

# Pickwick Academy Trust



## Wellbeing Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- a. The continued health, safety and wellbeing of staff is important to the Trust, and a good work-life balance is central to staff effectiveness and wellbeing, and to pupil learning. As such we aim to be a Centre of Excellence in education; pioneering innovative methods of teaching and learning that have a positive impact on achievement, and supporting staff to make the best possible contribution to this goal.
- b. Work-life balance is about helping and supporting staff to combine work with their personal interests and commitments, and reduce levels of stress.
- c. Pickwick Academy Trust has a responsibility for the wellbeing of all our staff. Everyone must take responsibility for their own work-life balance and take active steps to manage, and where possible, pre-empt any issues, being mindful of their behaviour as a role model for others.
- d. This policy includes a section on how the Trust provides support and assistance to employees going through the menopause.
- e. Wellbeing is a central foundation to being able to flourish together and we need to be connected to do so.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

- a. To provide a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and wellbeing of all staff, promoting mental health and advising employees how to reduce levels of stress in a systematic and consistent way.
- b. To consider the wellbeing of staff when setting out expectations of workload; creating a working environment in which excessive or unreasonable stress is minimised.
- c. To ensure that Pickwick Academy Trust:
  - Has a motivated, productive, and less stressed workforce.
  - Has employees that feel valued and supported.
  - Can recruit from a wide range of candidates.
  - Commits fully to CPD around wellbeing for all staff
  - Has increased productivity.
  - Has reduced absenteeism and turnover.
  - Monitoring and evaluation confirms that teachers spend less time on administrative tasks and have regular PPA time.
  - Appraisals show staff to be happy and supported in their role.
  - Creates a culture where staff feel they can approach trusted colleagues for support and advice.
  - The anonymous user report reveals that Employee Assistance Programmes are being used effectively.
  - Is an open and honest workplace where line managers and

employees can discuss a range of issues, including those that may be personal, associated with wellbeing, mental health or menopause, and ensure that necessary support is offered to employees when needed.

d. To ensure that employees:

- Are active and positive in managing their own wellbeing and health.
- Have greater responsibility and a sense of ownership.
- Have good two-way relationship with management.
- Are happier at home and at work through improved self-esteem, health, concentration, and confidence.
- Are loyal and committed to their daily and longer-term professional and working obligations.
- Find the time to focus more on life outside work. Develop healthy habits, are encouraged to rest and pursue personal interests, and develop resilience
- Have greater control of their working lives.
- Have improved workplace communication.
- Have improved teamwork, staff development and co-operation, due to distribution of leadership.
- Recognise that excessive hours of work do not equal commitment and may reduce effectiveness.
- Establish an honest relationship with management.
- Have a clear understanding of menopausal symptoms; feel able to talk openly about it and are empowered to ask for adjustments to ease symptoms, without embarrassment, to enable them to carry out their daily role and feel part of an inclusive work culture.

### **3. Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

a. The Trust will identify internal and external sources of support for any member of staff experiencing work related stress. This will be achieved by the school/trust consulting with the Trust's HR and or Occupational Health professionals to seek a range of possible options to discuss with the individual to identify and resource the best option, matched to the needs of the individual.

b. The Trustees are responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective implementation of this policy as part of its H&S responsibilities.
- Ensuring the Trust's ethos encourages a culture of flourishing and reflects its commitment to ensuring a fair work / life balance, and creating a work environment that is focused, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing.

c. The Local Governance Committees are responsible for:

- Ensuring staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored and that there is an equal distribution of workload.
- Ensuring that all school-based policies are assessed for workload impact.
- Encouraging stress awareness throughout the school – promoting the impact of stress and the need to be open about it as a serious issue

rather than a weakness.

