

Aycliffe Community Primary School



Trauma Informed School Wellbeing Policy

Signed: Jonathan Price

Date: January 2026

Next Review Date: September 2026

Make a Difference Make a Difference Make a Difference Make a Difference

Reference: Trauma Informed Schools Wellbeing Policy

Wellbeing is all about our holistic health, including the physical and emotional. When we have good levels of wellbeing, we are able to live life well. We feel motivated and engaged and have energy for life. If we are well supported by those around us who are compassionate, supportive and understanding, we are more likely to be resilient and able to deal effectively with day-to-day events, coping with life's challenges.

At Aycliffe Community Primary School we recognise that leaders who have empathy are more likely to create an ethos and culture that supports wellbeing. Leadership with empathy is proven to increase staff engagement, innovation, retention and overall wellbeing. Aycliffe Community Primary School values all staff both personally and for their professional skills and qualities. Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to ensure that all adults know that leaders are invested in them and will demonstrate this through the personal and professional support given. We value the views of all staff and will seek to ensure that their views are sought at every opportunity. Aycliffe Community Primary School as an employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is also required to have in place measures to mitigate, as far as possible, factors that could harm employees' physical and mental wellbeing, which includes work-related stress. Aycliffe Community Primary School adopts the HSE definition of work-related stress: "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work." We all need appropriate levels of stress in order to function successfully in life. Positive stress stimulates and motivates us and helps us to be our best selves. However, stress that is ongoing and experienced without the support of others within the context of a trusting relationship becomes toxic and it is toxic stress that leads to poor mental and physical health. At Aycliffe Community Primary School we will ensure that our expectations are reasonable and that staff do not experience unreasonable levels of stress either as a result of the demands placed upon them or the lack of supportive relationships around them.

At Aycliffe Community Primary School, we identify the following factors that may lead to stress:

- demands: workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- support: the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- Relationships: promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- Role: such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- Change: such as how organisational change is managed.

We are committed to making sure that this Staff Wellbeing Policy is implemented so that each individual is able to cope successfully with the demands in their lives, whatever the cause of stress. All staff will be enabled to talk honestly about work-related stress without fear of judgement, reprisals or shame.

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a school ethos which supports staff health and wellbeing by making sure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Our approach to staff well-being is based on the teachings of Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK). It is underpinned by educational practices which **PROTECT, RELATE, REGULATE, REFLECT**.

PROTECT

Our priority is to ensure that adults are physically and psychologically safe. That they are supported by policies and practice that mitigates the possibility of them experiencing physical harm at work or as a direct result of their work and that they have opportunities to engage in warm, empathic relationships with adults they trust. As a school we support and promote those relationships and we create a warm and calm environment that is consistent, accepting and optimises social engagement. We do not place adults in situations that they cannot manage.

Specifically:

- All adults are taught about the impact of toxic stress.
- Regular whole school training to ensure that all adults have a comprehensive understanding of **PACE (Hughes, 2016)**, **whole school awareness of Social Engagement Theory (Porges 2017)** and **Panksepp's Emotional Systems (2012)**. Adults are therefore able to engage in PACEFUL relationships with each other and increase social engagement.
- Ensuring that there are emotionally available adults in school who undertake the role of **wellbeing champions** and that staff know who they are and where to find them.
- There is a no shouting, no shaming policy in school. Raised or hostile voices are not tolerated.
- All adults receive feedback about their work and this is given positively, supporting professional development. Feedback is non-shaming and not harsh or critical.
- Adults have breaks and there are pleasant spaces for staff to relax and restore
- Leaders will continue to consider ways of reducing workload
- Senior Leaders check in with staff daily and demonstrate genuine interest in their work
- Use of adult only spaces and time to reflect is encouraged, in particular when staff have experienced challenging situations
- Adults are encouraged to express their emotions and are not shamed or undermined when acknowledging their anxieties or stressors
- Adults have daily opportunities to engage with each other in environments that are supportive and pleasant.
- Leaders will ensure that there is clear communication between staff and management with regards to all areas of school life.

RELATE

• At Aycliffe Community Primary School, our understanding of RELATE is underpinned by the knowledge that the ability to form meaningful relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. We understand that relationships are crucial in promoting the optimal development of the frontal lobes of the brain associated with the executive functions key to emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, planning, problem solving and ultimately, learning. The opportunity to engage in meaningful relationships with other colleagues is central to the health and well-being of all staff.

Specifically:

- All adults interact with each other from a position of social engagement not social defence.
- All adults know about the **key relational skills** and in particular the ability to listen with empathy and they use these when supporting each other.
- Leaders promote an open-door policy ensuring that all staff are valued and have regular contact with them
- Leaders will ensure that staff are celebrated for their successes and contributions

REGULATE

We know that leaving adults in a state of toxic stress can result in physical ill health as well as making

it impossible to engage productively in the activities taking place around them. We have a duty to support adults in school to ensure that they are not left in toxic stress. We know that one of the most powerful ways to do this is to create an environment in which adults can be listened to, attuned to and validated and to experience high levels of empathy.

Specifically:

- Promoting training and development procedures to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake the tasks/duties required of them.
- Ensuring that interactions are emotionally regulating, PACEFUL and designed to reduce stress levels.
- Ensuring that adults do not engage in socially defensive behaviour with each other
- Providing and valuing staff-only spaces, designed to promote regulation and reflection
- Ensuring that adults are aware of each other's needs and support each other through rich, trusting, relational experiences.
- Ensuring that strategies and policies are implemented to effectively manage and, where necessary, reduce employee stress.
- Encouraging staff to be fully involved in the decisions of the school through staff meetings in which staff can talk freely about any issues which impact on their ability to carry out their jobs.

REFLECT

At Aycliffe Community Primary School, we believe that adults need to be able to reflect on their feelings in order to fully understand them.

Reflection enables us to make sense of our life and have a coherent narrative that makes sense of what we are feeling and what has happened to us. There are times following troubling incidents that adults need to be helped to reflect in order to make sense of what has happened, of their response and if necessary, to repair ruptures in relationships that may have resulted. Adults also need opportunities to share with leaders, in a safe space, the stressors from work.

At Aycliffe Community Primary School we facilitate this in ways which support adults to feel valued and not blamed.

Specifically:

- All staff and in particular leaders, are **trained in the art of active listening** with a particular focus on empathy and acceptance of the feelings of others.
- Staff have access to free counselling services provided by the school or are signposted to free counselling services
- Leaders offer supervision
- Leaders will seek the views of employees on the effectiveness of the school's Wellbeing Policy using staff surveys and other appropriate questionnaires.

"Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary." - Fred Rogers.

This model policy has been developed to support schools and organisations in developing their own policy. If you wish to use this model policy, please reference Trauma Informed Schools UK at the beginning.