

# Wellbeing Guidance



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## **1. Background**

The Unity Schools Partnership (“the Trust”) is a growing partnership of schools located on the Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire borders. Our model is about creating inter-dependence between our central team and schools, while each school retains its own individual identity and character. All our schools and central team however, subscribe to a set of shared values, principles and operational processes that ensure quality education for all our young people.

Our central belief is that every young life is special; open to possibility, gifted with the potential to change the world for the better but also bound by the limits of their own circumstances. Our ambition is to unlock the potential of all children, remove the barriers to aspiration and ensure that all our children succeed

As new schools join the Trust, a strong central Leadership team has been appointed in recent years to ensure that all curriculum requirements can be met and to support and develop staff colleagues across the Trust.

## **2. Purpose and Principles**

The Trust’s Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that positive steps are taken in the central team and all Trust schools to promote a healthy work-life balance for all staff colleagues.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that Trusts’ Leaders both in schools and the central team, recognise the importance of ensuring that staff colleagues enjoy a reasonable balance between their working life and the demands of home, family and other interests and commitments.

An acceptable work-life balance will be different for each employee and will be different at different times in their career. It is not in the interest of either the trust or the individual member of staff to work to the detriment of his/her health.

Excessive work without rest and recreation is not conducive to efficient or effective working. Staff well-being is important in maintaining a positive atmosphere in the workplace.

The Trust’s central Leadership team and school Leaders across the Trust recognise and accept that employees are not obliged to work in school beyond their contracted hours, although teachers are expected to complete preparation, planning and assessment beyond the school day.

A healthy work-life balance for all staff colleagues will help the Trust’s schools and central team to:

- Attract and retain the calibre of staff needed for an outstanding education system;
- Improve Leaders effectiveness by actively reducing staff absenteeism and turnover;
- Develop a highly motivated workforce, with good morale and the ability to deliver outstanding teaching and learning for our children;
- Improve team work, staff development and co-operation by effectively distributing leadership and creating new leaders;
- Avoid consistent excessive hours of work which can reduce staff effectiveness

## **3. Key Aims**

The key aims of Governors and Leadership in the central Team and Trust schools will be to:

- a. Put in place systems and arrangements which will support staff colleagues in their work;
- b. Continuously seek to improve workplace communications in a way which benefits the whole school workforce
- c. Acknowledge that the needs of the overall Trust, its schools and its staff are not static, but change over time and put in place arrangements to involve staff in management of change
- d. Acknowledge the need for leadership teams (including the governing body), Trades Unions/staff representatives and staff to discuss workable work life balance solutions positively and constructively;
- e. Encourage and promote a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the Trusts' schools and all staff colleagues;
- f. Operate in a fair and consistent manner;
- g. Carefully plan and agree work-life balance solutions including flexible working practices where possible and appropriate, but without damaging the opportunities for pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes;
- h. Take into account the equality implications of any policies introduced;
- i. Communicate work-life balance practices to all staff colleagues, including regular consultations regarding proposed developments and changes to policies and procedures;
- j. Include a monitoring, evaluation and review mechanism, linked to performance management and the school improvement plan, for work-life balance initiatives and strategies.

#### 4. Health, Safety and Welfare

The Trust Board of Directors, Central Team, and all schools' Leaders recognise their duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff colleagues. This guidance will be implemented and will support all aspects of welfare which have been put in place to prevent and deal with workplace stress.

#### 5. Commitment

The following issues will be reviewed for inclusion in a programme of committing to and improving employees' work life balance and their well-being;

- a) **Unmeasured Working Time:** Where employees are contracted to work unmeasured time, for example the Leadership Team, the Governing Body undertakes to ensure that the central team and schools' requirements and expectations are reasonable.
- **Employment Policies and Practice:** The Trust Board of Directors, Central Team and all schools' governing bodies 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.

The Headteacher and Leadership Team 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 Absence Management Policy.

- b) **Individual and Team Workloads:** Leaders should aim for the school's timetable to reflect a fair and reasonable balance of work between different members of staff. Central team Leaders should aim for a fair distribution of work between employees. Leaders 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.

All schools' Leaders will apply fairness and consistency in the allocation of nonteaching time for teaching staff. Cover staff and/or supply teachers will be employed wherever to meet the "rarely cover" requirements.

