



Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy



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Document written by	Rhian Williams
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Responsibility	School Improvement
Approved by	Trustees

*subject to any relevant changes in legislation or other appropriate guidelines

Version	Date	Reviewed	Approved	Signature
1.0				

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Statement of intent

Vantage Academy Trust 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 Trust 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 Trust, 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.

St Barnabas C of E Primary Academy, firmly believes that by supporting staff well-being and mental health we enable our staff to shine.

Our Vision: Preparing our children to shine brightly.

St Barnabas is a caring, family school with Christian values at our core. We want our staff, families and children to encourage, inspire, believe and achieve whilst living out our Christian values inspired by St Barnabas – love, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, service and courage.

Our Mission is: *to develop all children to achieve personally and academically so that they can think for themselves and articulate their views, in a reasonable way, with the emotional resilience necessary to thrive in the ever-changing wider world.*

Signed by:

_____	CEO	Date:	_____
_____	Chair of Trustees	Date:	_____

1. Legal Framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Equality Act 2010
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- DfE (2018) 'Workload reduction toolkit'

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Attendance Management Policy
- Induction of New Staff Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Flexible Working Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The LAB is responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring the school's ethos reflects its commitment to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing.
- Ensuring staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored.
- Ensuring that all school policies are assessed for workload impact.
- Encouraging stress awareness throughout the school – promoting stress as a serious issue rather than a weakness.
- Consulting the Principal on managing staff stress and promoting wellbeing, including them in any decisions that need to be made.
- Ensuring the Principal 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 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.
- Recognising mental health issues and appointing a mental health and wellbeing governor who will oversee managing and supporting staff mental health.

2.2. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Governor is responsible for:

- Influencing the setting of a school vision which creates a positive wellbeing culture and is underpinned by equality values, a system of accountability, and robust policies and procedures.
- Ensuring the school's strategic plan includes objectives linked to improving, supporting and responding to the mental health of staff.
- Ensuring the school has appropriate policies in place that include objectives focussed on meeting staff needs.
- Ensuring there is a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing embedded within leadership practice, the curriculum, the school's values and ethos, and the social and physical environment.
- Ensuring the school has an identified wellbeing officer to oversee the provision and support of mental health and wellbeing in school, and to ensure effective links exist with local mental health support.
- Meeting with wellbeing officers on a to monitor and review the impact of provision and interventions.
- Working with the Principal to ensure that appropriate training is put in place to support staff.
- Reporting to the governing board on the successes and areas of improvement in planned interventions, and the resources that are in place.

2.3. The Principal is responsible for:

- Creating a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- 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.
- Monitoring employees' workloads and holiday entitlement, ensuring they are not overworked, and providing regular updates regarding absence to the governing board whilst maintaining staff confidentiality in line with the Data Protection Policy.
- 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.
- Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk assessments, considering the causes of stress.
- Ensuring all staff have read and understood this policy.
- Organising thorough inductions for new employees, explaining the school's policies and code of conduct.

2.4. HR is responsible for:

- Encouraging all staff to attend events and training opportunities that promote wellbeing and health.
- Providing information that helps staff to manage stress effectively.
- Ensuring that regular contact is maintained with members of staff who are absent for long periods of time.
- Ensuring new members of staff have received all the relevant information they require, including the procedures for raising concerns about wellbeing.
- 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
- Monitoring all staff absences and reporting this information to the Principal

2.5. All staff members are responsible for:

- Being able to recognise the early signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues.
- Supporting co-workers if they become stressed, 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.
- Not acting in a manner which endangers themselves or others.
- Undertaking additional training and personal development opportunities.

3. Identifying Warning Signs

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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
- 3.3. The school recognises that home and personal lives can also prove stressful for staff; bereavement, separation, 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.
- 3.4. The school will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace.
- 3.5. The school has a legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.
- 3.6. All members of staff will be aware of the warning signs that can indicate that a person may be having trouble managing stress.
- 3.7. 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 and lethargic

4. Actions to Support Staff

- 4.1. To positively impact levels of stress in the school, the Principal and LAB will make changes to the whole school.
- 4.2. To help manage stress, the Principal 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 to manage employees' 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.
- 4.3. To effectively address workload issues and support staff wellbeing, the Principal, working with the SLT, will take the following actions:
 - Measure staff wellbeing and identify workload issues by:
 - Commissioning staff surveys and organising structured conversations about workload with staff.
 - Arranging workshops and drawing together a summary of outcomes from staff surveys and questionnaires.

- Analysing staff diaries and identifying which members of staff are spending too much time on certain aspects of the job.
 - Address the 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.
- 4.4. The Principal will ensure that all changes proposed as a result of the actions outlined in 4.3 are communicated to all members of staff.
- 4.5. A mental health and wellbeing governor will be appointed by the LAB who will be responsible for monitoring the wellbeing of staff.
- 4.6. All new members of staff will be provided with a comprehensive induction and their duties will be made clear.
- 4.7. The school will adopt a sickness plan which will promote a positive, caring strategy for staff who are returning to work following sick leave.
- 4.8. The school will ensure wellbeing is promoted and stress is prevented through good management practices, including the following:
 - Recruitment and selection procedures
 - Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure the right candidates are recruited
 - CPD procedures to ensure all members of staff have the necessary skills and abilities to undertake the duties required
 - Promotion and reward procedures
 - Performance management procedures
 - Capability and absence management – return to work procedures will ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness
 - Suitable adaptations for disability
 - Harassment and anti-bullying resources
 - Annual surveys to better understand the areas of work that have a negative effect on staff wellbeing

5. Self-management

- 5.1. Staff can also make changes to avoid and prevent stress, as it is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored.

- 5.2. Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work.
- 5.3. Staff are encouraged to take action to manage their own stress, 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 drinking and smoking.
 - Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives and support offered by the school.

6. Reporting Procedures

- 6.1. Each school in the Trust will have at least 1 Designated Mental Health Lead/Wellbeing Officer
- 6.2. If any member of staff wishes to raise a concern about wellbeing, the wellbeing officer will be notified.
- 6.3. The wellbeing officer will provide the member of staff with information about the support that is available to them; this includes both within the school and outside sources. These resources include:
 - SAS
 - MEDICASH
 - HR
 - Occupational Health
- 6.4. The wellbeing officer will treat all cases confidentially. Real names of staff will not be used when wellbeing officer is reporting to the Principal.
- 6.5. In some cases, such as those that directly impact day-to-day activities, confidentiality will not be guaranteed. If this is the case, staff will be made aware of the situation.
- 6.6. The wellbeing officer in receipt of the complaint will investigate and report this to the Principal.
- 6.7. The Principal will decide whether any further action will be taken.

7. Response Actions

- 7.1. Where problems with wellbeing arise, the necessary support and appropriate actions will be considered. This may include support from HR advisers and/or external services, e.g. occupational health.
- 7.2. The school will continue to support staff when external services are involved.
- 7.3. Support will be provided to staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances outside of the workplace. The school will direct staff to support, both internal and external, and consider a plan of work and duties that can be managed differently during challenging periods.
- 7.4. Support for staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances within the school will be provided following the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the CEO and the Trustees.
- 8.2. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff.
- 8.3. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.
- 8.4. The next scheduled review date for this policy is November 2024.