

## **Health, Stress and Wellbeing Policy**

### **Russell Lower School Autumn 2021 (Review 2023)**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Russell Lower School Governing Board cares about staff at Russell Lower School and recognises the statutory responsibilities relating to employment. Day-to-day management of staff is delegated to the Headteacher and other line managers in Russell Lower School. Throughout this document, reference is made to the responsibilities held by the Headteacher for operational purposes. Ultimate responsibility rests with the Governing Body and CBC as the employer.
- 1.2 Russell Lower School and the Governing Board are committed to promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and will provide suitable support for all members of staff. 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.
- 1.3 Members of the teaching and non-teaching staff are entitled to be treated fairly and professionally at all times. The Governing Board of Russell Lower School takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer to all members of staff and a number of policies and procedures have been made in relation to this duty.

These include:

- Attendance and Absence Management Policy;
- Health, Stress and Wellbeing Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Equality of Opportunity Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy/Procedure;
- Harassment Procedure;
- Grievance Procedure;
- Whistleblowing Procedure.

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

- Pay Policy;
- Performance Management Policies for Teaching and Support Staff;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Shared Parental Leave and Maternity Policy;
- Disability Leave Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy;

All policies are published on the Russell Lower School website, Central Bedfordshire Schools Portal (usually the Personnel Handbook) or are available upon request from the school office.

- 1.4 The Governing Board recognises the importance of workplace unions in promoting and maintaining a positive health and wellbeing environment.

## **2. Who This Policy Applies To**

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all employees working in Russell Lower School.

## **3. Aims**

- 3.1 This policy aims to:
  - 3.1.1 Provide a working environment which enables staff to work in an environment in which staff wellbeing is supported and which enables staff to carry out their duties effectively.
  - 3.1.2 Recognise the key role of the Headteacher/Senior Leaders/Line Managers for their responsibilities by enabling access to guidance, training and support.
  - 3.1.3 Encourage staff as individuals to accept responsibility for their own mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.
  - 3.1.4 Comply with all statutory requirements.
  - 3.1.5 Develop and maintain a positive health and safety culture through regular communication and consultation with staff and their trade union representatives where appropriate.
  - 3.1.6 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.
  - 3.1.7 Ensure that all staff are aware of the policy.
  - 3.1.8 Identify the hazards that could lead to poor staff health and wellbeing and reduce these where possible.

## **4. Legislation**

- 4.1 Pieces of legislation that will be considered when promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, including, but not exclusively:
  - The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;

- The Equality Act 2010;
- Working Time Regulations;
- Employment Rights Act 1996;
- Employment Relations Act 1999.

## **5. Responsibilities**

### **5.1 Bedford Borough's HR Function shall:**

- 5.1.1 Provide the necessary professional advice, support and training to the Governing Body/School staff as and when required.
- 5.1.2 Assist with the referral of staff to Occupational Health, Counselling or mediation when appropriate.
- 5.1.3 Assist in the formulation of return-to-work programmes and provide advice on the implementation of statutory requirements.

### **5.2 The Governing Board shall:**

- 5.2.1 Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that recognise and deal with the issue of common mental and physical health problems, which will include: consideration of organisation of work; health risk assessment where appropriate; early recognition for staff with common mental and physical health problems (which may require training); and interventions that include short-term rehabilitation and return-to-work plans and longer-term reasonable adjustments.
- 5.2.2 Actively demonstrate recognition and acceptance of common mental and physical health problems by creating an environment where staff feel comfortable in asking for help.
- 5.2.3 Act early and provide consistent support.
- 5.2.4 Enlist the support of Russell Lower School's HR function and Occupational Health, when appropriate, and ensure staff are able to access this support.
- 5.2.5 Ensure that staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- 5.2.6 Attend training on health and wellbeing in schools.
- 5.2.7 Ensure that all of Russell Lower School's policies are considered for workload impact.
- 5.2.8 Take into account the equality implications of any policies introduced and monitor on a regular basis.

- 5.2.9 Develop a wellbeing action plan to be clear how staff will be supported.
- 5.2.10 Provide opportunities for staff to participate in free annual health checks, should they so desire.
- 5.2.11 Ensure the policy is monitored, evaluated and reviewed, in the light of changing needs and legislative frameworks.

