The

MAST

Academy Trust

Policy	Staff Wellbeing policy
Owner	The Mast Executive Administrator
Date approved	17th June 2021
Approver	Staffing Committee Trust Board

Current version	V1.0

Next review due	Summer term 2024

Objective of Policy

At the Mast Academy Trust we believe that the good mental health and wellbeing of our staff is vital to organisational success and sustainability.

This policy outlines the process and procedures relating to how health and wellbeing will be supported in the Trust.

Version Control	
Version Number	Summary of amends from previous version
1.0	Development of Policy

Sign off requirements	
Approvers	Position
Martyn Jones	Chair of trustees ratification
Reviewers	Position
Natasha Greenough	CEO The MAST
Dorcas Atkinson	Trust representative

1. **Why mental health and wellbeing is important**
    At the Mast Academy Trust we believe that the good mental health and wellbeing of our staff is vital to organisational success and sustainability. We also know that in order for our staff to support the ongoing mental health of our children, it is essential that we support our workforce in the same way.

    A healthy, happy workforce means we can:
    *   reduce sickness absence, presenteeism and staff turnover;
    *   enhance our reputation as an employer who cares;
    *   improve staff morale and performance;
    *   better support our children to learn and succeed.

    As a Trust we are committed to the following principles:
    *   Promoting wellbeing for all staff;
    *   Tackling the causes of work-related mental health problems;
    *   Supporting staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Mast Academy Trust Well-Being Charter. **Appendix C**

2. **Definition of mental health and wellbeing**
    We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing:

    "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

    Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want our staff to:
    *   Enjoy working in a safe, open and supportive workplace environment and culture that supports mental health, overall wellbeing and prevents discrimination;
    *   Be aware of mental health and wellbeing issues and behaviours;
    *   Help us reduce the stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace;
    *   Feel supported during times of personal or work stress;
    *   Maintain a healthy work life balance;
    *   Have opportunities to engage in initiatives that support mental health and wellbeing;
    *   Feel confident and empowered to talk about their problems to colleagues and or managers as appropriate;
    *   Have positive and healthy relationships at work.

3. **Links to other policies**
    This policy links to various HR policies and procedures and the Trust's code of conduct for staff, all can be found on the Trust website.

4. **Roles and Responsibilities**
    Supporting activities that enable good mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is the responsibility of all employees.

    The Mast Academy Trust will look to all line managers within the Trust to manage staff in a manner which is not detrimental to mental health and which, at its best, can positively promote mental health and wellbeing.

All staff should strive to achieve a healthy work life balance by regularly taking uninterrupted lunch breaks, refraining from sending work-related emails out of hours, taking annual leave and resting after busy periods, with very senior staff leading by example. Weekend and evening emails should be kept to a minimum and only sent where it is absolutely necessary for the smooth running of the schools or where there is an urgent reason for doing so.

All employees have a responsibility to promote a positive working environment that aims to help them and their colleagues to feel included, supported and empowered to talk about mental health openly and without judgement.

Employees are also responsible for accessing support when they need it and raising any concerns with their line manager.

There are specially trained members of staff across the Trust who are designated Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs). The role of the MHFAs is to:

- Approach, assess and assist members of staff in crisis or in need of support
- Listen and communicate non-judgmentally
- Give support and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage other support

5. **Engaging with staff to identify ways in which the Trust and its schools can better support mental health and wellbeing**

The Trust will:
Adhere to the principles outlined within the Well-Being Charter created in consultation with stakeholders.
We are working to develop a culture of openness whereby the whole of the staff team feel empowered to talk about mental health and put forward ideas as to how the Trust can support this even further.

We intend to continue our efforts to engage with the whole staff team and with individuals on a one on one basis in the ways outlined above and via the routine channels of communications that already exist in our schools (team meetings, 1:1 meetings, Senior Leadership Meetings, performance management meetings, drop in sessions etc.). The feedback from our staff will always drive the Trust's actions and efforts to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

6. **Positive working relationships and social connections.**
As a Trust we will take positive action to make the workplace a mutually supportive environment where good work relationships thrive.

