**

- 6.1. The Trust will:
  - 6.1.1. Promote a culture of open communication by providing both formal and informal channels through which staff can raise concerns.
  - 6.1.2. Take account of stress and mental wellbeing when planning and allocating workloads, so far as reasonably practicable. The Trust will provide opportunities to discuss these through our appraisal and one-to-one supervision processes with line managers.
  - 6.1.3. Monitor work levels to ensure that staff are not overworking.
  - 6.1.4. Ensure any risk assessments consider work-related stress.
  - 6.1.5. Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy.
  - 6.1.6. Ensure that any change management processes or changes to job roles or functions minimise uncertainty and stress so far as reasonably possible.

- 6.1.7. Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause or worsen stress in particular so that our Academies are free from harassment, bullying and victimisation and address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action when necessary.
- 6.1.8. Provide training to help all staff understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps they can take to protect and enhance their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues.
- 6.1.9. Provide support services such as Occupational Health, confidential counselling and mental health first aiders for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

## **7. Supporting the implementation of this policy**

### **7.1. All staff should:-**

- 7.1.1. ensure that they are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives;
- 7.1.2. plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and co-operate with support, advice and guidance that may be offered by line managers or the Trust; and
- 7.1.3. speak to a manager or mental health first aider if they experience or are aware of a situation that may result in work-related stress or where mental wellbeing at work in an Academy within the Trust may be undermined;
- 7.1.4. be aware of the warning signs that can indicate difficulties in managing stress including the following indicators:-
  - 7.1.4.1. Behavioural indicators, such as difficulty sleeping, changes in eating habits, increased smoking or drinking, isolation from friends and family.
  - 7.1.4.2. Physical indicators, such as tiredness, indigestion and nausea, headaches, aching muscles, heart palpitations.
  - 7.1.4.3. Mental indicators, such as indecisiveness, difficulty concentrating, memory loss, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem.
  - 7.1.4.4. Emotional indicators, such as anger or irritability, anxiety, hypersensitivity, feeling drained and lethargic.

### **7.2. All line managers:-**

- 7.2.1. have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage in an Academy within the Trust; and
- 7.2.2. will be given training to support them to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage in this and should seek advice from HR in the event that they have concerns;

- 7.2.3. should provide support to staff by working in conjunction with HR advice and through making appropriate referrals to the Occupational Health where appropriate;
  - 7.2.4. should promote a culture of open communication;
  - 7.2.5. should effectively plan and provide feedback on performance;
  - 7.2.6. should ensure that staff receive necessary training;
  - 7.2.7. should monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary;
  - 7.2.8. should support Local Academy Councils to understand staff wellbeing and workloads in school to highlight appropriate actions to support staff; and
  - 7.2.9. should ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others, and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.
- 7.3. Mental health first aiders
- 7.3.1. have been appointed by the Trust, who can be contacted by any member of staff experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress; and
  - 7.3.2. will be available to staff to discuss your concerns and provide details of available support. Details mental health first aiders are available from your line manager or from the Trust central team
  - 7.3.3. will have access to a termly central trust facilitated network to support Mental Health First Aiders in their role.
- 7.4. Other services – the Trust has the following services in place to assist staff who may be suffering from stress or poor mental health:
- 7.4.1. Trained Mental Health First Aiders in our schools as a first point of contact. Staff can confidentially contact the central team office if they wish to be put in touch with a mental health first aider from a different school to their own.
  - 7.4.2. A confidential counselling service staffed by independent advisers with access to specialist counsellors. The helpline is available 24 hours a day ]. The helpline number is 0333 0002082 (please quote ARAG) and covers both employees and their immediate family members
  - 7.4.3. Occupational Health referrals, to provide specialist advice on work-related stress and mental wellbeing; to support individuals who have been off sick and advise on return to work plans, including phased returns and adjustments to support a return to work; and to make recommendations for workplace counsellors or specialists.
  - 7.4.4. The Trust lead for staff well-being and mental health is Jo Warner, [jo.warner@drmnewcanglican.org](mailto:jo.warner@drmnewcanglican.org)
- 7.5. Help and information can also be obtained from Mind, the mental health charity, [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) or the Samaritans, [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

## Appendix 1

### Staff workload charter

#### Our aims

**The DNDLT** is committed to considering and supporting the wellbeing of all our staff. As part of this commitment, and through a coordinated effort with school staff and leaders, we aim to ensure workload can be managed and reduced.

