



SEAX TRUST

Wellbeing Charter



Wellbeing Charter

Related SEAX Trust Policies:

Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Leave of Absence Procedure

Performance Management Procedure

Recruitment & Retention Plan

Sickness Absence Procedure

Approved by the Board of Trustees &
Effective Date of Adoption:

20th October 2021

NEW POLICY – October 2021

Written by the SEAX Trust Wellbeing Group

The SEAX Trust is committed to being a fair and reasonable employer and to ensuring that it provides a professional and ethical environment which serves and protects the whole education community.

Through the Scheme of Delegation the SEAX Trust is responsible for determining HR policies in accordance with all appropriate regulations:

- Setting Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Establishing Trust-wide policies – Pay, Performance Management, Code of Conduct, Recruitment, Capability, Discipline & Dismissal, Grievance, Leave of Absence, Sickness Absence, Redundancy & Re-structuring
- Appointing CEO/Executive Principal
- Appointing cross-Trust staff
- Dismissing CEO/Executive Principal, local Principals/Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and senior cross-Trust staff in accordance with the Trust Disciplinary and Capability Policies

Through effective HR management the SEAX Trust will:

- Establish and maintain an effective organisational structure in which all staff are clear about their roles;
- Recruit, deploy and retain staff flexibly to meet the establishment's priorities and future plans, making the best use of individual skills;
- Induct and develop staff in line with their individual needs and those of the establishments' improvement plans;
- Establish and maintain constructive and harmonious staff relationships through good channels of communication, consultation and feedback;
- Ensure equal opportunities in recruitment, staff development, training, management, pay;
- Develop, maintain and operate policies and procedures which motivate and support staff and facilitate the early resolution of disputes and promote attendance;
- Allocate appropriate resources to HR management and equip managers at all levels to effectively manage HR issues;
- Regularly monitor, measure, evaluate and review all aspects of HR management;
- Have in place appropriate administrative systems to support the management of HR issues

The SEAX Trust is responsible for determining the Pay Policy and Performance Management Policy, following consultation with staff.

The Resource & Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing and proposing amendments to the Pay Policy and the Performance Management Policy, for consultation with staff.

The Local Governing Body is responsible for implementing the Pay Policy and Performance Management Policy and making pay decisions following Performance Management Reviews.

All Appeal Committees will have representation from Governors across the Trust.

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The SEAX Trust Wellbeing Charter

The SEAX Trust's wellbeing intentions include a promise to staff that the Trust will:

- Prioritise staff mental health
- Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing
- Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage
- Establish a clear communications' policy
- Give staff a voice in decision-making
- Drive down unnecessary workload
- Champion flexible working and diversity
- Create a good behaviour culture
- Support staff to progress their careers
- Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health
- Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing

Overview

The SEAX Trust Staff Wellbeing Charter is a declaration of support for, and set of commitments to, the wellbeing and mental health of everyone working in our Trust.

The introduction of the Charter coincides with, but remains separate to, the government's initiative to encourage all state funded schools and colleges to sign up to their own Education Staff Wellbeing Charter from the Autumn Term 2021, as a country-wide, shared commitment to protect, promote and enhance the wellbeing of all staff working in Education. The SEAX Trust Wellbeing Charter makes reference to the government's commitment, but remains bespoke to the needs of the provisions within the SEAX Trust.

The SEAX Wellbeing Charter is a direct result of the formation of the SEAX Wellbeing Group. The Wellbeing Group is supported by representatives from all Trust provisions and regular meetings are chaired by the CEO.

The Importance of Wellbeing

Wellbeing has multiple benefits. In England, the state-funded school system employs almost one million people (FTE), with an estimated further 216,500 in the FE sector. *[ONS 2021]*

The Trust recognises that the wellbeing of these people is something that should be promoted, protected and enhanced for its own sake.

In addition, the whole of the education system needs to attract and retain high-quality professionals. Improving the wellbeing of staff, including by creating supportive cultures, is a crucial means of increasing and safeguarding workforce supply in the long-term. Wellbeing is not the only factor involved in recruitment and retention, but it is recognised that improving wellbeing in the sector can help to both increase the chance of keeping current talent, and heighten the appeal of the sector to new talent in the long-term.

Factors which impact Wellbeing

Wellbeing is holistic. The wellbeing of individuals is affected by many interrelated factors. This means that levels of low or high wellbeing are rarely due to just one factor, and that the issue should be looked at holistically.