We will:
- promote a culture of teamwork, collaboration and information-sharing;
- promote positive behaviours to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- ensure robust policies on bullying and harassment are in place and well publicised;
- encourage exercise and regular social events to boost staff health, team work and mental wellbeing;
- offer mentoring and coaching sessions with buddy systems for new starters to help them gain confidence and develop new skills;
- celebrate the successes of teams and individuals in a variety of ways;

- encourage cross Trust networking both socially and professionally through the organisation of out of hours social events and events and cross school staff well-being forum

7.   Providing the right level of support to staff when it is needed

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the Trust or with advice from external professionals. Some staff will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that are available to staff within our Trust

Sources of other relevant support include:
- Our own Senior Leadership Teams;
- Our Mental Health First Aiders;
- Occupational Health;
- SAS (School Advisory Service) - Health & Wellbeing Support
- Bespoke counselling or CBT;
- NHS Mental Health Services;
- MIND;
- Samaritans;
- Other online / telephone helplines and charities.

Line Managers will routinely take stock of individuals' wellbeing and mental health to help assess the impact of current approaches and plan further improvements to enhance morale. This will take place in 1:1 meetings, performance management meetings and supervision meetings. Individual staff are also responsible for their own well-being and should alert line managers, or another appropriate colleague, to any difficulties they are having in order that support can be put in place.

Regular 1:1 meetings are encouraged across the Trust as they have significant benefits for employers and employees. They give managers opportunities to speak regularly with staff about how they're doing both at work and at home, and explore with them what might be impacting on their mental wellbeing. Whilst 1:1s are not always possible due to teaching schedules and working times, clear and regular lines of communication are essential, especially for those working in isolation, for example regular telephone catch ups

8.   Recruitment

Supporting mental health starts with getting the right person for the job. If there's a mismatch between a new recruit and our workplace, or their skills and abilities the Trust's vision, it can lead to intense stress. As a Trust we will always be realistic about the role in interviews, and be careful to select people on their skills and competencies, or realistic potential.

We will make it clear in adverts and interviews that the Trust values staff mental health, as this sends a signal that disclosure will not lead to discrimination. The following statement will be used routinely in our recruitment:

'As an employer we are committed to promoting and protecting the physical and mental health of all our staff.'

We will state clearly that reasonable adjustments are available – for the interview and the job itself – so applicants understand why disclosure might be beneficial.
Someone applying for a job may be worried about sharing information about their mental health. They might be anxious their mental health problems will lead to them being

rejected, or that the interviewer will view them in a negative light. Therefore, it is important that as a Trust, we provide a fair and unbiased recruitment process. We will ensure people can disclose confidentially and that any information about health or disability is kept separate from the application form, so the recruitment panel does not see it.

Since the Equality Act 2010 came into force, it is unlawful for employers to ask questions about health before making a job offer, including about mental health.
However, there are ways to support people to disclose their mental health problems lawfully. This helps ensure they have equal access to job opportunities and are offered the support they need without discrimination.

Recruitment decisions should always be based on whether candidates have the necessary qualifications and competence for the job, without making assumptions about health or disability. If there are concerns about whether health or disability will affect their ability to do the job, recruitment managers should assess these with the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

9. Induction

Delivering an effective induction programme is essential. Starting a new role can feel unsettling, and if employees aren't given the right expectations and guidance, it can destroy their confidence and trigger existing or generate new mental health problems. At this stage, we will make sure we provide information about what support is available for staff to look after their mental health and wellbeing.

10. Responding to disclosure

If a mental health disclosure is made by a member of staff, it is imperative that line managers have an early conversation about the person's needs. Managers should find a safe, quiet place to talk to the individual about their needs so that the right level of support can be arranged, including necessary adjustments.
This is where good people management skills, plus basic empathy and common sense, are essential. Managers need to ensure they are seen as approachable and listen when staff ask for help. They should also be mindful of whether people would feel safe sharing their problem at work.

