STOUR VALE ACADEMY TRUST

# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

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# 1. Intent, aims and responsibilities

## 1.1. Statement of Intent

Stour Vale Academy Trust is committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for everyone in our community of schools and settings: staff, members, trustees and governors, volunteers, pupils (including children in nursery settings) and their families.

The following definitions of mental health illustrate and guide our approach.

> "Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." (World Health Organisation: 2014)
>
> "Mental Health is a positive concept rather than a deficit attribute. Mental health is a continuum, with good mental health at one end of the spectrum and mental illness at the other. We all move along this continuum and there will be times when most people need more support than at other times. Being able to recognise this is crucial in order to make positive changes." (Positive Mental Health - A Whole School Approach: Glazzard & Bostwick 2018)

## 1.2. Scope

- Section 1 of this document describes our approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all the members of our Trust community, staff and pupils alike. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff, parents/carers and governors.
- Section 2 explains our commitments to our staff. This is common to all schools and settings in the Trust.
- Section 3 relates to our support of pupils. This section is tailored to the needs of individual schools and settings in the Trust.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies in individual schools and settings:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy – regarding the reporting of concerns.
- Medical Policy (or equivalent) in cases where a pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue.
- SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.
- Behaviour Policy (or equivalent)
- Policies on planned and unplanned absence of staff
- Flexible working policy

Which are available in schools and settings and on the Trust's IT systems.

This policy takes into account the following documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, annually updated)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE 2015)
- Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach (PHE, 2021)
- The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, (DfE, 2021)
- Health Survey 2017 The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Education Professionals (Education Support Partnership, 2017)

This policy adheres to the principles under data protection law. For further information please review the Trust's data protection policy published on the Trust's website.

### 1.3. Consultation

This document takes into account a broad range of relevant literature and research. It was written in consultation with staff, pupils and parents, at the originating school or setting and revised through consultation with Headteachers, local governing bodies of Stour Vale member schools/settings and trades unions at the JCNC meeting on 19th April 2023.

### 1.4. Aims

Stour Vale Academy Trust promotes positive mental health for every pupil and staff member. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we recognise and respond to mental ill health. We pursue these aims through our:

- **Culture and leadership:** We promote trust and openness and a culture where we acknowledge our own and others' strengths and areas for development without fear of judgement. We recognise that staff wellbeing is not only a good thing itself but is critical in securing the best outcomes for our pupils. Trustees, members of Local Governing Bodies and school/setting leadership teams commit to *The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter* (DfE, 2021). Collaboration is one of the fundamental values of Stour Vale and we believe that this supports staff at all levels by encouraging them to share ideas, experience, skills, and workload with colleagues across the Trust.
- **Support for Pupils:** Pupils receive helpful education in managing mental health, resilience and how to support others. Mental Health is framed positively, with a focus on developing resilience and finding solutions rather than a list of mental health problems. Staff know pupils well, recognise their needs, and teach them how to seek help and feel confident in doing so.
- **Support for Staff:** (a full version of The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter is included in Appendix B). We commit to develop a long-term strategy for improving staff wellbeing that will:
    - Prioritise staff mental health
    - Give staff the support they need to look out for their own and other people's wellbeing
    - Give managers access to the training, tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage
    - Establish a clear communications policy
    - Give staff voice in decision-making
    - Drive down unnecessary workload
    - Champion flexible working
    - Champion diversity
    - Create a good behaviour culture
    - Support staff to progress in their careers
    - Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing
- **Clear Systems:** Staff know how to support their pupils and each other. There are clear referral systems in place for pupils, and staff know how to seek support for themselves and their colleagues.
- **Excellence in Training:** Teachers and other school/setting staff are not trained medical professionals. However, all staff are supported through regular training to identify the signs of mental health conditions and how to refer pupils for

additional support. Where a school/setting has a Mental Health Lead, they will support the training of other staff, making use of professional development opportunities from a range of mental health training providers.

## 1.5. Responsibilities

This policy aims to ensure all staff are supported to promote and support the mental health of pupils and each other.

### 1.5.1. General Responsibilities

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the appropriate staff member. If there is a concern that the pupil is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school/setting's safeguarding procedures should be followed. If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a colleague or themselves, they should avoid the potential for speculation and gossip and, if necessary, talk to the school/setting's Mental Health Lead, a mental health first aid trained colleague (if available), their line manager or a member of the leadership team for confidential support. The manager / MH Lead will ensure that the employee concerned is provided with appropriate support. The Trust has engaged a confidential mental health resource to provide practical advice and support, including counselling on issues, both inside and out of school or setting, that might impact wellbeing.

