



Uplands Primary School Staff Wellbeing Policy

Date Approved by Governing Body: July 2023

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At Uplands Primary School we believe that all staff, regardless of their role, have the right to feel supported, listened to and valued so that they can fulfil their roles and develop personally and professionally. Staff are our biggest asset and that without a fully functioning team we will not be able to support our pupils to 'be the best they can be'.

We have developed this policy together to reflect our values and to enable all members of staff to be:

- Aware of their own emotions and how they may impact on others
- Able to manage their feelings
- Supported and supportive to each other
- Able to ask for support when needed
- Confident to challenge when an action may impact on the wellbeing of themselves or the wider team
- Reflective in their practise and able to suggest ways to work smarter
- Empathetic towards others and able to treat all members of the team with respect
- Clear on the values we adhere to in order to promote and protect the wellbeing of themselves and the team.

What do we mean by wellbeing at Uplands?

Our school values underpin how we work at Uplands. These values also support staff wellbeing in school. We believe that wellbeing is for every day, not just a staff meeting in September or an empty gesture such as a bowl of fruit in the staffroom. Wellbeing is for all members of the staff, inclusive of non-teaching staff and leaders. It is for the present and not just the absent. Wellbeing is not about always being 'nice,' having others doing it our way, avoiding difficult conversations or not challenging when we need to because these things can impact on the wellbeing of the wider team.

It is about having a positive culture based on good relationships and respect for each other. We believe that this is one of our strengths as a school. We feel that as a team we support and listen to each other. Staff feel that they can seek advice from each other when needed. We would like to build on this and develop these strengths further.

Our wellbeing principles

We have discussed principles from 'The Wellbeing Toolkit' by Andrew Cowley and agreed upon the following principles to adhere to:

Celebrate –we will give thanks to colleagues when we notice that they go above and beyond. For example, saying thank you when someone has covered our class.

Collaborate- we will share out the tasks and keep it fair. For example, all staff taking a turn to stay to the after-school activities or sharing out the planning.

Respect- we will always show respect for each other and our different roles and positions. This includes respecting time for life outside school. For example, as a general rule, we will not text someone about school very early in the morning or late at night.

Trust-we don't need to micromanage and we do recognise that people may act differently according to their role. We can ask for clarification but with respect.

Support- we will promote positivity, listen to each other and offer guidance.

Perseverance and resilience- we will support and prepare for challenging times. For example, in year teams we can identify when the pressure points are during the year and plan our workload around these.

Courage- we will act upon negative language and challenge when people act in a way that could undermine the wellbeing of others.

Empathy- understanding where different opinions may be coming from and why people are acting as they are can help us to work well together and resolve any differences. We will consider how well we know others, how well we understand their role and their challenges.

Time – we are a very busy school and we must protect our time, organise it, speak up about unnecessary tasks and prepare for a new term in advance.

Supporting each other.

New members of staff will be supported through an induction meeting with the Headteacher and support from their Line Manager who will talk them through their role. ECTs will have a mentor and be supported through following our Early Careers Teachers policy (which can be found on our website) and Hampshire guidance.

Should worries, concerns or queries arise, then there is a clear system for staff to ask for support. They can raise their worries/concerns with their Line Manager in the first instance or through team meetings. In addition to this, the Headteacher has an open door system where staff know they can talk to her straight away if the door to her office is open. In the absence of the Headteacher, a member of SLT are happy to take on this role.

The staff room is open to all members of staff including volunteers and is comfortable and (mostly) tidy! There is a larger room (known as the community room) for teachers to work in

during PPA time which is away from distractions. Should staff need a quiet space to talk or download the community room is also suitable for this purpose.

We have clear systems for reporting absence and sickness and levels of staff absence are monitored. This system can include, when certain triggers are met, support meetings to enable staff to return to work and/or find solutions to any problems. We ask staff to keep medical appointments to outside school time but will, where necessary, support on an individual basis.

Key information is communicated to all staff via e-mail each week and a paper copy and a timetable of the main events are displayed in the staffroom each week. Management plans are updated every half term as are PPA timetables and sent out to staff in advance of the end of term. Weekly meetings with Teaching Assistants help to keep them informed and teachers can add messages to the AOB section of their weekly meetings.

The curriculum has been mapped out and staff know what they will be teaching and when across for the whole year. Tasks and resourcing are shared out within a team. Subject Leaders are happy to talk to members of the team about their subject and will support with planning and resourcing. Pressure points can be planned for and ways of managing busy periods can be discussed in teams.

The school has clear policies and these are approved by the Governing body. These policies guide the day to day life of the school and can be useful to fall back on when dealing with a problem or issue such as behaviour. IT policies and our code of conduct support staff to know exactly what is acceptable in terms of behaviour and use of social media.

We recognise that life events can also impact on our wellbeing. For example, births, marriages and bereavements. We have systems in place to support with pregnancy and maternity leaves. Events outside school can be discussed confidentially and support will be given on an individual basis.