### **5.3 The Headteacher shall:**

- 5.3.1 Recognise the value of good management practice with systems in place to effectively manage staff and encourage a partnership approach with staff, workplace unions and the Governing Board.
- 5.3.2 Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner.
- 5.3.3 Promote a healthy workplace and practices that ensure that members of staff are able to develop a healthy mind.
- 5.3.4 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.
- 5.3.5 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.
- 5.3.6 Follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work related stress and other mental-health problems.
- 5.3.7 Ensure that a return-to-work procedure is established in the workplace that is supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work.
- 5.3.8 Carry out a risk assessment, where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised, as soon as possible.
- 5.3.9 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.
- 5.3.10 Carefully plan and agree work-life balance solutions including flexible working practices where possible and appropriate.
- 5.3.11 Demonstrate commitment, via systems and practices in place in Russell Lower School, to employees maintaining a good work/life

balance, and ensure that such practices are communicated to all staff.

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

5.3.13 Conduct an annual survey of staff, including a section on health and wellbeing, and share and act upon results.

#### **5.4 Senior Leaders/Line Managers shall:**

5.4.1 Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner.

5.4.2 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.

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

5.4.4 Ensure that the return-to-work procedures are followed in the workplace and it is supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work.

5.4.5 Carry out a risk assessment, where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised, as soon as possible.

5.4.6 Attend regular training on health and wellbeing in schools.

5.4.7 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.

5.4.8 Demonstrate commitment to staff by encouraging a good work/life balance and adhering to agreed practices.

#### **5.5 Staff should:**

5.5.0 Use the adult well-being scale around the school to self-assess their own well-being on a daily basis. They should use this 4-point plan to avoid 'struggling' or becoming 'unwell'. See Appendix 2. They should also foster a 'well-being culture', by encouraging children to use their well-being scale (Appendix 3), and calming techniques, daily (Appendix 4). All adults should use an 'Emotion Coaching' approach to dealing with all occasions of unregulated behaviour in school.

- 5.5.1 Seek support or help when they think they are experiencing a problem, if possible, to a clearly identified line manager or named individual. Russell Lower School has a Mental Health lead (Nicki Walker) who can support staff in the first instance. School also aims to train a Mental Health First Aider in the year 2021/22, as the previously trained MHFA (Sue Summerfield left in August 2021). Elaine Clarke (as Pastoral lead), will be undertaking this when it is available.
- 5.5.2 Act in a manner that respects the health and safety needs of themselves or others whilst in the workplace.
- 5.5.3 Consider wellbeing support mechanisms offered by Russell Lower School, Central Bedfordshire Council and Beds Borough; e.g. coaching, supervision, mentoring, Occupational Health or counselling.
- 5.5.4 Consider attending training on health and wellbeing issues where they feel that this is appropriate.
- 5.5.5 Where possible, be watchful of any indication of changes of behaviour in colleagues and promote sympathetic alertness to colleagues who show signs of stress. Report these concerns on to a line manager, where appropriate so that support can be put in place where required.

## **6. Support Mechanisms**

### **6.1 Counselling**

- 6.1.1 Counselling can be provided where appropriate through the Russell Lower School's HR provider (currently Bedford Borough Council). This will be a confidential, independent service using professionally qualified counsellors.
- 6.1.2 Staff can access the Counselling Service by contacting Bedford Borough Council HR. There are notices for this service on the Wellbeing notice board in the staffroom.

### **6.2 Mediation**

- 6.2.1 In addition to the Counselling Service there is also a mediation service in order to assist employees to return to normal working relationships. Where this service is appropriate it will be discussed with the employees affected by the situation.

