



Dame Alice Owen's School

WELLBEING STATEMENT

Summer 2024

The promotion of staff wellbeing and positive mental health is of utmost importance for us at Dame Alice Owen's School. We endeavour to take practical, proactive steps to ensure staff feel supported emotionally and physically both in and outside of school.

The Governing Body recognises that a good work-life balance is an essential factor in staff wellbeing and satisfaction, which in turn supports pupil learning. A 'supportive community' can help to recruit and retain staff, keeping them more motivated, through giving greater control of their working lives. The Governing Body acknowledges that by supporting employees' ability to handle pressure, while also looking at ways to reduce stress, will ultimately promote a healthy and happy work environment.

This statement covers the school's commitment to the above and sets out the way in which the school

- helps prevent work related stress and associated mental health problems occurring where reasonably practicable
- helps promote mental well-being at work
- supports employees experiencing stress-related problems

What is our wellbeing aim?

As a school, we aim to:

- Develop and maintain a healthy, motivated workforce that is able to deliver a high standard of education to pupils
- Recognise that excessive hours of work can be detrimental to staff health and effectiveness
- Communicate the importance of a work-life balance to all staff, with line managers who are committed to spotting the signs and supporting when the balance is wrong
- Respond sensitively to external pressures that affect the lives of staff members
- Develop a sense of community within the school through offering opportunities to mix socially
- Help employees feel valued for their contribution to the school

- Use the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* (Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give) to analyse the support already in place for our staff, and to constantly look for opportunities to ensure comprehensive cover across all five areas (see Appendix 2).
- Promote and extend the *Supportive Community* of the 'Owen's Way' for every person in our school
- Respond proactively and positively to difficult situations.

This statement applies to all employees of the school. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. This document will remain 'live' and will therefore continue to be updated with relevant sources of support, as well as being reactive to new initiatives and shaped by staff consultation. It should be read in conjunction with:

- Health and attendance policy
- Leave of absence policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Policy to safeguard staff against bullying and harassment
- Staff Development policy
- Performance management policy

How do we accomplish that?

Staff are supported within their job at Dame Alice Owen's School through the following strategies:

Teaching and learning

- Teachers are free to teach as they see fit for their students, no over-prescriptive Schemes of Work
- No requirement to provide lesson plans at all
- 21/25 periods assigned per week which is in line or better than expectations of other schools in Hertfordshire
- Only one compulsory duty required per week which is in line or better than expectations of other schools in Hertfordshire
- Great thought and time is put into creating the timetable which fulfils a plethora of requests in order to ease working practices and help staff with familial commitments and work/ life balance
- No requirement to provide a number of different differentiated tasks for students; support is given as needed to help all students reach the same levels

- No pressure to deliver 'show' lessons, typicality is sought when observations take place. Observation is seen as part of a developmental culture and no grades are given to support this ethos
- Constantly trying to streamline systems so things take less time, increased use of Google Suite to this end
- We only do things if we think they will make a real difference
- Cover is supported by a team of cover supervisors meaning staff being asked to cover is reduced.
- Students are encouraged to be intellectually curious and students take great pride in their learning
- Periodically, students write 'thank you' notes to staff, which are handed out in staff briefings/ delivered electronically
- The Headteacher sends thank you postcards to staff recognising those who go over and above.

Behaviour

- All staff reinforce high expectations of behaviour and so these are met
- Clear system of sanctions which are applied consistently
- A culture of positivity and celebration of success through the House rewards system
- Senior staff are a presence during breaktimes and lunchtimes, managing duty teams

Assessment and reporting

- Departments are encouraged to use a variety of methods which support the assessment and feedback appropriate to their subject with the sole aim of feedback in books being to support learning. There is no marking for marking's sake.
- Teachers encouraged only to set work which is important and useful so as not to use student time up with 'busy work' and so as not to spend their time marking something which will not be useful in progressing learning
- Minimal data entry and only the most essential data points in the year
- Reports to parents are very short with numbers replacing the need for additional prose

CPD

- CPD mainly delivered as twilights which aim to finish by 5pm with days off in lieu

- Few meetings take place and only happen when there is something important to be discussed
- Opportunities to shadow staff and/or take seconded positions have been developed to help provide career progression
- Strong support for ECTs

Consultation

- Staff are consulted on changes to working practices; working groups are often established in these instances and all interested parties are encouraged to get involved

Surveys

- Staff are encouraged to complete the annual staff survey which allows feedback on all areas of the school and feeds into the SIP

How do the Governors support this?

