

# Viking Academy Trust



## Staff Wellbeing Policy

The VIKING ACADEMY TRUST 'Staff Wellbeing Policy' has been written following advice from Auditors, DfE guidance and in consultation with staff and the Board of Trustees.

**Approved by the Trust: Term 1 2016**

**Reviewed annually: Term 1**

**Last review date: Term 1 2024**

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

**Signed:**

**Chair of Trustees**

Viking Academy Trust: Staff Well-being Policy



# Staff Well-being Policy

## The Viking Academy Trust

Empowering Children Through Education: One Childhood One Chance

### Schools in the Viking Academy Trust (VAT)

Chilton Primary School  
Ramsgate Arts Primary School  
Upton Junior School

This '**Staff Wellbeing Policy**' is applied consistently across all schools for all staff working for the VAT.

### Viking Academy Trust Staff Wellbeing Policy Statement and Guidelines Policy

At VAT, we recognise that our staff are our most important resource and are valued, supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally within a learning and caring community. The best thing for our pupils is a happy, motivated staff. By putting the staff equal first to the pupils we believe we are doing the best we can do for the pupils.

Research (and common sense!) show a relationship between healthier more positive staff, pupil achievement and school improvement. Our VAT motto '**One Childhood One Chance**' resonates in all we do; and if we want and expect the very best for our children, then we must ensure that our staff are equipped in every way to do so.

At Viking, we recognise equipping our staff with the tools needed be effective in their role goes beyond material resources. It is ensuring their working environment is conducive to a general feeling of well-being as well as being supported, appreciated and professionally inspired and challenged.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a document that embraces the many school practices that support staff health and well-being, to minimise the harm from stress and ensure that there is cohesion and progress in working towards the health and well-being of all staff.



## Guidelines for Implementation

The Trust Leadership Team, Board of Trustees, Local Advisory Bodies and School Leadership Teams will:

- ✓ Work towards a Trust ethos where staff across all schools are valued; where respect, empathy and honesty are the cornerstones of all school relationships. The VAT *'Little Blue Book'* sets out the eight promises that VAT staff agree are conducive to positive working relationships. (see appendix 1)
- ✓ Provide personal and professional development such as team building, management of change, stress/time management, mindfulness, assertiveness, communications etc. Provide a range of strategies for involving staff in school decision making processes.
- ✓ Operate consistent practice for Performance Appraisal, linked to clear job specifications. Pay progression is determined by performance, with a policy applied across VAT to ensure equality.
- ✓ Provide extra support from the Leadership Teams at certain times of particular stress and/or difficulty e.g. OFSTED Inspections, Behaviour & Safeguarding concerns, managing 'difficult parents' etc
- ✓ Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system e.g. mentors.
- ✓ Promote information about and access to supportive services. Ensure that, as part of the risk assessment processes of staff workload, there are robust evaluations of the risks of harm and act upon such findings.
- ✓ Provide staff, through training and building security, with a sense of safety and the confidence to deal positively with stressful incidents.
- ✓ Review the demands on teachers and support staff, the time spent on paperwork and see practical alternative solutions wherever possible through the School Improvement Plan process.
- ✓ Respond sensitively and flexibly to external pressures that impact on staff lives whilst at the same time ensuring the efficient running of the school.
- ✓ Maintain contact with staff when they are absent for long periods (by a named person).
- ✓ Maintain positive staff-pupil relationships to ensure an effective teaching and learning environment.



