Wisbech Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

(including Menopause Policy)

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| **Approved by:** | Penny Harris | **Date:** 19th September 2025 |
| **Last reviewed on:** | 1st September 2024 |
| **Next review due by:** | 19th September 2026 |

All policies are generated and reviewed with an awareness of equality and diversity in relation to pupils, staff and visitors. All policies are generated and reviewed placing safeguarding and wellbeing at the heart of all that we do.

1. **Rationale**

At On Track Education, we recognise that our staff are our most important resource. Their wellbeing, both personal and professional, is central to creating a caring, purposeful learning community where pupils thrive.

We understand there is a direct link between staff wellbeing and pupil wellbeing, and that the culture and ethos of a school are shaped by the extent to which staff feel supported, valued, and able to work towards a shared vision.

This policy sets out how we will:

* promote and protect the wellbeing of all staff
* minimise the harmful effects of stress
* support a healthy work–life balance
* create a culture where wellbeing is everyone’s responsibility

We also recognise that each member of staff has different circumstances. This policy provides a consistent framework while allowing for flexibility and fairness in individual situations.

1. **Aims**

We aim to ensure that our school:

* Promotes staff mental health and wellbeing as a priority
* Minimises unnecessary workload and stress
* Provides safe, accessible routes to wellbeing support
* Values, recognises, and celebrates the contributions of all staff
* Promotes a happy, collaborative and inclusive team culture
* Involves staff meaningfully in decision-making
* Takes account of equality, diversity, and inclusion in all wellbeing practices
* Protects the wellbeing of school leaders as well as staff at every level
1. **Organisational Commitments**

We commit to developing a long-term, sustainable strategy for staff wellbeing, including the following actions:

**Prioritising Mental Health**

* Promote an open, understanding culture that tackles stigma around mental health
* Treat mental and physical health equally, including in sickness absence management
* Provide confidential access to an **educational psychologist** and to an **Employee Assistance Programme (BUPA)** offering 24/7 advice and support

**Supporting Staff to Take Responsibility for Wellbeing**

* Provide guidance, training and resources so staff can take ownership of their own wellbeing and support colleagues appropriately
* Make staff aware of the multiple dimensions of wellbeing (mental, physical, financial, and social)

**Giving Managers Tools and Resources**

* Train and support leaders and managers to promote staff wellbeing
* Ensure clear routes to escalate concerns and access professional support, without placing unrealistic expectations on managers

**Driving Down Unnecessary Workload**

* Use tools such as the **DfE Workload Reduction Toolkit** to reduce unnecessary tasks
* Protect staff time (e.g. PPA) and plan timetables carefully to support balance

**Championing Flexible Working and Diversity**

* Create a culture where flexible working requests are understood and considered fairly
* Promote diversity, tackle discrimination, and advance equality of opportunity

**Accountability**

* Measure staff wellbeing regularly (e.g. surveys, feedback tools) and act on findings
* Monitor trends and be transparent about results

**Protect leader wellbeing and mental health**

* We will ensure that we protect leader mental health. This should include access to confidential counselling and/or coaching where appropriate
1. **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Mental Health Lead**

The SLT and Designated Mental Health Lead will:

* Model respectful, supportive, and empathetic relationships
* Monitor workload and remain alert to signs of stress
* Involve staff in decision-making and listen to their views
* Ensure that efforts and successes are acknowledged and celebrated
* Maintain open, effective channels of communication
* Provide mentoring, induction, and career development opportunities
* Support staff experiencing personal challenges (e.g. bereavement, health issues)
* Maintain contact during long absences and support return-to-work planning
* Ensure that support services are available or signposted when specialist help is needed

**All Staff**

All staff are responsible for:

* Treating one another with kindness, empathy, and respect
* Taking reasonable care of their own health and wellbeing
* Looking out for colleagues and supporting a culture of shared responsibility
* Contributing positively to the social and community life of the school
1. **Examples of Good Practice**

Wellbeing at Wisbech is promoted through a range of school practices, which include:

* **Wellbeing Wednesday**; a dedicated session once a month where staff take part in activities to connect, reflect, and build team spirit
* Including team-building activities in staff CPD
* Holding health and wellbeing open afternoons
* Celebrating staff achievements
* Open wellbeing surgeries - these are online sessions where employees can offload, reflect and explore in a safe and supportive environment on a 1:1 basis with a trained professional

**6. Support in Specific Circumstances**

Staff have access to:

* + **BUPA Employee Assistance Programme** (Freephone: 0800 269 616 / [www.bupa.co.uk/eaponline](http://www.bupa.co.uk/eaponline), Account: 1607462) for confidential 24/7 support.
	+ **Wellbeing surgeries** for 1:1 reflective sessions with trained professionals.
	+ An **educational psychologist** for confidential conversations about worries or concerns.
1. **Principles of Shared Understanding**

The wellbeing of individuals is affected by many interrelated factors. This means that levels of low or high wellbeing are rarely due to just one factor, and that the issue should be looked at holistically. We recognise that not all such factors are unique to staff in education settings. Equally, there are many critical factors outside of the workplace (like access to key services) that are beyond the scope of our remit. There are many evidence-based frameworks that aim to capture the drivers of staff wellbeing inside the workplace. The Department for Education used the following evidence-based model from What Works Wellbeing as a reference point during its engagement with the expert advisory group. It sets out five main drivers of wellbeing in the workplace, some of which overlap.