Possible warning signs in pupils and staff, which all staff should be aware of might include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement or performance
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretively
- An increase in lateness to, or absence from school / setting / work
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

### 1.5.2. Specific Responsibilities

- **Designated Mental Health Lead** – The role of Mental Health Lead, where one exists in the school/setting, is to act as a point of contact for parents, pupils, staff and external agencies and represent a strategic commitment to mental health. The Mental Health Lead ensures that mental health provision is appropriately led, managed and evaluated. A key part of the role is to focus on whole-school/setting approaches to promote good mental health.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy DSLs)** – The role of DSL with regard to this policy is to ensure that school/setting safeguarding

procedures are understood and followed with respect to issues associated with the mental health of pupils.

- **Special Educational Needs Coordinator** – The role of SENCo with regard to this policy is to assess and support pupils on the SEND register designated as SEMH.
- **Mental Health First Aiders** – In some Trust schools and settings, Mental Health First Aiders are trained to provide informal support and advice to teaching staff outside of the line-management structure. A list of Mental Health First Aiders will be kept alongside the conventional First Aid trained staff.

### 1.6. Workload Impact Assessment

This is a new policy, written with the input of staff, parents and pupils. It imposes no new duties on teaching or support staff. The process of raising concerns and managing disclosures is the existing statutory process covered in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Any additional training for teaching staff will be delivered during directed time. The Policy defines a new role of designated Mental Health Lead. The full workload impact assessment for this policy is included in Appendix C.

### 1.7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with trades unions and other stakeholders every three years unless significant changes to national policy and guidance require a more frequent review.

## 2. Supporting Colleagues

### 2.1. Organisational Commitments

Stour Vale Academy Trust commits to prioritising the mental health and emotional wellbeing of its staff. We recognise that working with children and young people can, on occasions, be challenging, whatever your role. Our principles embody our approach to mental health and wellbeing. We promote trust and openness and a culture where we acknowledge our own and others' strengths and areas for development without fear of judgement. Trustees of Stour Vale Academy Trust, members of Local Governing Bodies and school leadership teams commit to *The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter* (DfE, 2021). The eleven organisational commitments can be found in Appendix B.

In particular, Stour Vale Academy Trust, the Trustees, local governing bodies and Leadership Team commit to:

- **Prioritise staff mental health.** This means we will tackle mental health stigma and give the same consideration and support to mental health as physical health. We will measure staff wellbeing and act on the findings.
- **Minimise organisational stressors** and avoid unnecessary workload. Much organisational stress can be caused by unreasonably short deadlines, last-minute changes, ICT failures, poor behaviour of pupils and time pressures. We discourage a long- hours culture and encourage sound forward planning.
- Give all staff a **sense of secure autonomy**. We employ the best staff and trust them to do their job with autonomy and to deliver the best possible outcomes for children.
- Maintain systems to **support the quality of relationships** between colleagues and pupils, including school/setting behaviour policies, designed to reduce conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour, maintaining a calm, safe and disciplined environment.
- Encourage and model a **culture of support** from colleagues and line managers. Line managers are trained to support their colleagues and recognise the early signs of mental ill health.
- **Effective management of change**. We acknowledge that change can be stressful although necessary to ensure that our ways of working and structures are efficient and produce the best possible outcomes for pupils. Change, when necessary, is managed through consultation and clear communication, with a focus on staff workload and secure autonomy.

### 2.2. Workload

- Leaders will work proactively to drive down unnecessary workload, using resources such as the Workload Reduction Toolkit.
- School calendars will be planned in advance of the new school year and will pay due regard to directed time for teachers and other contractual matters.
- Workload will be planned to avoid conflicting deadlines. Any changes to the plan will be made with as much notice as possible and due regard to staff workload.
- Any change to policy or process will be subjected to a workload assessment and staff will be consulted prior to any changes being implemented. The full workload impact assessment for this policy is included in Appendix C.

- Senior and middle leaders recognise that they have a responsibility not to (even subconsciously) project an attitude that leads to a long-hours culture and recognise they have a responsibility to role model a healthy attitude towards both work and home life.
- Flexibility is supported in line with flexible working and planned absence policies.