11. Supporting an employee when they are unwell and off sick

Sometimes an employee may be so unwell they need time off work to recover. How well this is managed is key in shaping how well and how quickly people are able to return to work and get back to feeling healthy and able to work again.

Refer to the staff leave of absence policy on the Trust website.

12. Supporting people to return to work

Effective return-to-work interviews can ensure mental health problems are identified at an early stage before they get worse. However, to be effective, managers must understand how to use them to build trust and engagement. Before the interview, managers must always tell people what they can expect in advance and make it clear that the return to work interview is a supportive way to help them make a successful and lasting return to the workplace and address any on-going health needs.

Refer to the staff leave of absence policy on the Trust website.

13. **Workplace adjustments**

Workplace adjustments for mental health are often quite small, simple, practical and cost-effective changes. They could include anything from offering rooms for quiet work, to starting a buddy system. Often the change isn't physical, but about attitude, expectation or communication.

Employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments one they are aware that something about work is causing a problem for someone with a disability.

14. **Building people's mental health literacy so they can support each other**

Building mental health literacy means boosting employees' knowledge and skills so they better manage their own mental health and improve their ability to support that of others. Ensuring staff and managers have a good understanding of mental health, and the factors that affect workplace wellbeing, is essential for building a healthy, happy and productive workforce.

APPENDIX A: 5 steps to mental wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.

Connect – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.

Be active – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

Keep learning – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?

Give to others – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.

Be mindful – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

NHA Every Mind Matters
https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/?WT.tsrc=Search&WT.mc_id=MentalHealthGeneric&gclid=EAlaIQobChMlhJWArYHD7AlVg-3tCh1N1QRNEAAYASAAEgl-gPD_BwE

NHS Moodzone
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

APPENDIX B – SAS health and wellbeing support service

2020WellbeingBroc
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The Mast Academy Trust – Staff Well-being Charter

This Charter was formed through cross-school consultation and its formation was informed by a staff survey and the collaborative contributions of school leaders, Governors and Trustees. It is a set of principles which underpins our ethos and values and ensures we 'value our people' not in a tokenistic way, but through the everyday running of our schools.

Supporting a work/life balance
We commit to:
- A clear and fair leave of absence policy
- Supporting flexible working requests whenever possible
- Developing shared drives to reduce duplication
- Minimising data drops and unnecessary administration
- Ensuring that irrelevant emails and other communications are kept to a minimum

Supporting health and wellbeing:
We commit to:
- Ensuring staff have access to well-being and health support services
- Establishing a staff well-being forum across the Trust
- Having trained mental health first aiders
- Ensuring staff contributions are recognised and valued.
- Ensuring everyone is treated respectfully, professionally and with kindness.

It's okay messages…Perceptions?
We ensure that our staff understand that it is okay to…
- Adopt different working patterns to fit around other commitments
- Take the breaks you are entitled to without guilt
- Set an 'out of hours' message on your emails for evenings, weekends and holidays
- Raise concerns
- Need help

Actively listening and communicating
We commit to:
- Annual staff well-being survey
- Dedicated actions in school improvement plans to address identified areas
- Consultation with unions on all HR policies
- Recognising that some meetings and CPD can happen just as effectively on line, whilst also understanding the importance of person to person contact in strengthening relationships.

Equality for all:
We commit to:
- Blind recruitment processes
- Open and transparent internal and external recruitment processes
- Annual Equalities review against all HR policies
- Ensure that we have clear processes to identify, report and challenge inequality.
- Annual reminders for staff on policies which address conscious and unconscious bias/prejudice

To create a culture of well-being in our schools, it is essential that all colleagues recognise their own role. Therefore we ask all staff to…
- Be professional, kind and respectful of colleagues regardless of role.
- Take personal responsibility for their own well-being
- Adhere to policies, procedures and guidance which supports the well-being of colleagues
- 'Play their part' in the life of the school
- Support each other