- Consulting the Head on managing staff stress and wellbeing, including them in any decisions that need to be made.
  - Ensuring the Head puts measures in place to support staff wellbeing.
  - Actively trying to eliminate stressors in the school, e.g. by considering the format and quantity of information it requests from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
  - Ensuring monitoring visits are strategic, focussed, and reflective of its monitoring plan, and being clear with staff ahead of the visit about what the focus will be and the information that will be required from them.
  - Ensuring senior members of staff are knowledgeable in wellbeing initiatives in order to oversee the provision and support of mental health and wellbeing in school, and to ensure effective links exist with local mental health support.
  - Recognising mental health issues and ensuring the Head appoints a mental health and wellbeing lead who will ideally be mental health first aid trained and responsible for overseeing, managing, and supporting staff mental health.
  - Recognising issues arising from menopausal symptoms and ensuring the Head puts measures in place to support staff going through the menopause.
  - Developing an annual schedule of work and ensuring work is not duplicated between meetings of committees.
- d. The CEO and Executive Headteachers are responsible for:
- Ensuring this policy is communicated and implemented fairly and consistently across all Trust schools
  - Carrying out the duties and responsibilities as defined for the Head below, but for the Executive and central team
  - Creating a positive and supportive culture throughout the Trust, tackling factors that may affect wellbeing.
  - Ensuring there is a strong communication strategy to make sure all staff are well-informed about the values, activities and arrangements of the school/Trust.
  - Offering support and guidance to Heads and line managers to enable them to effectively support staff going through personal and health issues such as the menopause
- e. Each school's mental health and wellbeing lead is responsible for:
- Supporting and promoting the implementation of the school vision which creates a positive wellbeing culture and is underpinned by equality values, a system of accountability, and robust policies and procedures.
  - Escalating issues that arise to the Head and if necessary executive leaders
  - Ensuring the school's strategic plan includes objectives linked to improving, supporting, and responding to the mental health of staff.
  - Supporting and encouraging school staff to follow the policies that are in place

- Ensuring there is a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing embedded within leadership practise, the curriculum, the school's values and ethos, and the social and physical environment.
  - Supporting and advising senior members of staff so they are knowledgeable in wellbeing initiatives to help them to oversee the provision and support of mental health and wellbeing in school, and to ensure effective links exist with local mental health support.
  - Encouraging all staff to attend events and training opportunities that promote wellbeing and health.
  - Providing information that helps staff to manage stress effectively.
  - Working with the Head to ensure that appropriate training is put in place to support staff.
  - Promulgating information to assist with recognising symptoms associated with the menopause and supporting senior leaders to provide appropriate guidance and support.
- f. The Head (refers to Headteacher and Head of School) is responsible for:
- Appointing and managing the mental health and wellbeing lead in their school.
  - Creating a positive and supportive culture throughout the school, enabling time and space for conversations about wellbeing, and tackling factors that may affect wellbeing.
  - Implementing CPD which equips staff with the tools needed to effectively manage stress.
  - Developing a sensitive performance management process that is linked to clear job specifications.
  - Including all staff in the school's decision-making processes, where possible.
  - Organising extra support for staff at times of increased stress, e.g. during Ofsted inspections.
  - Encouraging staff to take advantage of any initiatives introduced to promote wellbeing and effective working e.g. an Employee Assistance Programme.
  - Ensuring that all policies that affect staff wellbeing are properly adhered to and reviewed.
  - Authorising any staff absences, as well as granting extended leave.
  - Monitoring employees' workloads and holiday entitlement, ensuring they are not overworked, and providing regular updates regarding absence to the Local Governance Committees whilst maintaining staff confidentiality in line with the Data Protection Policy.
  - Monitoring the use of the telephone counselling and support service (number of calls will be monitored; the specific content of discussions will remain confidential).
  - Evaluating the initiatives implemented to reduce teachers' workload.
  - Ensuring the maintenance of wellbeing initiatives in schools.
  - Regular appraisals with all staff.
  - Attending all necessary training, keeping skills current and setting a good example for staff.
  - Regularly communicating with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress, the menopause or other wellbeing issues.
  - Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk

assessments, considering the causes of stress, symptoms of menopause, or other wellbeing issues.