* **Health:** Including mental and physical health. In education, there is often a focus on stress caused by excessive workload (especially hours worked) and lack of recovery time. Importantly, pupils and students can also present with highly complex emotional needs, including mental and physical health issues. This can directly impact the health of those who support them.
* **Security:** Including working conditions, safety, bullying and harassment, and financial security. Equality and diversity are of particular importance here, especially where a member of staff has protected characteristics that they feel make them vulnerable to discrimination.
* **Environment:** This is a broad category that in education can cover both: a) The organisational environment: including the physical environment (school or college facilities) and systems (such as the availability and efficaciousness of flexible working arrangements). This may also include the degree to which a member of staff identifies with organisational values. b) The policy environment: including the policies of the government of the day, and public perceptions of the status of the profession.
* **Relationships:** In particular, the degree of support and respect an individual has from immediate colleagues, line managers, and leadership. It can also include relationships with parents.

**8. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, with input from staff, governors, and wellbeing surveys. All policies are developed and reviewed with equality, diversity, safeguarding and staff wellbeing at their core.

**Annex 1 – Menopause Policy**

1. **Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and menopause friendly workplace where managers and those experiencing menopause feel comfortable discussing any issues associated with this, and to ensure the necessary help is known about and offered to those affected.

We aim to normalise conversations about menopause in the workplace and remove any stigma. Menopause should not be a taboo subject. We encourage employees to have discussions about the menopause and be supportive of each other.

1. **What is the menopause?**

Menopause is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can sometimes happen earlier. This can last between 4 - 8 years. Menopause can have a big impact on your life and work for a number of years.

**Medical factors that can bring about premature menopause**

* Women who have had treatment, chemotherapy or radiotherapy
* Chromosome disorders such as Turner's syndrome, autoimmune diseases and certain infections such as TB, malaria or the mumps.
* Transgender colleagues who choose not to have hormonal transition.
* Surgery where ovaries are removed due to medical conditions
* Women undergoing treatment for endometriosis or infertility
1. **Effects of the menopause**

**Physical symptoms of the menopause can include:**

* Trouble sleeping
* Extreme fatigue
* Hot flushes
* Joint pains
* Headaches
* Poor concentration/brain fog
* Dry mouth/bleeding gums
* Dry eyes
* Heart palpitations
* Heavy/irregular periods
* Dry itchy skin
* Change in body shape/weight gain
* Urinary problems

**Emotional and behavioural impacts of the menopause can include:**

* Low mood or depression
* Anxiety
* Panic attacks
* Mood swings
* Irritability
* Problems with memory
* Loss of confidence
* Lack of motivation

It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy medication, which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

1. **Communication**

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should tell your manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. So that we can give you the best support possible, we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations. Alternatively, your manager may talk to you if they notice a change in your behaviour or performance.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with your manager. If this is the case, we encourage you to talk to another senior member of staff, the HR Manager or contact our Employee Assistance Programme with BUPA, on freephone: 0800 269 616, [www.bupa.co.uk/eaponline](http://www.bupa.co.uk/eaponlinew)

Our account number is 1607462.

During any discussions, your manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively and confidentiality will be maintained.

Managers will also arrange follow up sessions to review the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

1. **Making Adjustments to Your Role**

To help you in your daily duties, your manager will explore making adjustments to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on you. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues. We acknowledge that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first.

Examples of adjustments include:

* Allowing time to attend doctors’ appointments to review medication
* Making sure that the working environment can be well ventilated and/or have fans in them
* Providing period products in toilets so staff can access them quickly if needed
* Enabling access to cold drinking water and toilet breaks when needed
* Offering regular check-in opportunities with a line manager/colleague in a location/time of their choice
* Offering organisational support/resources to help with ‘brain fog’
* Enabling flexible working; please read our flexible working policy if you would like more details.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

1. **Whole school approach to the menopause**
* We will ensure that all levels of management are trained on the effects of menopause, how to hold discussions with employees who are experiencing menopause and about adjustments that can be made to an employee’s role to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.
* We will offer staff CPD on the menopause to reduce shame/stigma/misunderstanding around the topic
* We will consider having a menopause support group in school for sharing experiences and strategies.