### 2.3.Communication and Engagement

Clear guidelines for electronic communication are provided. The aim is to minimise unnecessary communication and reduce pressure on staff and there is no expectation on staff generally to answer emails sent out of school/setting hours before they are next in work.

Meetings are timetabled in advance with a clear focus and outcomes. The chair of each meeting should endeavour to stick to time and provide a brief summary of decisions and agreed actions.

Staff voice is actively sought in all decision making. Any change to policy or process that impacts on the staff body is consulted upon.

We actively seek staff views through our staff surveys, including our Trust-level survey, and commit to working with staff and responding to their feedback.

Our Trust intranet has been designed to make it easier for staff to access information quickly and independently.

We look for ways to encourage a sense of community with non-work-related social activities.

### 2.4. Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs (see para 1.5.1 above) which indicate a colleague is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should take appropriate steps to support their colleague, if appropriate by talking to the school/setting's Mental Health Lead, a mental health first aid trained colleague (if available), their line manager or a member of the leadership team for confidential support.

### 2.5.Staff Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training on recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep pupils safe. Nominated members of staff will also receive professional Mental Health First Aid training. Staff training will take place during directed time and will be part of the annual CPD plan. At times, the training plan may be altered to address an emerging need.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations.

## 3. Section 3 – Supporting Pupils

**THIS SECTION IS FOR THE SCHOOL/SETTING TO ADD DETAILS OF LOCAL INFORMATION AND APPROACHES BEFORE ADOPTION BY THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY**

### 3.1. Raising concerns and managing disclosures

### 3.2. Teaching about mental health

### 3.3. Supporting pupils with Mental Health Issues

3.3.1. Warning Signs

3.3.2. Sources of Support

3.3.3. Targeted Support

### 3.4. Working with parents

## Appendix A – Resources to support staff

We support the view in the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter that staff should be empowered to take ownership of their own wellbeing and look out for the wellbeing of others. We will ensure that staff know how to access appropriate training, guidance, support and tools.

Health Assured Employee Assistance Programme – available to all staff, this provides a wide range or both mental health and wellbeing resources and support.

Supporting staff wellbeing: Mentally Healthy Schools – a website from The Anna Freud Centre with a directory of useful resources

Supporting Staff (annafreud.org) – A site where you can find out more about staff wellbeing, and access useful tools and resources to help, on the Anna Freud Centre's '5 Steps to Mental Health and Wellbeing' framework

Home | Education Support – Education Support is a mental health charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of teachers, teaching assistants, headteachers and support staff in schools and further education settings.

Home – Mental Health At Work – website curated by Mind, supported by The Royal Foundation. It is a first stop to find documents, guides, tips, videos, courses, podcasts, templates and information from key organisations across the UK, all aimed at helping individuals and organisations get to grips with workplace mental health.

Appropriate training for specific roles will be provided, along with regular awareness raising training for all staff.

## Appendix B – Education Staff Wellbeing Charter

# Organisational commitments

In signing this charter, this school, college or trust commits to placing wellbeing and mental health at the heart of our decision making. We will support staff to make positive choices for their own wellbeing and encourage a collegiate culture across and between all roles in the school or college. **Specifically, we commit to develop a long-term strategy for improving staff wellbeing that will:**

1 **Prioritise staff mental health**
We will:
- tackle mental health stigma within the organisation, promoting an open and understanding culture
- give the same consideration and support to mental health as physical health, including in the management of staff absence
- fulfil our legal duty to control the risks associated with work-related stress in the education setting so far as is reasonably practicable
- channel support to individuals whose role is known to have a significant emotional component. This might take the form of peer support, supervision, and/or counselling
- ensure that staff understand the real benefits that sensitive pastoral support can have, while also recognising where their limits are as non-specialists. We will therefore ensure there are opportunities to increase joint working in support of pupils, as well as routes to refer for specialist support

2 **Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing**
We will empower staff to take ownership of their own wellbeing and look out for the wellbeing of others. This will include ensuring that all staff are familiar with the different dimensions of wellbeing, including mental health, financial wellbeing and physical wellbeing. We will ensure that staff know how to access appropriate guidance, support and tools, and that their use is encouraged throughout the organisation.

3 **Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage**
We will work to provide managers with tools, resources and training to support their staff. We will not, however, expect managers to provide professional wellbeing support for which they have no professional training, and will ensure that there are clear routes in place to escalate for further support.

