SENDAT STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

This policy is reviewed annually by the SENDAT Curriculum, Standards & Provision Committee.

To be read in conjunction with but not limited to:

Staff Sickness Absence Management policy and procedure
Staff Discretionary Leave of Absence policy and procedure
Working from Home policy
Flexible working policy
Equalities policy
And other relevant policies and procedures

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the accompanying Guidance note

History of Document

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SENDAT Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

1. Statement Of Intent

SENDAT is a Multi Academy Trust specialising in the care and education of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This policy should be considered in the light of this context and the complexity of need that is accommodated within the trust.

Our vision is to develop well-rounded individuals who can go forward into their adult lives prepared for the work environment and capable of being independent and productive citizens.

2. Purpose and Principles

2.1 The Trust's Board of Trustees is committed to promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and will provide suitable support for all staff colleagues.   It is recognised that taking action to prevent ill health and promote good health makes good educational and business sense, as sickness absence carries high costs both in monetary terms and in terms of the impact upon performance, teaching and learning, morale and productivity, which may disrupt or compromise student progress.

2.2 All staff colleagues are entitled to be treated fairly and professionally at all times.   The SENDAT Board of Trustees takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer and a number of policies and procedures are in place in relation to this duty.   These include:

- Staff Sickness Absence Management policy and procedure

- Staff Discretionary Leave of Absence policy and procedure
- Flexible working policy
- Working from home policy
- Equalities policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Grievance policy and procedure
- Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure
- Whistleblowing procedure

Other policies contribute to staff wellbeing by providing certainty, fairness and consistency in the treatment of staff in difference contexts, including:

- Pay policy
- Appraisal policy and procedure
- Induction and Probation policy and procedure
- Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers
- Family related policies – Maternity / Paternity / Adoption / Shared Parental Leave
- Disciplinary policy and procedure

Quick link to SENDAT policies:

https://priorysuffolksch.sharepoint.com/sites/SENDATEMPLOYEEINFORMATIONHUB/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?viewid=af03f71c%2D986a%2D42dd%2D86fe%2Dc63e92929d9b&id=%2Fsites%2FSENDATEMPLOYEEINFORMATIONHUB%2FShared%20Documents%2F01%20HR%20Finance%20S%26P%20H%26S%20policies%20%2D%20staff%20shared

2.3   This policy applies to all staff colleagues working in SENDAT schools and/or other provisions.

3.   Key Aims

This policy aims to:

a.   Provide a working environment in which:
- staff wellbeing is promoted and supported and which enables staff to carry out their duties effectively.
- Staff feel they can talk openly about mental health problems and where mental and physical health are treated as equally important.

b.   Recognise the additional risks to staff health and wellbeing posed by situations such as Covid-19 and to put in place strategies for extra support as required and appropriate.

c. Recognise the key roles of the Headteacher / Head of School / Senior and Middle Leaders / Line Managers in promoting staff wellbeing, by providing access to guidance, training and support.

d. Encourage staff as individuals to accept responsibility for their own mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

e. Comply with all statutory requirements.

f. Develop and maintain a positive health and safety culture through regular communication and consultation with staff on health and safety matters.

g. Develop an open culture in which mental, physical and emotional wellbeing is taken seriously and in which staff are supported in order that they may seek any help and support they need.

h. Ensure that all staff are aware of the policy through regular promotion on staff notice boards and electronic systems.

i. Identify the hazards that could lead to poor staff health and wellbeing and reduce these where possible.

j. Take account of and ensure compliance with all Employment, Health & Safety and other relevant legislation and DfE guidance.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The SENDAT Board of Trustees will:

a. Ensure this policy is implemented and monitored and that procedures are in place that recognise and address the issues of common mental and physical health problems in the workplace, in the light of changing needs and legislative frameworks.

b. Ensure that all SENDAT policies are assessed for workload impact.

c. Take into account and monitor the equality implications of any policies introduced.

4.2 The CEO / Exec Head / Head of School will:

a. Recognise the value of good management practice with systems in place to effectively manage staff and encourage a collaborative approach;

b. Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner, where staff feel able to talk openly about mental health;

c. Promote a healthy workplace and practices that supports physical and mental wellbeing for staff colleagues;

d. Be alert to and mindful of changes in performance or behaviour in staff and promote sympathetic management of staff colleagues who show signs of being under stress;

e. Understand the differing needs of staff, at different points and events during their life cycles, and offer support accordingly, if and when required. This may include support for pregnant women, older women during the menopause, and those with caring responsibilities.

f. Follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work related stress and other mental-health problems;

g. Ensure that the staff sickness absence management policy is fair, consistently applied and supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work;

h. Ensure that all staff have access to regular training sessions on health and wellbeing in schools, including practical sessions to deal with mental, physical and emotional wellbeing issues, and that they are given the appropriate time and resources to undertake this training;

i. Plan and agree work-life balance solutions including flexible working practices where possible and appropriate;

j. Demonstrate commitment, via systems and practices in place, to employees maintaining a good work/life balance, and ensure that such practices are communicated to all staff.

k. Manage pressures that may affect staff, including the impact of workload pressures, and anticipate likely problems, taking action to reduce the effects of these pressures where possible.

