

Three Counties Academy Trust



Staff Wellbeing Policy

#HR6

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Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our employees. Preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of our staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, TCAT understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of TCAT and staff members in supporting wellbeing and promoting mental health, and to advise employees on how to deal with mental health issues and prevent stress.

What do we mean by staff wellbeing?

The term “wellbeing” can be used to describe our holistic health, including our physical, mental, and emotional health. When we have good levels of wellbeing, we feel that life is in balance and that we can cope well. We feel motivated and engaged and are able to show resilience and “bounce back” from life’s challenges.

School staff often juggle multiple tasks and demands, so a focus on staff wellbeing has become increasingly important. Taking good care of staff both emotionally and practically helps them to perform to the best of their ability and ensures that they are better able to support pupils. Workloads, deadlines, and challenging behaviours can all impact negatively on the wellbeing of school staff.

Poor mental wellbeing may impact on their ability to manage during key moments of stress in the classroom or at school. Staff who have good mental wellbeing are more likely to have the necessary resources to be able to manage and plan during or after stressful episodes whether with a pupil, a class, a colleague, an inspector, or a parent.

Good staff wellbeing can have a number of benefits for schools including:

- Positive impact on pupils, including improved educational outcomes, as both staff and children and young people are more engaged
- Increased productivity of staff members
- Reduced absences from work in relation to sickness (both short term and long term)
- Staff being able to manage stress better and develop healthier coping strategies
- Improved job satisfaction, which can support retention
- Staff feeling valued, supported, and invested in

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Equality Act 2010
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- DfE (2019) 'Workload reduction toolkit'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT and school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Attendance Management Policy
- Induction of New Staff Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Flexible Working Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective implementation of this policy
- Ensuring TCAT's ethos reflects its commitment to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing
- Ensuring staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored
- Ensuring that all TCAT policies are assessed for workload impact
- Encouraging stress awareness throughout TCAT – promoting stress as a serious issue rather than a weakness
- Consulting the Executive Leadership on managing staff stress and promoting wellbeing, including them in any decisions that need to be made
- Ensuring the Executive Headteacher/CEO puts measures in place to support staff wellbeing
- Actively trying to eliminate stressors within TCAT, e.g., by considering the format and quantity of information it requests from the Executive Leadership and SLT
- Ensuring monitoring visits are strategic, focussed, and reflective of its monitoring plan, and being clear with staff ahead of the visit about what the focus will be and the information that will be required from them
- Recognising mental health issues and appointing a Mental Health and Wellbeing Trustee who will oversee managing and supporting staff mental health across TCAT
- Ensuring all committee meetings are purposeful, focussed, structured and relevant to TCAT development priorities

- Developing an annual schedule of work and ensuring work is not duplicated between meetings of committees and the full Governing Board

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Trustee is responsible for:

- Influencing the setting of the TCAT vision which creates a positive wellbeing culture and is underpinned by equality values, a system of accountability, and robust policies and procedures
- Ensuring TCAT's strategic plan includes objectives linked to improving, supporting, and responding to the mental health of staff
- Ensuring TCAT has appropriate policies in place that include objectives focussed on meeting staff needs
- Ensuring there is a TCAT approach to mental health and wellbeing embedded within leadership practice, the curriculum, TCAT's values and ethos, and the social and physical environment
- Ensuring two members of TCAT staff, one for each sector, with a vision to double this allocation, are identified as Wellbeing Officers to oversee the provision and support of mental health and wellbeing across TCAT, and to ensure effective links exist with local mental health support
- Meeting with Wellbeing Officers on a regular basis to monitor and review the impact of provision and interventions
- Working with the Executive Leadership to ensure that appropriate training is put in place to support staff
- Reporting to the Governing Board on the successes and areas of improvement in planned interventions, and the resources that are in place

The Executive Headteacher/CEO is responsible for:

- Creating and promoting a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout TCAT
- Implementing CPD which equips staff with the tools needed to effectively manage stress
- Developing a sensitive performance management process that is linked to clear job specifications
- Including all staff in TCAT's decision-making processes, where possible
- Organising extra support for staff at times of increased stress, e.g., during Ofsted inspections
- Encouraging staff to take advantage of any initiatives introduced to promote wellbeing and effective working, e.g., an employee assistance programme
- Ensuring that all policies that affect staff wellbeing are properly adhered to and reviewed
- Authorising any staff absences related to stress and/or mental health issues, as well as granting extended leave
- Monitoring employees' workloads and holiday entitlement, ensuring they are not overworked, and providing regular updates regarding absence to the Governing Board whilst maintaining staff confidentiality in line with the Data Protection Policy
- Attending all necessary training, keeping skills current and setting a good example for staff

