The Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation

BIRTH TO 19

Mental Health and Well-Being

Vision

Setting higher standards for what early education can achieve, we will challenge expectations, empowering every child to achieve their best and become active contributors to a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Mission

We are Better Together! In a safe, nurturing and respectful environment our dedicated, passionate teams and amazing families will work together to provide exceptional early education and care; enabling everyone in our diverse community to thrive and succeed!

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Approved By: Full Governing Board
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Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation and Birth to 19

1. Introduction

Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation and Birth to 19 recognise that staff mental health and wellbeing are fundamental to creating a positive, nurturing and high-quality environment for children, families and colleagues. When staff feel supported, valued and able to thrive, this can positively influence professional practice, relationships, teamwork and the culture of the organisation.

This policy sets out our commitment to promoting and protecting staff mental health and wellbeing through a proactive, supportive and collaborative approach. It explains the responsibilities shared by the organisation, leaders and staff, and outlines the support and initiatives available. Wellbeing is an ongoing commitment, not something addressed only when difficulties arise.

2. Purpose and principles

This policy aims to promote positive physical, mental and emotional wellbeing; create a respectful, inclusive and supportive workplace; encourage open communication; support manageable working practices and work–life balance; enable professional growth; and ensure staff know how to access support.

We recognise that wellbeing can be influenced by workload, working conditions, relationships, organisational culture and individual circumstances. Staff are encouraged to take reasonable care of their own wellbeing, while the organisation recognises its responsibility to create supportive systems, practices and environments.

Good mental health does not mean always feeling happy or never having a difficult day. It includes being able, where possible, to manage everyday challenges, maintain relationships, work productively and recover from setbacks. Mental and physical health are connected, and difficulties in one can affect the other.

3. Why workplace wellbeing matters

Workplace wellbeing is about more than supporting staff during difficult periods. It is about creating an environment where people feel valued, supported, motivated and able to succeed in their roles. Positive wellbeing can contribute to improved morale, confidence, professional growth, teamwork, recruitment and retention, while helping reduce stress and burnout. It also supports a healthy and inclusive culture and a positive environment for children, families and colleagues.

4. Our approach to wellbeing

4.1 Professional development

We believe wellbeing is strengthened when staff feel valued, confident and supported in their professional growth. We will provide access to relevant training and development, encourage collaboration and shared

learning, and offer Pause and Reflect sessions that support professional development. Staff are encouraged to reflect on their practice, identify strengths and development goals, and seek support when needed.

4.2 Workload and working environment

We recognise that workload, staffing pressures, change and the working environment can significantly affect wellbeing. We will monitor workload and staffing pressures, encourage effective communication and planning, and maintain a safe and supportive environment. Staff wellbeing will be considered when planning changes or introducing initiatives, and staff will be consulted wherever possible. We will promote a healthy work–life balance where operationally possible and encourage respectful working relationships.

4.3 Organisational culture and communication

We are committed to a culture in which staff feel respected, included, listened to, appreciated and safe to communicate professionally and constructively. Clear and honest communication helps build trust, strengthens working relationships and makes it easier to raise concerns early. Our open-door approach means staff can speak to a member of the senior leadership team when something is worrying them, when they need support or when they would value someone listening; they do not need to wait for a Pause & Reflect / Appraisal.

Communication is a two-way process. Staff are encouraged to share views and concerns respectfully, and leaders will consider feedback and communicate relevant responses. We will recognise achievements and contributions, provide constructive feedback, normalise conversations about mental health and use staff feedback to identify what is working well and what may need to change.

5. Stress and its impact

5.1 Positive stress

Not all stress is harmful. Short periods of manageable stress can increase alertness, focus attention and support performance. A challenge may feel difficult while still seeming achievable. However, stress should not be assumed to be beneficial when it is persistent, overwhelming or unsupported.

5.2 When stress becomes harmful

Harmful stress can leave a person exhausted, anxious or confused, affect concentration and reduce performance. It may be short-term or long-term. Signs that stress may be becoming harmful include difficulty completing routine tasks or increased mistakes; changes in sleep, eating, activity or other self-care; feeling overwhelmed by small decisions; feeling unable to begin everyday tasks; withdrawing from colleagues, friends or family; and persistent anxiety, low mood, negative thoughts or reduced self-esteem.

Long-term stress can affect physical and mental health. Staff are encouraged to notice changes in their own wellbeing and seek support early. Difficulties should not be seen as personal failure. A more compassionate and balanced response to stressful situations can help: for example, recognising that a situation is difficult while also acknowledging that you are doing your best.