4.3 Senior Leaders / Middle Leaders / Line Managers will:

a. Ensure that all new staff colleagues are properly inducted into their role through through the SENDAT Induction / Probation arrangements;

b. Ensure that all staff colleagues are regularly appraised in accordance with the SENDAT Appraisal policy and procedure:

c. Foster a supportive work environment, operating with sensitivity in a fair and consistent manner;

d. Pay attention to any indication of changes in performance or behaviour in staff and promote sympathetic alertness to staff who show signs of being under stress;

e. Follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work-related stress and other mental health problems;

f. Work with the SENDAT HR team to apply the staff sickness absence management policy in way that is fair, consistently and supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work;

g. Carry out risk assessments promptly where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised and keep under review;

h. Attend regular training on health and wellbeing in schools;

i. Communicate work-life balance practices to all staff and manage pressures which may affect staff and anticipate likely problems, taking action to reduce the effects of these pressures where possible;

j. Demonstrate commitment to staff by encouraging a good work/life balance.

4.4 The SENDAT HR Lead will:

a. Work in conjunction with the Trust Leadership Group (TLG) colleagues, external agencies and training providers as appropriate to provide the necessary professional advice, support and training to the SENDAT Trustees, LAB members and staff colleagues as and when required;

b. Provide HR advice, guidance and other assistance as necessary to Trustees, SLT and Line managements in the application of SENDAT staff HR policies and related staff management issues;

c. Refer staff to Occupational Health and signpost to SimplyHealth and other relevant services when appropriate;

d. Work with the TLG and other staff colleagues to put in place suitable return-to-work programmes and reasonably practicable temporary adjustments after periods of extended absence where appropriate;

e. Be available where reasonably practicable to all staff colleagues as a confidential listening ear. Provide assistance and advice where possible as requested and agreed, whilst maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and remaining mindful that the safety and wellbeing of the individual, staff colleagues and students may over-ride confidentiality.

f. Keep up to date and provide general and specialist advice and guidance on management of staff sickness absence and related issues.

4.5 All Staff Colleagues should:

a. Seek support or help if they feel they are experiencing a problem, if possible to a clearly identified line manager or named individual;

b. Act in a manner that respects the health and safety needs of themselves or others whilst n the workplace;

c. Consider wellbeing support mechanisms offered by the Trust, such as accessing the SimplyHealth confidential help line and Occupational Health;

d. Attend training on health and wellbeing issues offered by the Trust;

e. Be mindful of any indications of changes in behaviour of staff colleagues which might be indicative of stress and encourage them to seek help. Alert a member of the SLT if there are serious concerns

5. Mental Health

Types of mental health

There are many types of mental health issue. An issue can happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone's life, or it can build up gradually over time.

Common mental health issues include:
- Stress (this is not classed as a medical condition but it can still have a serious impact on wellbeing;
- Depression;
- Anxiety (this may be related to a specific fear/uncertainty such as Covid-19, or a more general feeling of anxiety);
- Mental health issues relating to serious family illness / bereavement;
- Stress/anxiety or feelings of isolation resulting from long periods of working from home;
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);

Less common mental health issues include:
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia

A mental health issue can be considered a disability under the law if all of the following apply:

- it has a 'substantial adverse effect' on the life of an employee (for example, they regularly cannot focus on a task, or it takes them longer to do)
- it lasts at least 12 months, or is expected to
- it affects their ability to do their normal day-to-day activities (for example, interacting with people, following instructions or keeping to set working times)
- A mental health issue can be considered a disability even if there are not symptoms all the time, or the symptoms are better at some times than at others.

SENDAT leaders will work with employees to make the right adjustments for them, even if the issue is not a disability in the legal sense. Often simple changes to working arrangements or responsibilities could be enough, or working with them each day to help prioritise their workload.

5.   Commitment

a. **Unmeasured Working Time**: Where employees are contracted to work unmeasured time, for example the TLG and other staff in Leadership roles, the SENDAT Board of Trustees undertakes to ensure that the schools' requirements and expectations are reasonable.

b. **Employment Policies and Practice:** The Trust Board of Trustees and TLG undertake to adopt and apply the appropriate policies in respect of 'family friendly' employment, including consideration of part time working, flexible working patterns etc where this can

be implemented without detriment to the operational requirements of the school or other provision.

c. **The TLG will adopt practices and provide clear guidance** on time off for public or trade union duties, or for personal reasons, with reference to the Trust's Sickness Absence Management and Staff Discretionary Leave of Absence policies.

d. **Individual and Team Workloads:** Leadership teams should aim for the school /other provision timetable to reflect a fair and reasonable balance of work between different members of staff. Leadership teams should ensure that new and emerging priorities are discussed with the employees affected and that ways of managing the implications for individual workloads are addressed.