## VAT schools will use the following to assess the impact of the staff well-being policy:

- ✓ Leaders are positive role models and always lead by example.
- ✓ Decision making processes are clearly understood and supported by staff.
- ✓ Opportunities are provided for all staff to socialise and relax with each other.
- ✓ New staff are supported with an appropriate level of induction.
- ✓ An open listening management system that responds quickly to problems. **'Off-Load Up'** being a mantra for staff to follow.
- ✓ A welcoming and tidy staff room that is sensitive to issues of race, gender, homophobia, culture and disability.
- ✓ The quality of staff facilities and accommodation e.g. access to refreshments, toast and cereal, adequate seating and toilet facilities.
- ✓ The regular and systematic monitoring of staff absences, staff/pupil/parent relationships and the recruitment and retention of staff. Practical actions to support new staff.
- ✓ New staff to be recognised and milestones celebrated e.g. a 'well done on completing your first term/year' card for ECTs etc
- ✓ Everyone offered the opportunity to purchase clothing with school logo (Trust to pay % contribution).
- ✓ All staff to have a name badge.
- ✓ 360 staff induction reviews undertaken across the first year of service. The review interview to take place with Line Manager.
- ✓ Teachers to receive advice and guidance on their first PPA day from either a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Line Manager.
- ✓ Induction programme to provide every member of staff with 'mentor'. The mentor will not be the line manager but provide additional support and advice outside of immediate working environment
- ✓ Initial meetings to agree a job description will be held.
- ✓ An initial discussion of roles.
- ✓ Introduction/visits to school/class or environment of new role.
- ✓ Establish a pattern of coaching.
- ✓ ECTs (Early Career Teachers) to follow intensive induction programme with weekly meetings provided for continual support and guidance.
- ✓ 1:1 support for new tasks e.g. coaching / mentoring.



- ✓ 1:1 Well-being meeting with Head of School/Line Manager to be held for all staff
- ✓ VAT wellbeing workshops held regularly across the year
- ✓ VAT HR one stop shop contains a breadth of wellbeing information for colleagues to access
- ✓ We focus on four pillars of wellbeing based on Gallup's 'Wellbeing at Work' Meta Studies to support 'good wellbeing for everyone'. Our communications are centred around this model/theory.
- ✓ Regular health promotion information is shared with staff such as 'Stoptober' 'Sober October' and national health awareness information.

The Board of Trustees recognise the importance of ensuring staff feel valued for the service they provide above and beyond all that can be written on a job description. There are many 'little things' that staff do willingly - and often out of hours - to enable our schools to run smoothly and allow us to provide the 'extras' that ensure VAT children receive an inspirational, memorable learning experience.

VAT Board of Trustees have recognised that there are a number of ways Viking Schools can express appreciation to staff for the valuable role they play. The list below is by no means a definitive list of incentives but examples of the practices considered appropriate as a token of appreciation and/or in showing that the Trust is a supportive, understanding employer:

- Tea & coffee provided free of charge for staff and volunteers
- Occasional food treats provided to mark an event / occasion (e.g. cakes / fruit / mince pies)
- Flowers & card sent to staff absent from school for 10 days+. Also, if hospitalised, wedding or suffering a bereavement.
- Flowers / small gift purchased to express gratitude for additional work completed by a member of staff - e.g. Led a staff Inset session, worked alongside visiting school for period time
- At least one of the five Inset days a year will have a lunch provided by the Trust (if more than one occasion, the HoS to get permission from EHT)



- Staff requests for 'family time' recognised and granted where possible e.g. son's graduation, child's class assembly, mother's hospital etc (Absence Request Form completed)
- Health and fitness sessions provided for period of time (if sufficient staff will benefit) e.g. summer Yoga sessions, Fit Club session
- Early morning meetings to provide sustenance e.g. breakfast bagels, muffins, bacon roll)
- Meetings post 5:30pm to provide suitable sustenance e.g. sandwich/pizza provided at late night parents evening
- Refreshments (soft drinks, hot or cold) for staff accompanying children on school trip (day or residential) eg coffee at lunch, drink with evening meal - non-alcoholic!
- Staff discount if hiring school facilities for personal use (not for profit) e.g. Birthday party (see individual school Lettings Policy for more details)
- School to pay for one school lunch a week for staff on the expectation it is eaten in the school dining hall alongside the children to promote social skills, good table manners etc
- End of year Staff / Governors 'social' event: eg buffet
- The '**Viking Spirit Award**' reward scheme. An opportunity for the Trust to recognise and reward staff that 'go over and above' expectations (see Viking Spirit Award Policy for further information)

### Work Life Balance:

VAT promotes good 'Time Management' with their staff and continually reviews its practices to reduce unnecessary admin tasks and reduction of time in meetings.

Viking Leaders ensure **intent** and **purpose** are considered with regard to key areas of teacher workload e.g. assessment for learning review of marking and teacher assessment.

Below is a list of practices routinely used across VAT schools. This isn't a definitive list and the Trust Leadership Team welcome feedback from staff during review meetings, well-being meetings etc suggesting ways to further impact upon positive use of time.