6. Supporting our own wellbeing

Staff are encouraged to take reasonable care of their own health and wellbeing, while recognising that individual self-care cannot replace appropriate organisational support. Helpful approaches may include recognising personal limits; maintaining supportive relationships; adapting to change and asking for help when needed; practising self-compassion; staying physically active, eating regularly and maintaining a healthy sleep routine and making time for social connection. Staff may also wish to explore hobbies, activities or professional support to strengthen their support networks.

7. Supporting colleagues

Promoting good mental health is everyone's responsibility. Knowing and understanding colleagues can help us recognise when someone may be experiencing difficulty. Staff do not need specialist training to show care.

Helpful support includes listening without judgement, offering reassurance, staying calm, being patient and allowing the person to decide how much to share. Colleagues can let the person know that support is available and encourage them to use relevant support routes when needed. Confidentiality and professional boundaries should be respected. Where there are concerns about safety, safeguarding or a serious risk of harm, staff must follow the relevant organisational procedures.

8. Leadership and organisational responsibilities

The organisation is committed to creating working conditions that support positive mental health and wellbeing. Leaders will communicate clearly, particularly when changes may affect staff, and consult wherever possible. They will maintain opportunities for staff to raise concerns, consider wellbeing when managing workload and making decisions, and ensure staff are aware of available resources. Regular Pause and Reflect discussions will support wellbeing, learning and development.

Leaders will keep wellbeing on the agenda, encourage open conversations that reduce stigma, recognise staff effort and contributions, and use feedback to inform improvements. The governing body has an ethical and moral responsibility to consider the quality of working conditions and ensure appropriate attention is given to staff mental health and wellbeing.

9. Staff Wellbeing Group

The Staff Wellbeing Group supports the organisation's ongoing commitment to wellbeing. It will meet approximately three times per year to promote wellbeing initiatives and awareness, consider themes arising from staff feedback, identify opportunities for improvement and encourage inclusive, constructive and solution-focused discussion. The group supports wellbeing across the organisation but does not replace individual support routes, supervision, grievance procedures or individual case management.

10. Wellbeing Code of Conduct

All staff are expected to treat colleagues with kindness, respect and professionalism; communicate constructively; contribute positively to team culture; raise concerns through appropriate channels; support a solution-focused approach; respect confidentiality where appropriate; use wellbeing support responsibly; and take reasonable responsibility for their own wellbeing and professional conduct.

In return, the organisation is committed to listening to staff, promoting fairness and respect, providing wellbeing resources and encouraging healthy working practices.

11. Current wellbeing support and initiatives

11.1 Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools

Current support for nursery staff includes:

- 2 hours wellbeing time per term for all nursery staff
- 4 Group staff sessions and wellbeing events per year
- Fresh fruit and access to a water dispenser
- Pause and Reflect sessions
- Regular wellbeing surveys
- Mental Health First Aiders within the organisation
- Online wellbeing support through the School Wellbeing Service: https://schoolwellbeing.com/

11.2 Birth to 19

Current support for Birth to 19 staff includes:

- Flexible working arrangements, including working from home where applicable
- Fresh fruit and access to a water dispenser
- Pause and Reflect sessions
- Regular wellbeing surveys
- Mental Health First Aiders within the organisation
- Online wellbeing support through the School Wellbeing Service: https://schoolwellbeing.com/

12. Monitoring, confidentiality and review

Staff wellbeing is an ongoing part of organisational development and improvement planning. Feedback from surveys, discussions and the Wellbeing Group will be considered to identify themes and opportunities for improvement. Relevant updates will be communicated to staff, and this policy and associated support will be reviewed regularly in response to changing needs, organisational arrangements, legislation and guidance.

Information shared about wellbeing will be handled sensitively and in line with data protection and organisational procedures. Confidentiality may have limits where information must be shared to meet legal, safeguarding, health and safety or other organisational responsibilities.

13. Legal framework and related policies

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Mental Health Act 1983.
- Mental Health Act 2007.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Employment Rights Act 1996.
- Employment Relations Act 1999.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Working Time Regulations 1998.
- Department for Education (2024), Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.
- Department for Education (2024), Improve Workload and Wellbeing for School Staff.
- Mental Health Act 2025

This policy operates alongside the following organisational policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- A-Z Staff Handbook
- EDI Policy
- Leave of Absence Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Complaints Policy

14. Policy review

Policy updated: October 2026

Next review due: October 2027