   Leadership teams will apply fairness and consistency in the allocation of non-teaching time for teaching staff. Cover staff and/or supply teachers will be employed wherever possible and appropriate.

e. **Planning and Preparation:** Leadership teams will aim to ensure that the requirement to prepare documentation should be no more elaborate than is necessary and consistent with its purpose. Planning and preparation time will be allocated in accordance with relevant SENDAT policies and procedures.

f. **Meetings:** Leadership teams will aim to ensure that patterns of meetings are appropriate to the requirements of the whole school/provision, that they are agreed in advance and that the pattern is adhered to wherever possible i.e.

   • Leaders convening meetings should specify a target finishing time and adhere to it.

   • Meetings held via Teams or other online systems should be conducted in the same way i.e. a target finishing time and reasonable breaks between meetings.

   • Outcomes from meetings should be clear and concise and communicated effectively to all staff colleagues as appropriate.

   • Staff meetings should include Staff Wellbeing as a standard agenda item at least once every half term.

g. **Administration:** Administrative work should be delegated wherever possible to appropriate support staff and systems will be regularly reviewed. Requests for information,

statistics, policies and similar will be assessed for their importance and benefit to the school and kept to a minimum.

6.   Individual support and training

6.1 Performance reviews will offer the opportunity for staff colleagues to raise with their reviewer any concerns which they may have about their workload or ability to balance work with other aspects of their life.

6.2   Every SENDAT school/provision will put in place a line management system in place for support and in addition, a member of the Schools' Leadership team will have responsibility for oversight of Wellbeing for all staff colleagues.

6.3   Individual support, including counselling through the Schools' confidential service is available to staff colleagues so that they may raise concerns about problems and difficulties, which affect them either in their work or their family / personal life.   The school's provider is SimplyHealth and details can be found in the staff room.

6.4   Individual support, through the Trust's Occupational Health provider will be offered as appropriate and schools will seek guidance from Occupational Health regarding support for staff in the workplace (see Staff Absence and Attendance policy and procedure)

6.5   All Trust schools/other provisions will apply consistency and fairness with regard to requests for Leave of Absence and appreciate the support all staff give these arrangements. Leadership teams and all staff colleagues should work together constructively and creatively to alleviate any work-related problems.

6.6   Staff colleagues may be required, or otherwise authorised to work from home for reasons which may include:
   •   Self-isolating
   •   Caring responsibilities
   •   Temporary mobility / travel problems
Leadership teams should ensure that contact is maintained with all employees working from home, in accordance with the 'Working from Home' guidance set out in the SENDAT Working from home policy.   Leadership teams should regularly assess and monitor staff working from home and ensure that extra support is provided on an individual basis as required, remaining particularly mindful that staff working from home may be vulnerable to the detrimental effects of isolation on mental health and wellbeing.

7. Additional Support and Services for staff

7.1 Representatives of recognised Trades Unions will be given reasonable access to the Headteacher / Head of School.

7.2 Staff room facilities will be provided which are adequate and accessible to all staff colleagues.   All members of staff should share in the responsibility to keep the staffroom clean and tidy and in a state which is conducive to periods of calm reflection;

7.3 All Trust schools/other provisions should make full and sustained use of Cover Supervisors and supply teachers to reduce cover undertaken by teaching staff;

7.4 Administrative staff should be deployed in ways which most effectively support teaching and learning;

7.5 PD Days should be scheduled to allow time for consideration of staff wellbeing issues;

7.6 All Trust schools /other provisions should consider use of staff questionnaires at regular intervals which include questions on staff working conditions.   Results should be given careful consideration and, wherever possible and appropriate, action taken to respond to concerns raised.

7.7 Trust schools / other provisions should provide a forum which gives all staff colleagues, at least once each term, the opportunity to voice concerns and to have their views sought.

APPENDIX 1

Useful Websites

Acas www.acas.org.uk
Information on stress, and employer and employee rights, in the workplace

Alcoholics Anonymous www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other to recover from alcoholism.

Carers UK www.carersuk.org
The voice of carers

CBI www.cbi.org.uk
Guidance to businesses on managing stress at work

Department of Health www.gov.uk/government/organisation/department-of-health
Information on dealing with stress and mental health problems, including the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Dignity at Work Partnership www.dignityatwork.org
Information and guidance on bullying in the workplace

The Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com
The commission is working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.

Gingerbread www.gingerbread.org.uk
Gingerbread and One Parent Families have now merged to provide better support and a bigger voice to 1.8 million lone parents and their children throughout England and Wales.

HSE http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/
Information on the stress management standards

Local Government Employers www.local.gov.uk
Guidance for all councils on stress prevention and management

Mindful Employer www.mindfulemployer.net
Information and guidance on managing stress and mental health in the workplace

NHS 111 http://www.nhs.uk/111
National Health Service advice and guidance on health matters

Princess Royal Trust for Carers http://www.carers.org
Here to improve carers' lives by fighting for equality and recognition for carers.

Relate http://www.relate.org.uk
UK's largest provider of relationship counselling and sex therapy.

Samaritans http://www.samaritans.org
Offers confidential, non-judgemental support to individuals.

Teacher Support Network
http://teachersupport.info

Work Life Balance Centre http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org
Exists to help people restore control over their workload and working lives we enable them to cut down overworking and so make new decisions about how they spend their time.

World Health Organisation
http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/oehstress.pdf Publication on work organisation and stress