How to support with your own wellbeing

All staff have had some training on how to keep themselves fit and well. This will be refreshed at least annually, given on induction to new staff and revisited with individuals where needed. We have discussed and learnt about a few practical ways we can use to support ourselves and these are explained fully in appendix 1.

We all have triggers (rotten eggs) that can lead to anxious thoughts and sometimes these can be useful as they motivate us to get going! Learning to be aware of these triggers can help us all to manage them. These anxious thoughts are known as negative automatic thoughts. Learning to identify when we are being taken over by these automatic thoughts can help to support during a stressful time. It can also help us to regulate emotions and the way in which we deal with or respond to others in the team. More information about negative automatic thoughts, how to identify them and deal with them can be found in appendix 2.

Research shows that certain situations will arise in schools where wellbeing can be impacted upon. Appendix 3 lists the common themes mentioned in 'The Wellbeing Toolkit' that have

arisen from school surveys. Being aware of these themes can help us to be aware of why we may be feeling upset and also ensure that we think before we do!

If problems arise

On a daily basis, most of us work within our challenge and comfort zones. We may dip in and out of our stretch zone depending on how our day goes and if there are any rotten eggs looming! It is normal to feel out of our comfort zones and this can be a good thing and mean that we are growing personally and professionally. For example, someone who has just taken on a promotion may feel out of their comfort zone while they get used to the new role. See appendix 4 for information about comfort zones.

However, if a member of staff feels that they are always in the panic zone and that feelings of anxiety are taking over then we encourage staff to:

- Talk to someone even if they just need to download
- Ask for advice and support from someone they trust.
- Talk through their planning/tasks with another colleague.
- Jot down what their anxieties are and try to make a plan to move forward. For example, during a busy time, timetable the tasks they need to complete
- Seek advice from outside the school. For example, a Union or advice from a doctor.
- Make an appointment to meet with a member of the SLT and discuss concerns. Should the concerns be about the SLT, then there is a grievance policy to follow or staff could speak to the Chair of Governors.
- If the concern is about another member of the school community for example a parent then staff can ask for another member of staff or SLT to support them in handling this person/situation.
- Should staff feel that their feelings are caused by bullying or unfair treatment, then we would advise that they follow the steps in the staff grievance policy which can be found on our school system.
- Lots of staff will support with dealing with challenging pupils and referrals to outside agencies can support with providing strategies.

Working outside of school time

We recognize that staff will work at home during the weekends and holidays. However, it is important that staff know that they only need to work as much as is necessary to ensure that they can fulfil their contract. There is no expectation to give up a particular amount of holiday or weekends or evenings. Staff should not be made to feel that they have to come into school during the holidays. We also respect that staff do not have to reply to any e-mails or texts outside of school hours unless there is a real emergency. We will try to think before we send e-mails outside of school hours about whether or not the e-mail could wait until the next school day.

Team Leaders will try to organize planning and tasks well before the end of term so that staff can break up from school feeling prepared for the next school term.

We recognize that as a busy school, we often require staff to work outside school hours for key events such as discos, fayres and residentials. We will try to ensure that we 'share and keep it fair' so that these events do not always fall upon the same members of staff to attend.

Further Support

Some guidance can be found in the staffroom and some popular books that may interest are:

- The Chimp Paradox by Prof Steve Peters
- Feel the Fear and do it Anyway by Susan Jeffries
- The Wellbeing Toolkit by Andrew Cowley
- The Mentally Healthy Schools Workbook by Pooky Knightsmith

Website Sources of support

MIND

HHC – wellbeing resources for schools. Access via the intranet.

Website- 47 wellbeing tips for teachers

Young minds- wellbeing for school staff

Education support charity

Supporting staff wellbeing: Mentally Healthy Schools

Other linked policies

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with:

- Staff code of conduct
- Staff absence and sickness policy
- Induction policy
- Health and safety policy
- NQT policy
- Staff grievance policy
- Equalities policy
- Acceptable use of IT policy
- Use of social media policy

Child Protection

Child protection and keeping our pupils safe is paramount in all we do. Adherence to our child protection and whistleblowing policies **will always** take precedence over keeping staff members happy or protected.

Appendix 1

Five ways to support with your own wellbeing



1. Connecting with others

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

With this in mind, we will try to do something different today and make a connection. Examples of this may include:

- Talking to someone instead of sending an email
- Speaking to someone new for example, having lunch next to someone outside your year team.
- Asking how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Putting five minutes aside to find out how someone really is
- Giving a colleague a lift to work or share the journey home with them.

2. Be active

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being. However, it doesn't need to be particularly intense for us to feel good - slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise.

Today, why not get physical? Here are a few ideas:

- Take the stairs not the lift
- Go for a walk at lunchtime
- Walk into work - perhaps with a colleague – so you can 'connect' as well
- Get off the bus one stop earlier than usual and walk the final part of your journey to work
- Organise a work sporting activity
- Have a kick-about in a local park
- Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching, before you leave for work in the morning
- Walk to someone's desk instead of calling or emailing.