- Regularly communicating with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress
- Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk assessments, considering the causes of stress
- Ensuring all staff have read and understood this policy
- Organising thorough inductions for new employees, explaining TCAT's policies and Code of Conduct
- Making reasonable adjustments for members of staff who are struggling with long-term mental health issues
- Providing information that helps staff to manage stress effectively through the work of the appointed Wellbeing Officers

The Chief Finance Officer and Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Encouraging all staff to attend events and training opportunities that promote wellbeing and health
- Ensuring that regular contact is maintained with members of staff who are absent for long periods of time
- Ensuring new members of staff have received all the relevant information they require, including the procedures for raising concerns about wellbeing
- Gathering information in any cases that allow monitoring of this policy, such as, but not limited to, the following:
 - Sickness and absence data
 - Staff turnover
 - Exit interviews
 - Referrals to the counselling service
 - Referrals to other mental health services
 - Grievance cases
 - Harassment cases
- Monitoring all staff absences and reporting this information to the Executive Headteacher/CEO

All staff members are responsible for:

- Being able to recognise the early signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues
- Supporting co-workers if they become stressed, which may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Maintaining a healthy work-life balance
- Promoting a positive, supportive atmosphere throughout TCAT
- Being open to discussing stress
- Reporting honestly about their wellbeing and any incidents of stress, e.g., being overworked
- Where possible, asking for help when they feel under pressure or stressed
- Attending events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health
- Not acting in a manner which endangers themselves or others
- Undertaking additional training and personal development opportunities

- Reporting any concerns they have about their co-workers' stress and/or mental health to the Executive Headteacher/CEO or the Headteacher/Head of School

3. Identifying warning signs

TCAT recognises that individuals will react differently to stressful situations and become stressed by different situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. Because of this, it is important that staff understand the different factors that may cause themselves or their colleagues' stress.

The following sources of stress can often be attributed to work:

- Overworking or undertaking work that does not match the employee's skills and abilities
- Fear of change and trying to cope with change, e.g., advancements in technology
- Insufficient workload or not being able to use skills
- Lack of job security
- Poor relationships with colleagues and a lack of involvement
- Harassment or bullying
- Crisis management
- Not having a long-term plan in place

TCAT recognises that home and personal lives can also prove stressful for staff; bereavement, separation, financial and family problems make people more vulnerable to stress at work. It is common that a combination of stress at home and work can make people particularly stressed.

TCAT will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace.

TCAT has a legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.

All members of staff will be aware of the warning signs that can indicate that a person may be having trouble managing stress, and look out for the following indicators when identifying stress in themselves or others:

Behavioural indicators

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Isolation from friends and family

Physical indicators

- Tiredness
- Indigestion and nausea
- Headaches
- Aching muscles
- Heart palpitations

Mental indicators

- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Low self-esteem

Emotional indicators

- Anger or irritability
- Anxiety
- Hypersensitivity
- Feeling drained and lethargic

4. Actions to support staff

To positively impact wellbeing across TCAT, the Executive Headteacher/CEO and Governing Board will ensure that the 'TCAT' approach is taken.

To help manage wellbeing, the Executive Headteacher/CEO will:

- Lead by example and encourage staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a full life outside of work
- Make the most of team bonding; using INSET days to build positive relationships, as feeling comfortable amongst colleagues will make discussing wellbeing easier
- Assist with work and help to manage employees' workloads
- Reach out to staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g., bereavement, allowing sufficient time off and supporting them when they return to work
- Arrange a meeting with all members of staff in which the current working times and practices will be discussed
- Research and implement an employee assistance programme relevant to the needs of all staff, regularly monitoring its effectiveness and impact on wellbeing

To effectively address workload issues and support staff wellbeing, the Executive Headteacher/CEO, working with the SLT and Wellbeing Officers, will take the following actions:

- Measure staff wellbeing and identify workload issues by:
 - Commissioning staff workload and wellbeing surveys on a termly basis and organising structured conversations about workload with staff
 - Arranging workshops and drawing together a summary of outcomes from staff surveys and questionnaires
- Review the areas of workload that have been identified using a workload impact assessment matrix and producing an evaluation of TCAT's current workload to highlight the actions that will be taken
- Address the workload issues that have been identified, e.g., by undertaking a data collection audit and action plan and developing an action plan

- Implement a Staff Workload Charter to outline the commitment and expectations between the Governing Board, Executive Leadership, SLT and TCAT staff regarding the wellbeing and mental health of TCAT staff
- Evaluate the impact of the actions taken on a termly basis, measuring staff wellbeing and identifying new workload issues to address during the next term

The Executive Headteacher/CEO will ensure that all changes proposed as a result of the actions outlined above are communicated to all members of staff.