- Ensuring all staff have read and understood this policy.
  - Organising thorough inductions for new employees, explaining the school's policies and code of conduct.
  - Ensuring that regular conduct is maintained with members of staff who are absent for long periods of time.
  - Ensuring that employees going through the menopause feel comfortable in managing this transition and, where needed, being able to talk openly about their situation, how it is affecting them and that they feel confident to ask for adjustments to be made to enable them to carry out their daily role, which the Head will keep confidential.
  - Working together with the employee to ensure the right support is in place which satisfies the Trust's and the employee's needs.
  - Work with the employee experiencing the menopause to decide on which reasonable adjustments need to be made and ensure they are implemented (recording all adjustments made and reviewing with the employee on a regular basis).
  - Ensuring new members of staff have received all the relevant information they require, including the procedures for raising concerns about wellbeing.
  - Ensuring they communicate efficiently and effectively with all staff so they feel well-informed about the activities and arrangements of the school/Trust
  - Gathering information in any cases that allow monitoring of this policy, such as, but not limited to, the following:
    - Sickness and absence data.
    - Staff turnover.
    - Exit interviews.
    - Referrals to the counselling service.
    - Referrals to other mental health services.
    - Grievance cases.
    - Harassment cases.
- g. All staff have a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage their individual health, wellbeing and levels of stress, taking into account the impact that each person has on another's stress and workload. All staff are responsible for taking proactive steps to ensure that personal factors which impact on work are managed and in so doing, an individual's health and wellbeing is maintained, and the Trust can contribute to the successful work-life balance of individuals. This may mean collaborating with managers to address difficult situations
- h. All staff members are responsible for:
- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health and to seek help from relevant professionals such as their GP.
  - Being able to recognise the early signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues.
  - Reporting any concerns they may have as a result of symptoms associated with the menopause to their line manager and discussing them as openly and honestly as possible so that support can be

- provided.
- Asking for adjustments to be made to their working environment as a result of menopausal symptoms and ensuring they work with their line manager to review any adjustments made.
- Supporting co-workers if they become stressed, and/or are experiencing menopausal symptoms, which may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
- Maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
- Promoting a positive, supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Being open to discussing stress – reporting honestly about their wellbeing and any incidents of stress e.g. being overworked.
- Where possible, asking for help when they feel under pressure or stressed.
- Attending events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health.
- Ensuring they communicate their worries and concerns to their line manager before they become a serious issue.
- Not acting in a manner which endangers themselves or others.
- Any member of staff who thinks they are suffering from stress, whether work-related or in their personal life should inform the Head, or their line manager if this is not the Head, to discuss what support can be made available and to minimise the effect upon carrying out their job.
- Considering their own physical wellbeing by adopting healthy eating, incorporating physical activity into their life and reducing consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

#### **4. Definitions**

- a. Within the policy, where Head is mentioned, this may refer to Head of School or Headteacher.
- b. It is always difficult to quantify exactly what wellbeing in the workplace means, as it means different things to different people.
- c. There is no universal definition of stress. However, the Health and Safety Executive has defined stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them’.

For the purpose of this policy, ‘menopause’ is defined as a biological state in a female’s life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive cycle. The average age that a female reaches menopause is 51; however, it can be earlier or later than this due to a number of reasons; ‘perimenopause’ is defined as the time leading up to the menopause where a female begins to experience the signs and symptoms of menopause. This can be several years before the menopause actually occurs.

## 5. What does Wellbeing look like at Pickwick Academy Trust?

- a. The Board of Trustees, alongside Local Governance Committees are looking to create an environment that enables all staff to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of their jobs and to offer support to those staff whose health and wellbeing are affected by stress, the menopause, or other wellbeing issues. In return, this will create a motivated and productive workforce operating with a greater sense of responsibility and teamwork and communication; and without additional pressures caused, for example, by absenteeism.
- b. At Pickwick Academy Trust we understand that wellbeing and work-life balance mean different things to different people. That is why we demonstrate commitment to a range of measures designed to maintain the needs of the business and our valued employees:
  - A staffing structure that encompasses clear lines of communication and organisational systems.
  - Flexible systems of working: job shares, part time contracts, completion of complex work from home.
  - Robust induction and onboarding arrangements to ensure that joiners or those starting a new role experience a warm welcome, familiarisation and support to help them in their new role.
  - An excellent system of Continual Professional Development, with roles and responsibilities of individual staff reviewed annually with training and development needs identified.
  - A clear commitment to Work-Life Balance and Wellbeing demonstrated by each Trust School.
  - Every staff member having access to an external, impartial Employee Assistance Programme through each school's supply insurance provider.
  - Referral to Occupational Health should there be concerns about the health and wellbeing of an employee.
  - Effective approaches to recruitment.
  - Effective staff retention approaches.
  - Establishment of wellbeing initiatives.
  - SLT and Local Governance Committee agendas.
  - A commitment to involving, encouraging and enabling staff to actively manage their own careers and personal development.
  - A commitment to looking at existing and new practises to make systems as efficient and time saving as possible.
  - Suitable facilities for break and relaxation.
  - Regular PPA for teaching staff.
  - Computer equipment provided for teachers and some support staff.
  - Appropriate administrative and leadership support for Heads.