The Trust recognises that not all such factors are unique to education staff. Equally, there are many critical factors outside the workplace (like access to key services) that are beyond the scope of this Charter, and outside the influence of the Trust. There are many evidence-based frameworks that aim to capture the drivers of staff wellbeing inside the workplace. The following evidence-based model from the **What Works Centre for Wellbeing** sets out five main drivers of wellbeing in the workplace, some of which overlap:

1. **Health:**

Including mental and physical health. In education, there is often a focus on stress caused by excessive workload (especially hours worked) and lack of recovery time. Importantly, pupils and students can also present with highly complex emotional needs, including mental and physical health issues. This can directly impact the health of those who support them.

2. **Security:**

Including working conditions, safety, bullying and harassment, and financial security. Equality and diversity are of particular importance here, especially where a member of staff has protected characteristics that they feel make them vulnerable to discrimination.

3. **Environment:**

This is a broad category that in education can cover both:

(a) The organisational environment: including the physical environment (school or college facilities) and systems (such as the availability and efficaciousness of flexible working arrangements). This may also include the degree to which a member of staff identifies with organisational values.

(b) The policy environment: including the policies of the government of the day, and public perceptions of the status of the profession.

4. **Relationships:**

In particular, the degree of support and respect an individual has from immediate colleagues, line managers, and leadership. It can also include relationships with parents.

5. **Purpose:**

In particular, high-quality job design. For education staff, this can mean:

- the right type of work for the individual
- a sense of 'belonging' – including shared organisational goals and vision
- the opportunity to develop and demonstrate competence, and progress in their career
- an appropriate degree of autonomy

About the Charter

The SEAX Wellbeing Charter:

- was created by individual representatives from all Trust provisions, to highlight staff wellbeing within the Trust
- is a tool, bespoke to the Trust's special schools/colleges, which allows the Trust to publicly commit to its own staff wellbeing strategies

- is a declaration to protect, promote and enhance the wellbeing and mental health of everyone working within the Trust community
- outlines the 12 commitments on education staff wellbeing by the DfE and Ofsted
- sets out a shared understanding of the meaning and importance of wellbeing and everyone's roles and responsibilities
- hopes to send a message to everyone working in SEAX Trust that their wellbeing and mental health matters
- aims to further improve wellbeing in Trust provisions by encouraging debate and accountability

We hope the Charter will serve to:

- show staff that the Trust takes their wellbeing seriously
- open a conversation with staff about their wellbeing and mental health
- create a staff wellbeing strategy
- create a wellbeing-focused culture within our community

The 12 Commitments on Education Staff Wellbeing by the DfE and Ofsted (2021)

The DfE and Ofsted shape the policy environment that most schools and colleges operate in and their policies can have both direct and indirect impacts on the wellbeing of education staff.

The Trust therefore feels that reference to the commitments made by the DfE and Ofsted in their 2021 Charter serves as a foundation to the SEAX Trust's own promise to staff. Further details can be found via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>

The SEAX Trust's Promise to Staff

Through the creation of the Wellbeing Charter, The Trust commits to placing wellbeing and mental health at the heart of our decision making. We will support staff to make positive choices for their own wellbeing and encourage a collegiate culture across and between all provisions and roles within the Trust. Specifically, we commit to develop a long-term strategy for improving staff wellbeing that will:

1. Prioritise staff mental health

We will:

- tackle mental health stigma within the organisation, promoting an open and understanding culture
- give the same consideration and support to mental health as physical health, including in the management of staff absence
- fulfil our legal duty to control the risks associated with work-related stress in the education setting so far as is reasonably practicable
- channel support to individuals whose role is known to have a significant emotional component. This might take the form of peer support, supervision, and/or counselling
- ensure that staff understand the real benefits that sensitive pastoral support can have, while also recognising where their limits are as non-specialists. We will therefore ensure there are opportunities to increase joint working in support of pupils, as well as routes to refer for specialist support

2. Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing

We will empower staff to take ownership of their own wellbeing and look out for the wellbeing of others. This will include ensuring that all staff are familiar with the different dimensions of wellbeing, including mental health, financial wellbeing and physical wellbeing. We will ensure that staff know how to access appropriate guidance, support and tools, and that their use is encouraged throughout the organisation.

3. Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage

We will work to provide managers with tools, resources and training to support their staff. We will not, however, expect managers to provide professional wellbeing support for which they have no professional training, and will ensure that there are clear routes in place to escalate for further support.

4. Establish a clear communications policy

We will provide clear guidance to all stakeholders (internal and external) on remote and out-of-school/college hours' working, including when it is and isn't reasonable to expect staff to respond to queries. This should not necessarily include preventing staff from accessing email at 'unsociable' hours if it suits them personally.