We recognise that staff workload can become overwhelming, which in turn affects staff wellbeing and prevents a healthy work-life balance. We believe that we have a collective responsibility to ensure working at the school remains manageable, a positive experience, and, above all, enjoyable.

By providing this support, we hope that we can retain and recruit more staff and meet our core values and ethos for helping and caring for one another.

To protect staff wellbeing, we will:

- Ensure staff have a fair and reasonable workload, including policies on marking, planning and data management.
- Provide high-quality training and CPD opportunities that meet the needs of individual staff members.
- Continue to review staff workload and ensure it always remains manageable.

#### Our commitments

We have agreed the following commitments and expectations between the Trust board, academy council, SLT and school staff, to demonstrate our support in helping to manage staff workload.

All staff working at the school can expect:

- To work within a clear code of conduct.
- To receive a robust and high-quality induction.
- To be provided with a trained mentor as part of their induction process.
- To be provided with training opportunities relevant to their role and responsibilities.
- To be allocated roles and responsibilities that are linked to their skill set and area of expertise or be provided with appropriate training to upskill and broaden areas of expertise.
- The fair and equal distribution of roles, responsibilities and tasks.
- If required, to collect data using streamlined processes that are beneficial to their work and receive robust training on using the school's data management systems.
- The support of the SLT to provide guidance and advice, and simplify school processes where possible.
- A consistent and fair Behaviour Policy which allows staff to work effectively and be provided with support from the SLT to manage behaviour effectively.
- An agreed communication protocol which outlines the expected response times from colleagues and external communications, e.g. from parents.
- The use of technology to ensure effective and efficient communication, document and data management, and access to information.



- To be provided with access to external support, such as an occupational health or a confidential listening service, if needed.
- To work within an environment where their wellbeing is prioritised and valued.
- All changes to school processes to be communicated clearly and the SLT to provide support with implementation.

In addition to the above, teaching staff at the school can expect:

- A clear curriculum planning scheme that provides flexibility, is fully resourced with high-quality materials and is planned over well-defined blocks of time.
- An agreed policy that ensures all marking undertaken is purposeful and focusses on quality feedback and the impact on pupil outcomes.

The headteacher and the SLT commit to the following:

- Conducting regular activities, e.g. staff surveys, to identify the areas of work that lead to high levels of workload and implementing approaches to reduce this
- Providing staff with regular opportunities to discuss areas they feel are creating high levels of workload and how these could be managed
- Implementing practices that allow for meaningful and useful communications to reduce workload
- Supporting ECTs and teachers in the early stages of their careers to adopt efficient work practices and keeping this support under regular review
- Encouraging a workplace culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance
- Making every effort to reduce the number of meetings, ensuring that those that take place are planned effectively and flexibly, and always have a key focus
- Providing staff with relevant training or CPD opportunities in school, including on recognising the early signs of stress
- Ensuring staff are clear about the purpose of marking and ensuring it is meaningful, and that they understand feedback can be given in many forms
- Ensuring the school's workload reduction initiative is included within the SDP and that enough resources are dedicated towards achieving this aim
- Monitoring staff absence levels, patterns and reasons, and using return to work meetings consistently and effectively
- Regularly monitoring the progress of work practices, including curriculum planning, communications, marking and feedback, and data collection, and adapting these where necessary
- Considering the impact of any potential changes to the school's practices before they are implemented and creating a clear implementation plan before changes are agreed
- Communicating changes to the school's practices to all staff and the whole school community, to ensure everyone understands the reasons behind the changes

The academy council and trustees commit to the following:

- Ensuring the school's ethos reflects its commitments to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing through the successful management of workload

- Ensuring it receives regular updates regarding absence levels that are broken down into the cause of absence and role of staff
- Making every effort to ensure committee meetings that school staff are expected to attend are purposeful, focussed and structured, and relevant to the school development priorities
- Considering the nature of information requests and being clear about the information needed from the SLT and school staff
- Providing staff with advanced notice of all monitoring visits and informing them of what the focus will be and what information is required
- Working within any policy agreements, including those relating to using technology to reduce workload
- Establishing the role of the mental health and wellbeing governor to support the mental health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils
- Regularly seeking views from staff on the impact of workload and working with the headteacher and SLT to improve any identified issues