- ✓ Staff Meetings to be referred to as 'Professional Development Meeting' (PDM) as the meetings are about staff development with the purpose of impacting upon standards in school.
- ✓ PDM meetings are to be held weekly with an agenda shared in advance. The main body of the meeting is to last no more than one hour with AOB the additional item.
- ✓ A weekly communication meeting is to be held in every school on the first day of the new week. This allows staff to have timetable for the week in advance and to ensure nothing happens by chance. The diary for the week is written up on a board for all staff to read - and make additions to where necessary.
- ✓ This weekly communication meeting is preceded by a weekly bulletin - sent out by HoS at the end of the week. It contains the diary for the following week - again to ensure all staff are aware of activities taking place in a busy school. It is expected all staff read the bulletin and view the weekly timetable displayed. This allows for staff to be organised and prepared for the week ahead, therefore minimising pressures of 'not knowing'
- ✓ Monitoring timetables are shared at the start of each term alongside a termly / annual overview. This is to ensure staff can plan ahead and have advance notice to formal monitoring taking place (eg lesson observations / work scrutiny timetable). It is never the intention of VAT TLT to 'catch somebody out' with monitoring, rather to allow staff every opportunity to prepare.
- ✓ Learning walks / lesson drop ins / informal monitoring will take place regularly to ensure daily practice matches expectations. It allows for positive feedback to be given on a regular basis and if necessary, informal targets or advice given in a supportive, coaching manner.
- ✓ PDM time recognises assessment data collection, report writing, appraisal reviews etc and will be timetabled across the year to allow staff sufficient time to meet the school's expectations.
- ✓ Release time is timetabled to meet the priorities in the SIP; with leaders given time out of their teaching commitment to complete tasks eg work scrutiny, learning environment walk, monitoring of planning
- ✓ Parents are given the opportunity to complete 'Praise forms' to formally acknowledge a member of staff. On receipt of these, the HoS will share



with the member of staff concerned and also save to the recipient's personnel file

- ✓ The LAB / Board of Trustees are encouraged to share positive comments and express a formal note of thanks to members of staff that go above and beyond in their role
- ✓ Agreed times for work emails/communication. Understanding that those wishing to work outside of these hours must not impose on others 'home' time and therefore, consideration of what and when to share information, use of draft box etc

The very nature of working in a school means that there are times when an issue arises. This may be as a result of internal or external issues. Either way, the Trust recognise that it is in the interests of all parties to work together to ensure the needs of the individual and the school are met and managed appropriately.

#### When a problem arises:

- ✓ Communication is vital. "*A problem shared...*"
- ✓ The school will provide support and discuss options as appropriate to the circumstances.
- ✓ This may include external support such as the teacher helpline, counselling, support from leadership across the Trust and or seeking advice from HR consultant.
- ✓ Occupational Health and GP services may be used. The school will continue to support even when external services are involved. The outcome of stressful or threatening incidents will often be influenced by the response of the pupils. This will be considered in the school's response.
- ✓ During this time the school will seek at all times to maintain the confidentiality, rights and dignity of the staff involved.
- ✓ Internal access to an onsite Stress Management/wellbeing and mental health coach.

#### When a problem arises: External Support networks:

**Education Support:** UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health & wellbeing of education staff

- ✓ [www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling](http://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling)





- ✓ Education Support: Tel: 0800 562561

'Worried?' tab on Viking school websites have links to organisations to support children and adults with mental health & wellbeing:

- ✓ [RAPS worried?](#)
- ✓ [Chilton Worried?](#)
- ✓ [Upton Worried?](#)

**Staff Care Services:** As a trust we buy in the KCC Staff Care Services which offers confidential support line counselling:

- ✓ Speak with Mrs L Blatchford or your HoS for further information or telephone: 03000411411 to make an initial enquiry

### Managing Absence due to Ill-Health

VAT schools follow a consistent policy detailing the procedure for managing absence due to ill health - see Appendix 3

### Ofsted Guidance

VAT leaders recognise and welcome the importance the revised 'Ofsted framework' (Sept 2023) has specifically placed upon staff well-being. Viking practice is, and has always been, integral to the time taken to build positive relationships amongst the staff team. It is not an 'add on' and is reviewed regularly to develop this fundamental aspect of staff welfare via this policy, staff questionnaires, 1:1 meetings etc