5. Give staff a voice in decision-making

We will constantly strive to improve the ways in which the voice of staff is included in the decision-making process across the Trust. (This may also include engagement with key stakeholders, such as recognised trade unions and others.) In particular, we will proactively seek to draw upon the experience of those with mental health issues and/ or of discrimination, ensuring that, as per commitment, they are able to share their experience confidently and safely.

6. Drive down unnecessary workload

We will work proactively to drive down unnecessary workload, making use of available tools.

7. Champion flexible working and diversity

We will work to create a supportive culture around flexible working. We will agree an approach that not only recognises employees' legal right to request flexible working but acknowledges that, for some staff, working flexibly can be a key means of protecting and enhancing their personal wellbeing.

We will work to promote diversity – eliminating discrimination, and advancing equality of opportunity.

8. Create a good behaviour culture

We will work with staff and pupils to maintain and implement relevant school/college-based behaviour policies. All staff and pupils will have a shared understanding of how good behaviour is encouraged and rewarded, and the sanctions that will be imposed if pupils misbehave. We will support teachers to create calm, safe and disciplined environments, which allow teachers to teach and pupils to learn. Our approach will go hand-in-hand with understanding and supporting pupil mental health issues.

9. Support staff to progress in their careers

We will ensure that staff are able to pursue professional development without adversely impacting their own or other people's workload. In schools, we will ensure that any professional development activity is aligned to the Standard for Teachers' Professional Development.

10. Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health

We will ensure that all those with strategic decision-making responsibility (including as appropriate Academy Committee members and Trustees) should collaborate to develop a sub-strategy specifically for protecting leader mental health. This should include access to confidential counselling and/or coaching where needed.

11. Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing

We will measure the wellbeing of staff using recognised tools and metrics and be transparent about results. We will monitor trends over time, and act in response to changes. Further, we will work with staff and relevant stakeholders (this might include parents, recognised trade unions and others) to agree an approach to organisational accountability on our commitments, giving due consideration to workload.

The Role of Individuals

Wellbeing is a shared responsibility and we recognise that the responsibility for wellbeing and mental health must be shared across the entire education system. There is no single panacea or golden bullet to improving wellbeing. It must be a long-term and concerted effort from people across the system, each fulfilling their responsibilities, many of which are covered by a range of existing frameworks and legislation.

a) DfE and associated non-ministerial departments:

The policy environment determined by DfE and its agencies interacts with local school and college cultures to affect individuals working in education. Good policies support employers, leaders and staff to care for themselves and for colleagues.

b) Employers:

All school and college employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. This includes their mental health, and taking reasonable steps to prevent work-related stress. This duty is detailed in a range of legislation, including but not limited to:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended);
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013;
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

c) Academy Committees:

Governors and Academy Committee members have a critical role to play in influencing the overall culture of the organisation – including ensuring that this produces a supportive environment for staff. As set out in the 'Governance Handbook', this means ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

d) Senior leaders:

Senior leaders play a critical role in shaping the culture of a school or college, and can have delegated responsibility for fulfilling the employer's legal commitments on health, safety and welfare. It is important to emphasise that senior leaders are also employees whose wellbeing and mental health is of paramount importance, and firmly within the scope of this Charter.

e) Individuals:

Everyone at every level carries responsibility for their own self-care and personal decision-making, though that decision making can only ever make the best of the broader context. Individuals also have a clear responsibility to look out for the wellbeing of others. Education staff should play an active role in influencing their culture, including in challenging policies and practices that threaten

their own, or others', wellbeing. The Trust aims to work to provide individuals with the support and training they need to fulfil these responsibilities, and to ensure that it remains culturally safe for staff to discuss and debate matters of wellbeing and mental health within our community.

How the Trust will Monitor and Evaluate Wellbeing

Wellbeing is subjective (but it can be measured). The Trust recognises wellbeing as a sense of 'how we are doing' that includes, but is not limited to, our physical and mental health, and the quality of our social relationships.

Wellbeing can therefore be described as: **'a state of total health that is not merely the absence of disease or illness'**. The Trust will use this working definition as a basis for discussing what wellbeing means for individuals in our community.