The Governing Body assumes a responsibility for the work-life balance of the school staff and is committed to ensuring that they are not required to work unreasonable hours in order that they can achieve a reasonable work-life balance.

- Classroom teachers will not be directed to work beyond 1265 hours a year
- Members of the leadership group and those on the pay range for leading practitioners do not operate on a time-bound contract and are not subject to the working time provisions. Nonetheless, the headteacher remains duty bound to have regard to the work-life balance of such staff and should ensure that workload for those on the leadership scale, including those who work part-time, is reasonable and that part-time staff are treated fairly in comparison with their full-time equivalents
- Consideration is given to the demand placed on all staff when planning the school calendar especially with regards to meetings and parents' evenings. This calendar is consulted on annually (usually in July for the following school year) and published following consultation, usually before the end of the previous school year, so that staff can plan ahead
- All staff are given the opportunity to discuss their role, training needs, duties and responsibilities through the professional development process. This is where conversations about the above can be had and support, training or changes to role can be considered to aid all staff in the delivery of their work and managing the expectations of the job
- The school provides access to 24/7 GP services as well as physiotherapy services, stress and mental health support through Westfield Health Westfield Health
- Staff are encouraged to sign up to use the School gym and to take advantage of the beautiful walks possible around the campus to improve their fitness and wellbeing
- Line managers are committed to keeping watch for those who seem to be working excessively and to actively discourage staff from working excessively long hours/supporting them to ensure that such working practice is not required

- Heads of Department share and discuss effective pedagogy, workload and wellbeing at Subject Leaders Forum in order to reduce teacher workload whilst maintaining (or increasing) student performance
- Special leave, as requested, will be considered in line with the leave of absence policy
- Flexible working practices agreed where possible, with consideration of the impact on the smooth running of the school, the workload of others or opportunities for pupils to succeed
- The time impact of any new initiative will always be considered as will the question 'is there anything we can stop doing to allow us to do this?'

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring that the work environment supports the wellbeing of staff by

- Providing adequate workplace facilities for breaks and relaxation
- Providing an induction programme for staff appropriate to their position
- Providing periodic training and advice for staff to help them support their own wellbeing
- Training Middle and Senior leaders as Mental Health First aiders (see list of trained staff in Appendix 1b) in order that leaders are clear about how to spot and support staff who may need additional support.
- Signposting support agencies such as those in Appendix 1 so that staff can self-refer or support others as appropriate
- Supporting staff towards further referrals should their mental health require it
- Supporting effective teaching and learning strategies that reduce staff workload and also have a positive impact on student learning (see Appendix 2)
- Encouraging an Owen's *Supportive Community* through a variety of staff social events and opportunities as outlined in Appendix 2. Many of these opportunities also support staff in their physical and emotional health.
- Evaluating our current offer as part of the *Five ways to Wellbeing*, and striving to ensure a comprehensive programme (see Appendix 2).

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.

Calm www.calm.com

No.1 app for meditation and sleep

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

Education Support <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

Dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff in schools, colleges and universities. It contains free information including a free 24/7 helpline - 08000 562 561.

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.

Every Mind Matters <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

General information about looking after your mental health, as well as top tips to improve your emotional wellbeing

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

Mind www.mind.org.uk

Supporting mental health

Mindful Employer www.mindfulemployer.net

Information and guidance on managing stress and mental health in the workplace

NASUWT www.nasuwt.org.uk

Information on a whole range of issues related to stress and wellbeing

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

Appendix 1b: Support for employees suffering from stress related problems

Mental Health first aiders

Staff are encouraged to speak to anyone they feel able to regarding their mental health. Posters and shared information encourage staff to look out for each other but also to speak out if they are struggling in any way.