- c. The above elements are in place to support staff in attaining a balanced lifestyle where they can achieve their best at work and manage other areas of life effectively.

## **6. Workplace Demands**

- a. In its positive manifestation, stress can act as a motivational and enabling force for individuals. Pressures that we can respond to effectively are likely to lead to job satisfaction.
- b. In its negative format however, stress becomes harmful and disabling and a potential cause of physical and mental illness. However, pressures at a level that one cannot cope with, even in some cases too little pressure or challenge, are likely to result in stress for the individual. This document is concerned with the negative aspects of stress.
- c. Pressure can arise from an individual's personal life as well as from work and people vary in their capacity and ability to cope with different types of pressure. Some individuals will recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others will not recognise or acknowledge that they are stressed although it may be apparent to their manager and work colleagues. Maintaining a managed balance between the demands of an individual's work and personal life is also an important factor in managing stress and an individual's wellbeing. Although in itself stress is not an illness, there is evidence that stress can lead to mental and physical ill health.

## **7. Prevention of work-related stress**

- a. The Board has agreed a Health and Safety Policy. This overarching document outlines arrangements for health and safety of individuals and includes mental health.
- b. Where appropriate the Trust or individual school will use a stress questionnaire to assess and monitor stress in the workplace.
- c. A mental health and wellbeing lead will ensure effective practices are in place and provide an independent overview of issues in school.
- d. The Trust shall ensure through the Heads/CEO that regular risk assessments are undertaken in respect of potential workplace pressures and that reasonable steps are taken to reduce potential stress factors.
- e. As part of the annual appraisal process for all staff, any mismatch between the role and the job description shall be identified and the job description updated as required.

## 8. Identification of Warning Signs of stress

- a. The Trust, through the CEO and Heads will make information and training available to staff to help identify the signs of stress in themselves and others.
- b. The school recognises that individuals will react differently to stressful situations and become stressed by different situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. Because of this, it is important that staff understand the different factors that may cause themselves or their colleagues' stress.
- c. The following sources of stress can often be attributed to work:
  - Overworking or undertaking work that does not match the employee's skills and abilities.
  - Fear of change and trying to cope with change, e.g. advancements in technology.
  - Insufficient workload or not being able to use skills.
  - Lack of job security.
  - Poor relationships with colleagues and a lack of involvement.
  - Harassment or bullying.
  - Crisis management.
  - Not having a long-term plan in place.
  - Challenging and unacceptable pupil behaviour.
- d. The school recognises that home and personal lives can also prove stressful for staff; bereavement, separation, menopause/perimenopause, financial and family problems make people more vulnerable to stress at work. It is common that a combination of stress at home and work can make people particularly stressed.
- e. All members of staff will look out for the following indicators when identifying stress in themselves or others:
  - Behavioural indicators:**
    - Difficulty sleeping.
    - Changes in eating habits.
    - Increased smoking or drinking.
    - Isolation from friends and family.
  - Physical indicators:**
    - Tiredness.
    - Indigestion and nausea.
    - Headaches.
    - Aching muscles.
    - Heart palpitations.
  - Mental indicators:**
    - Indecisiveness
    - Difficulty concentrating.
    - Memory loss.
    - Feelings of inadequacy.

- Low self-esteem.
- Emotional indicators:**
- Anger or irritability.
  - Anxiety.
  - Hypersensitivity.
  - Feeling drained or lethargic.