A Mental Health and Wellbeing Trustee, currently Mr N Ferguson will be appointed by the Governing Board who will be responsible for monitoring the wellbeing of staff across TCAT.

All new members of staff will be provided with a comprehensive induction and their duties regarding their own and their colleagues' wellbeing will be made clear.

TCAT will adopt a sickness plan which will promote a positive, caring strategy for staff who are returning to work following sick leave.

The Governing Board will be allocated funds for a wellbeing budget – all members of staff are welcome to make suggestions for the use of this fund. The Executive Headteacher/CEO will have the final say as to how the fund is spent.

TCAT will ensure wellbeing is promoted and stress is prevented through good management practices, including the following:

- Recruitment and selection procedures
- Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure the right candidates are recruited
- CPD procedures to ensure all members of staff have the necessary skills and abilities to undertake the duties required
- Promotion and reward procedures
- Performance management procedures
- Capability and absence management – return to work procedures will ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness
- Suitable adaptations for disability
- Harassment and anti-bullying resources
- Flexible working arrangements, in line with the Flexible Working Policy
- Annual surveys to better understand the areas of work that have a negative effect on staff wellbeing

5. Self-management

Staff can make changes to avoid and prevent stress and/or poor mental wellbeing, as it is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored.

Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are struggling with their mental wellbeing or feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work.

Staff are encouraged to take action to manage their own mental wellbeing. These actions will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An awareness that regular exercise can be beneficial to physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Managing their workload, and establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life
- Prioritising their workload throughout the workday, leaving the least important tasks until the end of the day, and concentrating on the work that will make the biggest difference
- Be aware of the detrimental impact habits such as drinking, and smoking can have on an individual both physically and mentally
- Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives, training and support offered by TCAT
- Speaking to the Executive Headteacher/CEO about any concerns they may have regarding their workload, stress, or mental wellbeing

6. Reporting procedures

The following two members of staff will be designated as Wellbeing Officers; this is in the event that one of the Wellbeing Officers is the subject of the complaint:

- Primary – TBC, contact Mr S. Seneque in the first instance
- Secondary – TBC, contact Mrs S. McAtear in the first instance

If any member of staff wishes to raise a concern about wellbeing, one of the two Wellbeing Officers will be notified, and this does not need to be sector specific.

The Wellbeing Officer will provide the member of staff with information about the support that is available to them; this includes both within TCAT and outside sources.

The Wellbeing Officer will treat all cases confidentially. Real names of staff will not be used when Wellbeing Officers are reporting to the Executive Headteacher/CEO.

In some cases, such as those that directly impact day-to-day activities, confidentiality will not be guaranteed. If this is the case, staff will be made aware of the situation.

The Wellbeing Officer in receipt of the complaint will investigate and report this to the Executive Headteacher/CEO.

The Executive Headteacher/CEO will decide whether any further action will be taken.

TCAT has an ambition to increase the number of Wellbeing Officers to four by the end of the 2023-2024 Academic Year.

7. Response actions

Where problems with wellbeing arise, the necessary support and appropriate actions will be considered. This may include support from HR advisers and/or external services, e.g., occupational health.

TCAT will continue to support staff when external services are involved.

Support will be provided to staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances outside of the workplace. TCAT will direct staff to support, both internal and external, and consider a plan of work and duties that can be managed differently during challenging periods.

Support for staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances within TCAT will be provided following the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO in conjunction with Headteachers/Heads of School, and the Governing Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2026.

Signed by:

_____	Executive Headteacher/CEO	Date: _____
_____	Chair of Governing Board	Date: _____



Staff Workload Charter

Our aims

Three Counties Academy Trust is committed to considering and supporting the wellbeing of all our staff. As part of this commitment, and through a coordinated effort with Trust staff and leaders, we aim to ensure workload can be managed and reduced.