The Mental Health lead for staff is Vicki Blackburn.

The following staff are all Mental Health First Aid trained:

Charlotte Surry
Hannah Nemko
Katharine Wheatley
Tania Jackson

Support for employees suffering from stress related problems

Staff experiencing mental health problems should be encouraged to speak to anyone they feel can support them. Karen Acosta, HR manager and the Headteacher, should be alerted regarding anyone suffering with their mental health, be that due to a short or longer term issue, in order that appropriate support can be put into place to help. This may include but may not be limited to encouraging the member of staff to:

- make use of the talking therapy through the Employee Support Programme, Westfield Health
- self referring to the GP for additional support (this can also be done through the 24/7 GP support via Westfield Health)
- have a facilitated (or other) conversation with their line manager about such things as
 - smarter ways of working
 - additional resources available to them to support them in their work
 - expectations they have of themselves.

Staff leading those conversations may choose to make reference to the [HSE's Talking toolkit for Schools](#) this will help understand where stressors currently are regarding their work and how these may be able to be overcome

- consider their working pattern and contract
- nominate/agree a member of staff with whom they can regularly check in to help support them
- consent to the school making a referral to occupational health for further advice

APPENDIX 2

Dame Alice School believes strongly in the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, as described here <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>.



The following list outlines our current offer, however, this will be constantly reviewed in order to ensure our school has a broad and comprehensive support programme.

1. Connect

- Open door to SLT culture so that issues can be raised and for staff to feel supported
- Staff Choir
- Staff Band, *The Lines*, who perform at school concerts and end of year functions
- Lots of the in-school activities (mentioned in Be Active and Learn) support connecting with others as well as camaraderie
- Staff social committee who lead on a variety of social events throughout the year
- Rounders and/or refreshments after INSET at the start of the year to which all staff are invited
- Social evenings planned at various points throughout the year to which all staff are invited
- Culture of individual departments also having social opportunities at the ends of term
- Christmas lunch held annually to which all staff are invited
- Visitation dinner held at the end of the year to which all staff are invited

2. Be Active

- Staff Yoga
- Staff Netball
- Staff Football, including matches against other schools and the annual Mayor of Hertsmere's Charity Tournament which is held at Arsenal Football Club training ground
- Staff Badminton
- Brand new gym which staff have access to
- Wellbeing INSET days have included table tennis and Zumba sessions
- Staff have the opportunity to join in with Sports Day
- Free Flu Jab offer

3. Take Notice

- Staff encouraged to work in a way that suits them but to have in place a 'boulder', an immovable thing they do for themselves and their family e.g. an exercise class
- No expectation that staff answer email outside of school hours, encouragement that they set an out of office message during school holidays etc. and have a break
- Thank you postcards and thank you messages in briefing along with Maurice Daphne Awards at Christmas reinforce a culture of staff praise
- Tea, coffee and biscuits periodically brought to departments to thank them for their work
- The December occasional day allows the opportunity to have a pause in a long term
- Early finish days at the end of each half term

4. Keep Learning

- Wellbeing INSET days have included sessions on pottery, knitting, board games and craft making
- Lots of opportunities to get involved in the wider life of the school through visits abroad (recently visited: Iceland, Tanzania, Costa Rica, France (including Ski trip), Germany, Spain for language trips as well as art trips), D of E
- Monday morning TES quiz in the staff room

- Owen's Bookclub
- Greater ownership over individual CPD allows for a bespoke and relevant programme of training, including the opportunity to gain qualifications through online learning
- Free staff tickets to all of the fantastic concerts, productions and shows that the school offer

5. Give

- Staff participation in non-uniform days
- Periodic bake sales for charitable causes in the staff room
- Culture of staff giving up their time for leading extra curricular activities and trips

APPENDIX 3

Thank you to the following who participated in the creation and upkeep of this statement:

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