

Aspirational Futures

Multi Academy Trust



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Staff Wellbeing Policy

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust Wide Policy

January 2026

Document Control

Reviewed by:	Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust Board	Date: Sept 2023
Approved by:	Keith Fielding, Chair of Board	Date: Sept 2023
Adopted by Academies:	September 2023	
Review:	Annually	
Next review due by:	January 2027	

Document Information

	Information
Document Name	Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust Staff Wellbeing Policy
Document Author	HR
Document Approval	Board of Trustees
Document Status	Version 1.3
Publication Date	September 2023
Distribution	Staff Use Only Website

Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Amended By	Comments
1.0	Jun 2022 by PHS	HR Lead	New Trust policy adopted from PHS September 2023
1.1	January 2024	S Mitchell	Review of policy by H Partington & AO'Dolan. Front cover and review dates amended
1.2	Dec 2024	S Mitchell	Review of policy
1.3	Jan 2026	S Mitchell	Review of policy. Updated template in line with the National College.

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Statement of intent

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. Preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of the school's staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, the school understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed. The school also recognises that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of employees at work.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of the school 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.

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
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Working Time Regulations 1998
- DfE 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Induction of New Staff Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Capability Procedure

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees will:

- Ensure the effective implementation of this policy.
- Recognise mental health issues and seek to manage staff mental health through risk assessments, surveys and early intervention.
- Ensure staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored.

- Ensure that all school policies are assessed for workload impact.

The headteacher in each school will:

- Create a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Be responsible for implementing CPD which equips staff with the tools to effectively manage stress.
- Aim to develop a sensitive performance management process that is linked to clear job specifications.
- Aim to include all staff in the school's decision making process where appropriate.
- Organise extra support for staff at times of increased stress, such as during Ofsted inspections.
- Ensure that all policies that affect staff wellbeing are properly adhered to and reviewed.
- Be responsible for authorising any staff absences, as well as granting extended leave.
- The headteacher will attempt to be fair and equitable to all staff.

The trust HR manager will:

- Ensure that regular contact is maintained with members of staff who are absent for long periods.
- Ensure new members of staff have received all the relevant information they require. This includes the procedures for raising concerns about wellbeing.
- Gather 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

The trust HR manager will be responsible for monitoring all staff absences.

Senior management will:

- Act in a supportive and constructive manner when dealing with cases related to wellbeing.
- Will attend events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health.
- Encourage all staff to attend events and training opportunities that promote wellbeing and health.
- Provide information that helps staff to manage stress effectively.

Staff responsibilities. All members of staff will:

- Be responsible for acting in a way that maintains a healthy work/life balance.
- Act in a way that promotes a positive, supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Be responsible for reporting honestly about their wellbeing.
- Where possible, ask for help when they feel under pressure or stressed.
- Be invited to attend events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health.
- Act in a manner which does not endanger themselves or others.

- Behave in an appropriate way when attending staff functions.

3. Understanding stress and mental health

The trust will acknowledge that stress is the adverse reaction individuals will experience when excessive pressures or demands are placed upon them. While stress will not be considered an illness, the school recognises that if sustained over a prolonged period, it may lead to mental and/or physical health issues.

The trust will understand that mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It will influence how staff members think, feel, and act, and how they cope with everyday pressures. The trust will recognise that positive mental health is not a fixed state; various internal and external factors will influence mental health, causing individuals to move along a spectrum ranging from good to poor mental health.

Pressure vs. Stress

The trust will make a clear distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. It will recognise that certain levels of pressure will be both acceptable and normal in any role. This level of pressure can enhance performance, enable individuals to reach their full potential, and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, the trust will also understand that when pressure becomes excessive, it may lead to stress and undermine mental health.

External Pressures and Their Impact

The trust will acknowledge that pressures outside of the workplace—such as unexpected or traumatic events, accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown, or financial concerns—may contribute to stress and poor mental health. The trust will recognise that these external pressures can also intensify the normal pressures experienced in the workplace.

Individual Reactions and Triggers

The trust will recognise that each employee will respond to situations differently, and that what triggers stress and poor mental health will vary from person to person. Understanding this individuality will be a key part of the school's commitment to staff wellbeing.