We recognise that staff workload can become overwhelming, which in turn affects staff wellbeing and prevents a healthy work-life balance. We believe that we have a collective responsibility to ensure working for the Trust remains rewarding, manageable, a positive experience, and, above all, enjoyable.

By providing this support, we hope that we can retain and recruit more staff and meet our core values and ethos for helping and caring for one another. In the same way that Support. Believe. Achieve. Works for our pupils, so should it for our staff.

To protect staff wellbeing, we will:

- Ensure staff have a fair and reasonable workload, including policies on marking, planning and data management
- Provide high-quality training and CPD opportunities that meet the needs of individual staff members
- Continue to review staff workload and ensure it always remains manageable

Our commitments

We have agreed the following commitments and expectations between the Trust Board, Executive Leadership, school SLT's and school staff representation, to demonstrate our support in helping to manage staff workload.

All staff working for the Trust can expect:

- To work within a clear code of conduct
- To receive a robust and high-quality induction
- To be provided with a trained mentor as part of their induction process
- To be provided with training opportunities relevant to their role and responsibilities

- To be allocated roles and responsibilities that are linked to their skill set and area of expertise or be provided with appropriate training to upskill and broaden areas of expertise
- The fair and equal distribution of roles, responsibilities, and tasks
- If required, to collect data using streamlined processes that are beneficial to their work and receive robust training on using the Trusts data management systems
- The support of the SLT to provide guidance and advice, and simplify school processes where possible
- A consistent and fair Conduct for Learning (Behaviour) Policy who allows staff to work effectively and be provided with support from the SLT and Executive Leadership to manage behaviour effectively
- An agreed communication protocol which outlines the expected response times from colleagues and external communications, e.g., from parents
- The use of technology to ensure effective and efficient communication, document and data management, and access to information
- To be provided with access to external support, such as an occupational health or a confidential listening service, if needed
- To work within an environment where their wellbeing is prioritised and valued
- All changes to Trust processes to be communicated clearly and the SLT and Executive Leadership to provide support with implementation

In addition to the above, teaching staff at the Trust can expect:

- A clear curriculum planning scheme that provides flexibility, is fully resourced with high-quality materials, and is planned over well-defined blocks of time
- An agreed policy that ensures all marking undertaken is purposeful and focusses on quality feedback and the impact on pupil outcomes

The Executive Leadership and the SLT commit to the following:

- Conducting regular activities, e.g., staff surveys, to identify the areas of work that lead to high levels of workload and implementing approaches to reduce this
- Providing staff with termly opportunities to discuss areas they feel are creating high levels of workload and how these could be managed
- Implementing practices that allow for meaningful and useful communications to reduce workload
- Supporting ECTs and teachers in the early stages of their careers to adopt efficient work practices and keeping this support under regular review
- Encouraging a workplace culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance
- Making every effort to reduce the number of meetings, ensuring that those that take place are planned effectively and flexibly, and always have a key focus
- Providing staff with relevant training or CPD opportunities in school, including on recognising the early signs of stress
- Ensuring staff are clear about the purpose of marking and ensuring it is meaningful, and that they understand feedback can be given in many forms
- Ensuring the school's workload reduction initiative is included within the SDP and that enough resources are dedicated towards achieving this aim

- Monitoring staff absence levels, patterns and reasons, and using return to work meetings consistently and effectively
- Regularly monitoring the progress of work practices, including curriculum planning, communications, marking and feedback, and data collection, and adapting these where necessary
- Considering the impact of any potential changes to the Trusts practices before they are implemented and creating a clear implementation plan before changes are agreed
- Communicating changes to the Trusts practices to all staff and the whole school community, to ensure everyone understands the reasons behind the changes

The Trust Board commits to the following:

- Ensuring the Trusts ethos reflects its commitments to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing through the successful management of workload
- Ensuring it receives regular updates regarding absence levels that are broken down into the cause of absence and role of staff
- Making every effort to ensure committee meetings that Trust staff are expected to attend are purposeful, focussed, and structured, and relevant to the Trust development priorities
- Considering the nature of information requests and being clear about the information needed from the Executive Leadership, SLT and Trust staff
- Providing staff with advanced notice of all monitoring visits and informing them of what the focus will be and what information is required
- Working within any policy agreements, including those relating to using technology to reduce workload
- Establishing the role of the mental health and wellbeing Trustee, currently Mr N Ferguson, to support the mental health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils
- Regularly seeking views from staff on the impact of workload and working with the Executive Leadership and SLT to improve any identified issues