## **9. Actions to support our staff in managing stress**

- a. To positively impact wellbeing and reduce levels of stress in the school/across the Trust, the Head/CEO and Local Governance Committee/Trust Board will regularly review staff wellbeing and stress levels and take action where appropriate.
- b. To help manage stress, the Head/CEO will
  - Lead by example and encourage staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a full life outside of work.
  - Make the most of team bonding, using INSET days to build relationships, as feeling comfortable amongst colleagues will make discussing stress easier.
  - Assist with work and help employees to manage their workloads.
  - Reach out to staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g. bereavement, allowing sufficient time off and supporting them when they return to work.
  - Arrange a meeting with all members of staff in which the current working times and practices will be discussed.
  - Research and implement an Employee Assistance Programme relevant to the needs of all staff, regularly monitoring its effectiveness and impact on wellbeing.
  - Address any workload issues that have been identified, e.g. by undertaking a data audit and developing an action plan.
  - Evaluate the impact of the actions taken on a termly basis, measuring staff wellbeing and identifying new workload issues to address during the next term.
  - Schedule annual surveys to better understand the areas of work that have a negative effect on staff wellbeing and present reports to the Trust Board.

## **10. Identification of warning signs for employees going through the menopause**

- a. Physical symptoms of menopause can include:
  - hot flushes
  - insomnia
  - fatigue
  - poor concentration
  - headaches
  - skin irritation

- urinary problems
- b. Psychological symptoms of menopause can include:
  - depression
  - anxiety
  - panic attacks
  - mood swings
  - irritability
  - problems with memory
  - loss of confidence

## **11. Workplace adjustments for menopause**

- a. In order to assist an employee in their daily role, the Trust will explore making adjustments to the role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on the employee. The Trust acknowledges that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so any adjustment will be made after discussing it fully with the employee.
- b. Examples of adjustment include:
  - Conducting a risk assessment to identify any particular areas that are a detriment to individuals going through the menopause
  - Changing the location of the employee so they are closer to the toilet facilities or away from hot and cold spots in the workplace
  - Access to a cool, private space which can be used on a drop-in basis
  - Access to a first aid room
  - Implementing further temperature control such as access to a fan
  - Assessing how work is allocated and whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day
  - Allowing additional rest breaks
  - Considering flexible working hours or allowing the employee to work from home if appropriate
  - Making allowances for additional needs for sickness absence
- c. Any adjustments made will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect
- d. Attendance procedures:
  - Attendance of employees experiencing the menopause will be managed in line with the Trust's Managing Absence and Ill-Health Policy
  - All menopause-related sickness absences will be recorded as ongoing issues rather than individual absences
  - The Trust will ensure that any appraisal, capability and performance procedures are not applied in a way as to discriminate unlawfully against female staff members experiencing the menopause

## **12. Self-Management of wellbeing**

- a. Staff can also make changes to avoid and prevent stress and manage their own wellbeing, as it is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored.
- b. Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work, or have concerns about their wellbeing.
- c. Staff are encouraged to take action to manage their own stress and wellbeing, these actions will include but are not limited to, the following:
  - Keeping active as a way of releasing emotional intensity and any negative feelings, exercise will also help to clear thoughts and deal with problems more calmly.
  - Managing their workload and establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life.
  - Prioritising work, leaving the least important tasks until the end of the day, and concentrating on the work that will make the biggest difference.
  - Avoiding unhealthy habits, such as excessive drinking and smoking.
  - Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives and support offered by the school.
- d. All staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme to help manage anxieties around health, financial stability, addiction and isolation. MIND have also issued guidance for individuals worried about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on their mental wellbeing.
- e. There are a number of sources of information available for both employees and managers on the menopause through the following websites:
  - NHS – menopause guidance
  - Nice.org.uk guidance
  - Menopause Matters website
  - CIPD Practical Guide for People Managers

## **13. Combating Isolation**

- a. Disruption, changes to the established norms and isolation can all have a very direct and serious impact on employees' mental health.
- b. Communication will help hugely with this and is absolutely the top priority for keeping your colleagues feeling well cared for whilst working remotely.

## **14. Equal Opportunities**

- a. An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure it complies with equality obligations outlined in anti-discrimination legislation.

The policy positively reflects the aims and ambitions of Pickwick Academy Trust.

## **15. References, Acknowledgements and Associated Documents**

- a. This policy will be implemented by the CEO in conjunction with other Pickwick Academy Policies in the same group of policies, namely:
- Health and Safety Policy
  - Managing Absence and Ill Health Policy
  - Induction Policy
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Grievance Policy
  - Flexible Working Policy
  - The DfE (2018) 'Workload reduction toolkit'
  - Family Policy
  - Professional Expectations and Standards Policy
  - Bullying and Harassment Policy