4. Identifying warning signs

The trust will recognise that individuals will respond differently to stressful situations and may experience stress from various situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. It will be important that all staff members understand the different factors that may cause stress for themselves or their colleagues. This awareness will form a crucial part of the trust's approach to maintaining a healthy and supportive work environment.

The trust will be mindful of the following sources of stress that 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

The trust will also acknowledge that pressures from home and personal life can contribute significantly to staff stress levels. Events such as bereavement, separation, financial difficulties, and family problems will be recognised as factors that can increase vulnerability to stress within the workplace. The trust will understand that a combination of personal and professional stress may intensify overall stress levels, and it will be committed to supporting staff in managing both aspects.

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

The trust will uphold its 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

5. Actions to support staff

To positively impact wellbeing in each school, the headteacher and local governing board will ensure that a whole-school approach is taken.

To help manage wellbeing, the headteacher 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 headteacher, working with the SLT, will take the following actions:

- Measure staff wellbeing and identify workload issues by:
 - Commissioning staff workload and wellbeing surveys and organising structured conversations about workload with staff.
 - Arranging workshops and drawing together a summary of outcomes from staff surveys and questionnaires.
 - Analysing staff diaries and identifying which members of staff are spending too much time on certain aspects of the job.
 - Conducting impact graphing exercises to visually assess where workload issues lie and identify key areas of focus.
- Review the areas of workload that have been identified using a workload impact assessment matrix and producing an evaluation of the school'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.
- Evaluate the impact of the actions taken, measuring staff wellbeing and identifying new workload issues to address during the next term.

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

A wellbeing committee will also be appointed to ensure all staff are supported in their roles and that actions are implemented to mitigate stress in the workplace.

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.

Each school 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
- 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, where possible
- Surveys to better understand the areas of work that have a negative effect on staff wellbeing

6. 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:

- Keeping active as a way of releasing emotional intensity and any negative feelings; exercise will also help to clear thoughts and deal with problems more calmly
- 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
- Avoiding unhealthy habits, such as drinking and smoking
- Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives, training and support offered by the school
- Speaking to the headteacher about any concerns they may have regarding their workload, stress, or mental wellbeing

7. Reporting procedures

- Two senior members of staff will be designated as wellbeing officers; this is in the event of one of the wellbeing officers being the subject of the complaint.
- If any member of staff wishes to raise a concern about wellbeing, one of the two wellbeing officers will be notified.
- The wellbeing officer will provide the member of staff with information about the support that is available to them; this includes both within the school and outside sources.
- The wellbeing officer will treat all cases confidentially where appropriate.
- In some cases, such as those that involve a direct impact on day-to-day activities, confidentiality cannot 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 headteacher.
- The headteacher will decide whether any further action will be taken.

8. 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.

The school 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. The school 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 the school will be provided following the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.

9. Absence due to stress or mental ill health

If an employee is absent due to work-related stress or mental ill health, the school will follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in the school's Staff Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in the Staff Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Capability Procedure.

10. Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

Employees who report that they are suffering from work-related stress or mental ill health, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

If an employee feels as though they have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, they should seek support from the headteacher. Employees may also raise a complaint in accordance with the Grievance Procedure.

If, after investigation, an employee is found to have provided false information in bad faith, the employee may be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure.

11. Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust's commitment to staff wellbeing

The trust is committed to providing a safe, secure and supportive environment for all members of staff. As the employer we seek to:

- Monitor and review the amount of after-school staff meetings to promote a happy work/life balance.
- Offer an employer-paid healthcare cash plan giving staff access to a wide range of medical benefits they may need including:
 - dental check-ups, X-rays & hygienist treatments
 - health screenings
 - wellbeing treatments, such as physiotherapy & chiropractic medical prescriptions
 - eye tests, spectacles & contact lenses etc.
- Implement individual and whole staff CPD which equips staff with the tools to effectively manage stress. Staff are reminded of their responsibilities as outlined in this policy to ensure that wellbeing is a joint responsibility between employer and employee.