3. Take notice

Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances our well-being and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm our life priorities. Heightened awareness also enhances our self-understanding and allows us to make positive choices based on our own values and motivations.

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around us. Here are a few ideas:

- Get a plant for your workspace
- Have a 'clear the clutter' day
- Take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or acting
- Take a different route on your journey to or from work
- Visit a new place for lunch.

4. Learn

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps to lift older people out of depression. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Why not learn something new today? Here are a few more ideas:

- Find out something about your colleagues
- Sign up for a class
- Read the news or a book
- Set up a book club
- Do a crossword or Sudoku
- Research something you've always wondered about
- Learn a new word.

5. Give to others

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Appendix 2

Identifying and Dealing with Negative Automatic Thoughts

Identifying 'rotten eggs'

Being aware of certain events and times that will trigger stress and anxiety can then support us to find ways to manage our emotions during these times. A rotten egg is an event or person or time of year that may trigger these feelings. In teaching, lesson visits or OFSTED or SATS can be common triggers.

A 'rotten egg' can trigger negative automatic thoughts such as:

All or nothing/ black or white thinking. Examples of this are:

- If I don't do it perfectly, then I'm rubbish
- If I am not a perfect mother/father/daughter/son – then I'm useless
- If I don't do well at every area of my job, I am hopeless
- If I don't get on with everyone, no one likes me
- If my partner is annoyed with me, they must hate me
- If I don't win the game, I must be a loser



Over control and perfectionism. Examples of this are:

- Unless I do everything perfectly life is intolerable
- If my house is not perfectly clean, it is a pigsty
- If I don't take care over my appearance, then I am a mess and I can't go out
- If I allow paperwork to pile up, I will be out of control

Magical thinking or fortune telling. Examples of this are:

- My thoughts are so powerful, just by thinking it, something bad will happen
- I know exactly what she is thinking....
- I predict that if I say something about this to her, she will find me unacceptable
- If I don't please everyone, they will hate me/ be disappointed in me

Catastrophising. Examples of this are:

- If I don't do well in my next exam, I am going to fail everything, get kicked out of university and be a failure for the rest of my life
- If I don't get my act together soon, I never will
- If I don't get this job, I will never get another one, and will be on the scrapheap
- If I get sick, I will never recover, and never be able to be happy again
- If I split up with my partner, I will never meet anyone again, and will be alone

Pessimistic or negative bias. Examples of this are:

Be careful how
you are talking
to yourself
because you are
listening.

Hayes

- If something bad is going to happen, it is much more likely to happen to me
- This proves what I suspected all along
- You can't trust anyone these days
- Everyone is out to rip you off
- I will never get out of this mess
- Bad things are always happening to me, or someone I care about

Personalisation, over responsibility. Examples of this are:

- You assume responsibility for bad things, even though you probably were not responsible
- A mother feels responsible for her daughters' poor grades at school and concludes 'I am a lousy mother'
- You complete a tender at work and your company is not awarded the work – 'I failed, I don't deserve the trust and respect people give me'

Dealing with negative thoughts

Most of the time, negative thoughts will come into your head and leave quickly, as if there has been a break and enter, you are left with the mess of the feelings, but didn't really catch the thoughts as they occurred.

So, use your feelings as a cue, and whenever you are feeling upset, try and notice what exactly you are feeling, put it into words, 'I am anxious' 'I am sad' and ask yourself the question, 'What did I just think then?' It might also take the form of a picture, or a visual image of a face, or a scene. Ask yourself what did you see?

If you seem upset by something that has just happened, an event, try and look for what it was you were telling yourself about the situation? How did I view this? What did it mean to me?

Counting negative thoughts

Being aware of your thoughts is critical in helping you to challenge them. One way might be to count how many times you have negative thoughts in any one day.

Writing down your thoughts

The best way to become more aware is by writing them down and look out for the ones that are more unique to you. By being your own negative thought scientist, it can help take the sting out of them, and even this process can help you to look at them differently. Looking back on your thoughts can also help us to realise that most of what we worry about never happens!

Appendix 3

Research that has been carried out in other schools shows that staff wellbeing can be impacted through:

- Toxic culture- bullying, cliques, gossip, staff not speaking to each other with respect
- Social media/e-mail- nasty comments, comments without permission
- Staff do/social exclusion- seating plan, talking openly about a night out in front of staff not invited
- Leaders including middle leaders- ways of dealing with staff
- Teacher on teacher- not treating with respect
- Support staff- having favourites, not supporting teacher, negative.
- Career/life satisfaction (or not)
- Holidays- balance of work, how much is expected, not breaking up on a positive note
- Births, marriages and deaths- how does school manage this?
- Changes at work- redundancy
- Accountability- results, data, PM, expectations
- Inspections- OFSTED and lesson observations
- Unnecessary workload
- Reports, data, planning
- Sense of it is not fair- for example, always having PPA taken away, having to do more, absent colleague
- Not understanding the wider picture

This list was taken from The Wellbeing Toolkit by Andrew Cowley



Appendix 4

Diagram to Explain Comfort Zones