4 **Establish a clear communications policy**
We will provide clear guidance to all stakeholders (internal and external) on remote and out-of-school/college hours working, including when it is and isn't reasonable to expect staff to respond to queries. This should not necessarily include preventing staff from accessing email at 'unsociable' hours if it suits them personally.

5 **Give staff a voice in decision-making**
We will constantly strive to improve the ways in which the voice of staff is included in the decision-making process across the college or school. (This may also include engagement with key stakeholders, such as recognised trade unions and others.) In particular, we will proactively seek to draw upon the experience of those with mental health issues and/or of discrimination, ensuring that, as per commitment, they are able to share their experience confidently and safely.

**6 Drive down unnecessary workload**
We will work proactively to drive down unnecessary workload, making use of available tools (such as the Workload Reduction Toolkit for schools).

**7 Champion flexible working and diversity**
We will work to create a supportive culture around flexible working. We will agree an approach that not only recognises employees' legal right to request flexible working but acknowledges that for some staff working flexibly can be a key means of protecting and enhancing their personal wellbeing.

We will work to promote diversity – eliminating discrimination, and advancing equality of opportunity.

**8 Create a good behaviour culture**
We will work with staff and pupils to maintain and implement a school-wide behaviour policy. All staff and pupils will have a shared understanding of how good behaviour is encouraged and rewarded, and the sanctions that will be imposed if pupils misbehave. We will support teachers to create calm, safe and disciplined environments, which allow teachers to teach and pupils to learn. Our approach will go hand-in-hand with understanding and supporting pupil mental health issues.[4]

**9 Support staff to progress in their careers**
We will ensure that staff are able to pursue professional development without adversely impacting their own or other people's workload. In schools, we will ensure that any professional development activity is aligned to the Standard for Teachers' Professional Development.

**10 Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health**
We will ensure that all those with strategic decision-making responsibility (including as appropriate governors and trustees) should collaborate to develop a sub-strategy specifically for protecting leader mental health. This should include access to confidential counselling and/or coaching where needed.

**11 Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing**
We will measure the wellbeing of staff using recognised tools and metrics and be transparent about results. We will monitor trends over time, and act in response to changes.[5] Further, we will work with staff and relevant stakeholders (this might include parents, recognised trade unions and others) to agree an approach to organisational accountability on our commitments, giving due consideration to workload.

4 Please refer to DfE's guidance on mental health and behaviour: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2.

5 Please refer to charter's host page www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter for guidance on these tools and their limitations.

## Appendix C – Workload Impact Assessment

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|---|---|
| Policy | Mental Health & Wellbeing |
| Proposed date of implementation | September 2023 (and review every three years) |

The following checklist should be used and made available to staff on completion before a new or revised policy is introduced.

| Criteria | Yes/No | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|
| The policy complies with and is consistent with staff contractual entitlements. | Yes | |
| The policy and any related procedures will be introduced following consultation with the trades unions. | Yes | Consultation with trades unions took place at Trust-wide level on 19th April 2023. |
| The policy and any related procedures include a specific statement regarding workload impact. | Yes | Throughout the document and specifically in section 1.6 |
| The policy has been piloted/trialled to enable an assessment of workload impact to be made. | No | Any actions for teaching and support staff are consistent with their current duties under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and general responsibilities for Health & Safety. |
| The policy and related procedures have not added additional hours of working, or limited/reduced other school/setting procedures. | Yes | As above. In addition, the policy draws on the work of the NEU and NASUWT both of whom contributed to the "Education Staff Wellbeing Charter" which this policy adopts. |
| The policy does not duplicate any other existing policy. | Yes | There are no similar policies in place. |
| Any similar policies have been reviewed to assess whether any are outdated and unnecessary. | Yes | There are no similar policies in place. |
| The Trust and member schools/settings will identify the resources necessary to support the policy, including staff time, any additional support staffing and appropriate equipment. | Yes | This will include allocated management time for the MH Lead in schools, where applicable. |
| Implementation of this policy will not result in additional meetings/activities that have not been identified within school calendars. | Yes | There are no additional meetings associated with this policy. Any whole staff training will be conducted during directed / contracted time. |
| All staff will have training to ensure that the policy and any related procedures are carried out without increasing workload burdens. | Yes | |
| The policy and related procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that additional workload burdens have not been added over time. | Yes | Reviewed every three years, or sooner in the event of legislative changes. |