- c) **Planning and Preparation:** Schools' Leaders 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 the Schools Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (as amended).
- d) **Meetings:** Leaders will aim to ensure that patterns of meetings are appropriate to the requirements of the central team, whole school, faculties and departments etc. and that they are agreed in advance and that the pattern is adhered to.
- Leaders convening meetings should specify a target finishing time and adhere to it.
  - Outcomes from meetings should be clear and concise and communicated effectively to all staff colleagues as appropriate.
  - Governing body should include wellbeing as a standard agenda item.
  - Staff meetings should include Staff Wellbeing as a standard agenda item at least once every half term.
- e) **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 where possible will be collated by support staff.

## 6. Individual support and training

- a) Appraisals 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.
- b) Every Trust school 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.
- c) The Headteacher or member of the leadership team in the school or within the Central Team will discuss concerns with any individual employee in order to agree the most appropriate support.
- d) Individual support via the Employee Assistance Programme provides a counselling, support service for any personal work or family issues and can be contacted at [www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk](http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk). Details can be obtained via the HR helpdesk or within the staff room.
- e) The central team and all trust schools have free access to our Occupational Health Provider. This is an opportunity to discuss any health conditions and obtain feedback in the best possible way to manage or improve conditions to help employees carry out their duties or return to work.
- f) The central team and trust schools will apply consistency and fairness with regard to "personal & private" time allowances 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.

## **7. Responsibilities**

- a) Schools' Governing Bodies are responsible for the welfare of all staff and will monitor the effectiveness of these guidance notes through the Headteacher.
- b) The central team Leaders, Headteachers and School Leaderships teams are responsible for dealing with issues and incidents where the safety and welfare of staff are not in their best interests.
- c) All staff colleagues have a responsibility to raise awareness when concerns arise so that everybody can work together constructively to resolve the issue.
- d) All concerns will be treated with confidentiality.

## **8. Additional Support and Services for staff**

- a) Representatives of recognised Trades Unions will be given reasonable access to the Headteacher.
- b) All Trust schools should make full and sustained use of Cover Supervisors and supply teachers to reduce cover undertaken by teaching staff;
- c) Administrative staff should be deployed in ways which most effectively support teaching and learning;
- d) Schools should schedule PD Days to allow time for consideration of staff wellbeing issues;
- e) All Trust schools and central team 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.
- f) Trust schools 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.
- g) Legislation which will be considered when promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing include, but not limited to:

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Equality Act 2010

Working Time Regulations

Employment Rights Act 1996

Employment Relations Act 1999

- h) The trust has an HR team which can offer support and advice, initial contact can be made via the HR helpdesk, contactable on 01440 333401 or [HRHelpdesk@Unitysp.co.uk](mailto:HRHelpdesk@Unitysp.co.uk)

## Well-being Core Offer

**All Unity Schools Partnership employees are entitled to and will receive the following well-being support:**

### **Targeted Support**

- Supervision for members of staff in emotionally challenging roles (e.g. Designated Safeguarding Leads, Family Support Workers, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, Headteachers) from trained staff (internal and external)
- Stress management toolkit for staff requiring support
- Regular wellbeing check-in meetings for staff requiring support

### **Universal Support**

- A named Mental Health Lead in every school, who is part of the Senior Leadership Team, with the relevant training and responsibilities
- At least one named Mental Health First Aider in every school, and in the central team
- Dedicated spaces for staff to work and take breaks
- Opportunities to discuss ideas and concerns, e.g. staff wellbeing team, events committee, standing agenda item at briefings/meetings, anonymous suggestion box etc.
- Appraisal meetings which include an opportunity to discuss workload and wellbeing
- Trust-wide Staff Wellbeing Guidance notes
- A commitment to accommodate flexible working arrangements in all schools, and in the central team
- Leaders who engage with their staff, are aware and take account of the main pressures on them, and are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload
- Other trust-wide policies including (but not limited to):
  - Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy
  - Staff Absence Policy
  - Parental Leave Policy
  - Harassment and Bullying Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff incentive schemes, e.g. discounted gym membership, cycle to work scheme etc.
- Line management support, including mentoring, coaching and supervision, from trained leaders
- An annual staff survey, including a focus on wellbeing, which is reported to governors and the trust board
- Return to work interviews, risk assessments for pregnant staff etc. with trained staff, in line with trust policies
- Leaders to act upon concerns raised and agree with the employee in the best way to support them.