### Ofsted Grade Descriptors 'Leadership & Management'

- Leaders ensure that highly effective and meaningful engagement takes place with staff at all levels and that issues are identified. When issues are identified, in particular about workload, they are consistently dealt with appropriately and quickly. (*Outstanding*)
- Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues. (*Outstanding*)
- Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload. (*Good*)
- Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment. (*Good*)



## Education staff benefits ('perks') outside of the Viking Academy Trust

- The VAT will share will staff employed at the Trust the discount websites / codes available for staff working within our educational organisation:
  - ✓ <https://kcc.rewardgateway.co.uk/>
  - ✓ <https://www.discountsforteachers.co.uk/>

### Appendices:

Appendix 1: Wellbeing: Practical Advice

Appendix 2: VAT Little Blue Book

Appendix 3: Staff Absence Management Policy

Appendix 4: Absence Request Form (Key Survey)

Appendix 5: Viking Spirit Award Policy

Appendices 2 - 5 can be found in VAT Policies on Share Point and on the VAT website.





## Appendix 1: Wellbeing: Practical Advice

### Well-Being

Wellbeing is a holistic way to look at our health, it covers everything that can contribute to us feeling positive or negative about our lives from job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing to physical health and economic wellbeing. These factors are often all interlinked.

We all know how important wellbeing is but the reality of applying it to our lives proves more difficult. It helps to acknowledge when we are not feeling okay and take actions to prevent the build-up of negative wellbeing.

[Live It Well](#) is full of great wellbeing information and resources designed to promote better wellbeing and mental health in Kent. Take a [self-assessment test](#) to determine your current state of wellbeing.

To kick-start your personal wellbeing we have picked some practical advice below.

#### 1. Sleeping, Eating, and Exercising

These are the basics, you need to be doing these right to feel okay every day. If you're not **sleeping** properly then you will have no energy, feel moody, and let things get to you more than normal. 7- 9 hours is usually the [recommended amount](#) to function well. Take a look at this [Healthy Sleep Tips](#) infographic on getting good sleep.

**Eating** properly will give you the right energy and nutrients to help you deal with the day. Find out more about healthy eating on the NHS website [Change for Life](#) and remember to [drink enough water](#) to keep hydrated.

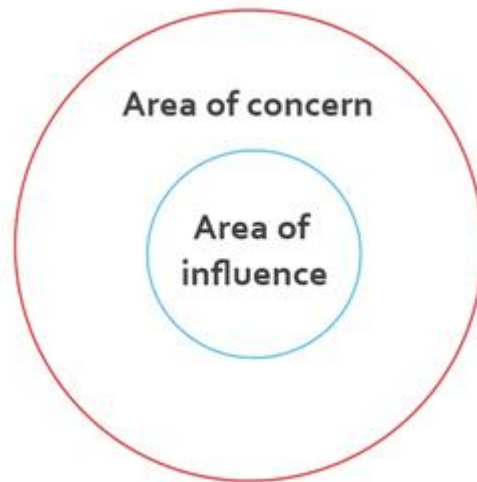
**Exercise** is beneficial for mood as well as your physical health. Focus on the immediate feel-good benefits rather than long term goals like losing weight. Most of us need to be doing [at least 150 minutes a week](#), how you break down the time and what you do is up to you.

#### 2. Focus on what you can do

The diagram below, based on the one in Stephen Covey's book, 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People', shows how we only have influence over the a small area of things we are concerned about. So we should use our energy to



focus on the areas we can control and not things we cannot like world issues and what people think of us. Instead of getting upset about homeless people on the street, try making a donation to a charity or volunteer at a soup kitchen.



### **3. Talk, not complain**

We all like to complain, it helps to get things out of our system but it can get too negative so see if you can do something about the issue or avoid these conversations. Talk to the right people, if you have an issue at work then it might help to talk to the person involved or your manager, rather than let it build up. It might be useful to have [counselling](#), talking to a professional can help you work through key issues.

### **4. Be grateful and keep learning**

A [study](#) showed that gratitude and love of learning were two best positive predictors of wellbeing out of 24 character strengths. Love, honesty, hope and humour followed very close.

### **5. Spend time with people you love**

Having a strong support system will get you through most things. We go through our days and weeks not aware of what we are doing because we are mindlessly going through the motions. When it comes to the crunch, time spent with our friends and family is what counts. No matter how busy you are, making time to see your loved ones is good for yours and their wellbeing.