

# Viking Academy Trust



## Staff Mental Health Policy

The VIKING ACADEMY TRUST 'Staff Mental Health' policy has been written using advice from CIPD, ACAS and HR Inform.

**Approved by the Trust: Term 2 2023**

**Reviewed annually: Term 2**

**Last review date: N/A**

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roby', is written over a faint rectangular stamp.

**Chair of Trustees**



# VIKING ACADEMY TRUST

**‘Empowering children through education: One Childhood One Chance’**

## GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

**All staff, governors and Trustees** make the education of pupils at the Viking Academy Trust their first concern and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct.

**All staff, governors and Trustees** act with honesty and integrity; have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date and are self-critical; forge positive professional relationships; and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils.

## Schools in the Viking Academy Trust (VAT)

- Chilton Primary School
- Ramsgate Arts Primary School
- Upton Junior School

This ‘Staff Mental Health’ policy is for all the aforementioned schools.

## STAFF MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

We understand the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of our organisation and that mental health will play a significant role in an employees’ state of mind.

We appreciate that individuals can experience periods - sometimes prolonged periods - of poor mental health in the same way as with physical health. We commit to providing support for employees going through mental health problems because we recognise such employees can provide a substantial contribution to the success of Viking Academy Trust.

### DEFINITION

For the purposes of this policy, the term ‘mental health problem’ includes mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional as well as signs of stress and anxiety.

There are many types of mental health conditions, for example:

- Depression
- Anxiety

Less common ones include:



- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia

Stress is not classed as a medical condition, but it can still be serious and cause, or make worse, other mental health conditions. For example, if you have stress over a long time, this might lead to anxiety or depression.

## **SPOTTING POSSIBLE SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM**

Not everyone will show obvious signs of poor mental health and it's important not to make assumptions. But some possible signs at work include:

- Appearing tired, anxious or withdrawn.
- Increase in sickness absence or being late to work.
- Changes in the standard of their work or focus on tasks.
- Being less interested in tasks they previously enjoyed.
- Changes in usual behaviour, mood or how the person behaves with the people they work with.

## **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

We understand that, as an organisation, we must comply with health and safety legislation. We undertake to create a safe workplace in which we will actively take measures to limit risks to mental health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of making reasonable adjustments for employees suffering from a disability.

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Where necessary, managers will invite the employee to regular private meetings and ask them to talk openly about their mental health problems. The manager will not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting on the employee personally and professionally. Initial action will include checking how the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee was suffering from a known physical health problem.

In a more general sense, managers will strive to create an environment in which employees feel capable of approaching their manager to discuss their mental health.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Any support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee themselves. We actively encourage employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow these to be addressed. There is also an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who have mental health problems.



Behaviour which is deemed by us as being harassing or bullying in nature which is either a contributory factor to an employee's poor mental health, or is in reaction to the employee's current situation, is unacceptable and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

## **WELLBEING PLAN**

### **1) EMPLOYEE ACTION PLAN**

If a manager identifies a mental health issue, they will refer the employee to the HR Director to create a personal action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. This will support ongoing open communication between the manager and the employee and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The HR Director will ask the employee to draft the plan to ensure it meets their requirements, with medical support as necessary, and then it will be set in place with their manager. Any information in the plan, and the plan itself, will be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their manager.

### **2) WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS**

We will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is suffering from a mental health problem to ensure their situation does not create a barrier to actively contributing to the workplace. Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

### **3) OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL**

With the employee's consent, a referral will be made to our external occupational health expert who will undertake an assessment on the employee's current condition to ascertain how we may provide appropriate support to the employee.

### **4) MANAGING ABSENCE AND RETURN TO WORK**

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their manager will communicate with the employee at regular intervals during their absence as agreed with the employee. Our absence management policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return-to-work meeting will take place and any return-to-work plan agreed between the manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.



## 5) STAFF CARE SERVICES

The HR Director and manager will make the employee aware of all support that is offered by the Viking Academy Trust, including the necessary information to access our staff care services counselling sessions.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Information concerning an employee's mental health is defined as sensitive personal information. This information will only be disclosed to others where necessary.

### TRAINING

To be able to provide valuable support to an employee suffering from poor mental health, managers and other relevant members of staff will attend training in how to support positive mental health and how to deal with poor mental health in employees, including how to identify the signs of poor mental health in employees and how to take appropriate measures to proactively deal with it. Training will also include the taking of swift and appropriate action to discover whether the cause of the concern is work-related.