While wellbeing is itself subjective, the Trust also recognises that there are indicators that can, and should, be measured. In the UK, the National Wellbeing Programme at the Office for National Statistics has drawn upon the expertise of leading academics from around the world and national debate within the UK, and now reports on a range of indicators in its national wellbeing data sets. For organisations, the **What Works Centre for Wellbeing's** workplace wellbeing question bank includes a list of questions that can be used by employers to measure and monitor the wellbeing of employees. The Trust also supports recognised organisations, such as **Mind**, the Mental Health Charity and the **Anna Freud National Centre for Children & Families**, which promotes a Schools in Mind campaign.

The Trust will support, monitor and evaluate staff wellbeing in a variety of ways, including:

- Regular staff wellbeing surveys
- The initiation of cross-Trust groups facilitated by Central Team staff
- Regular visits to Trust provisions by Central Trust staff
- On-going monitoring of staff absence and turnover data
- On-going publication of Gender Pay Gap data
- Provision of a range of policies and procedures with a grounding in staff wellbeing, including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, the Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing, Grievance, Flexible Working, Confidentiality, Data Protection, Lone Working, Absence Management, Pay, Dealing with Safeguarding Allegations Against Adults, Employee Communications & Consultation, Performance Management, ECT, Upper Pay Range and Trustees' Concerns.
- By encouraging an open-door policy within individual provisions, where staff have a continuing opportunity to speak to their Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team
- Through an open-door policy where staff in any role within the Trust are encouraged to speak directly to members of the Trust's Central Team and/or Trustees

How to raise Wellbeing Concerns

It is essential that everyone within the SEAX Trust community feels able to raise wellbeing concerns as soon as they become apparent. Members of our community should not feel 'put off' by a lack of understanding regarding which particular policy or procedure to follow.

Concerns may vary and may be centred on the individual or on other individuals and, depending on the circumstances involved, it may not always be clear which route to take. However, the general 'ladder of support' within SEAX Trust provisions includes:

1. An individual's immediate leader – eg Team Leader, Class Teacher or Office Manager
2. An individual's mentor/'buddy' – especially during a new employee's probationary procedure
3. The wellbeing lead or pastoral support in any particular provision
4. The HR Lead in any particular provision
5. The individual's Line Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team
6. A counsellor, supervisor or mentor assigned to the individual
7. The Deputy Headteacher
8. The Headteacher/Executive Headteacher
9. A member, or the Chair, of the relevant Academy/Executive Committee
10. A member of the Trust's Central Team or the CEO
11. A SEAX Trustee or the Chair of the Trust

If an individual feels unable to approach another person to discuss their concerns face-to-face, they can consider outlining the issue in writing, by email, by phone or through a third party.

In addition, the Trust provides a range of support services available to all staff, some of which can be contacted confidentially and without the knowledge of the school/Trust (see Wellbeing Resources below).

Appendix 1 Wellbeing Resources

1. Mental Health Links:

- a. **DAS FREE 24HR Counselling Helpline Service: Telephone 0117 934 2121.** Available to all SEAX Trust staff and their immediate family members. Provides up to 6 x 1 hour telephone sessions with a registered BACP counsellor. You do not need to speak to your school before using this service, which is completely confidential. Lines are open 24 hours a day/365 days a year.
- b. **Education Support Partnership: Telephone 08000 562561** A free, 24 hour, confidential helpline for people working in education.
- c. **Occupational Health** referrals & with referrals to counselling support available. Speak to your Headteacher or HR Lead if you feel this would be beneficial.
- d. **Anna Freud National Centre for Children & Families**, including 'Schools in Mind'
<https://www.annafreud.org/>
- e. **Mind** – How to improve your mental wellbeing
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/wellbeing/wellbeing/>
- f. **The Mental Health Foundation** – Support & Research for Good Mental Health
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
- g. **NHS** - Mental Health
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>
- h. **Acas** - Supporting mental health in the workplace
https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mental%20health%20%20avoiding%20discrimination&utm_content=mental%20health%20%20avoiding%20discrimination+CID_8c074c44aebd4a9cf2884fa2cf2f95c6&utm_source=Acas%20National%20Email%20Marketing%20Live&utm_term=Acas%20-%20Supporting%20mental%20health%20in%20the%20workplace

2. Physical Health Support

NHS England

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/physical-health-and-wellbeing/>

Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service: <https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/>

3. Bereavement: Sources of information and support

- Acas guidance on time off for bereavement
<https://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement>
- Bereavement UK
<http://www.bereavement.co.uk/>
- Child Bereavement UK
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>
- Cruse – Bereavement Care
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- Dying Matters
<https://www.dyingmatters.org/>
- Sands (Stillbirth & neonatal death charity) <https://www.sands.org.uk/>