### **6.3 Teacher Support Network**

- 6.3.1 The Teacher Support Network is a group of independent charities and a social enterprise that provides practical and emotional support to staff in the education sector and their families. Information, support

and coaching is offered to all staff. The Teacher Support Network provides over 1000 factsheets covering a wide range of issues including money advice, how to cope with bereavement, mental health, diet and nutrition and how to manage stress. To access the free support line, staff can call 08000 562 561, or for more information go to <http://teachersupport.info/>

## **6.4 Occupational Health**

6.4.1 The School has access to Beds Borough Occupational Health provider. This will enable an employee to discuss any concerns about their health and wellbeing with a nurse or doctor trained in occupational medicine. This is an opportunity to discuss any health condition and get feedback about managing or improving that condition to help an employee to carry out their duties or return to work. The information given is entirely confidential and will not be shared with the Governing Board or members of staff within Russell Lower School.

## **6.5 Specific Strategies**

6.5.1 Russell Lower school will take the following measure to support staff's health, stress and wellbeing:

- Encourage and promote working practices that support good health, wellbeing and lower levels of stress. Examples include: using 'delayed send' emails when emailing colleagues at the weekend or in the evening, giving staff some time during INSET Days or SDMs (staff development meetings) where they are able to choose the tasks they undertake, 'blinking out' some SDMs so that tasks like report writing can be undertaken and enabling staff to take PPA sessions together
- Minimise evening and out of hours meetings where at all possible
- Continue to diarise sharing lunches
- Plan end of term staff 'dos' with an inclusive ethos
- Reflect and act upon reducing teacher workload advice, for example by having a minimal marking and feedback policy, not excessively collecting data, providing effective resources etc. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reducing-school-workload>
- Provide a detailed, annual school calendar with key milestones already planned in so that staff can effectively plan their own workload accordingly
- Continuing to staff the school as effectively as possible so that colleagues can support each other. For example, there are

learning support assistants in most year groups to support teachers

- Foster an open culture, where health and wellbeing are prioritised and staff feel able to talk about, and feel listened to, regarding any concerns they have
- Foster a culture where supportive, constructive challenge is welcomed at all levels
- Encourage staff to see someone who can help when they need it and to escalate concerns where they feel they are not being addressed
- Have a swift and robust response to any harassment or bullying in the workplace, and send clear messages to all that this will not be tolerated
- Monitor staff attendance and hold return to work interviews where needed to further support staff in a structured way
- Have a robust Behaviour Policy so that staff feel supported
- Ensure all policies are considered in the light of staff workload
- Ensure all practices are considered in terms of impact – both effectiveness and staff workload
- Provide training so that all staff feel able to do their job effectively, particularly in the early stages of a career or for unqualified teachers
- Communicate well with all staff using a weekly briefing sheet and a set of pre-planned meetings (such the Office Manager meeting the MDSAs, a weekly Office Meeting with the Headteacher, a programme of Staff Development Meetings, weekly briefings etc.)
- Conduct an annual staff survey where health, wellbeing and stress questions are included. From this, create an action plan to keep wellbeing a focus in school



## Appendix 1

### Link to CBC services to support with mental health and well-being

[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/54/welfare\\_reform/10/welfare\\_information\\_and\\_advice/4](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/54/welfare_reform/10/welfare_information_and_advice/4)

#### Help with stress and worry

##### Mental health support

Constant money concerns can sometimes leave you feeling distressed and worried about your mental wellbeing. If you are in this situation, there are local organisations with years of experience supporting people in such circumstances who can help you. Contact them before matters reach crisis point.

**Mind (Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes)**(link opens in new window): Contact the charity for confidential help on a range of mental health issues. It also runs support groups in several areas of Central Bedfordshire including Ampthill, Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard.

##### Mind BLMK Ampthill

Ampthill Methodist Church  
Chandos Road (off Dunstable Street)  
Ampthill  
Bedfordshire  
MK45 2JS

**Telephone:** 07707 253511

**Email:** [ampthill@mind-blmk.org.uk](mailto:ampthill@mind-blmk.org.uk)

##### Useful Websites

Acas [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

Information on stress, and employer and employee rights, in the workplace

Alcoholics Anonymous [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://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](http://www.carersuk.org)

The voice of carers

CBI [www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk)

Guidance to businesses on managing stress at work

Department of Health [www.gov.uk/government/organisation/department-of-health](http://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](http://www.dignityatwork.org)

## Information and guidance on bullying in the workplace

The Equality and Human Rights Commission [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.local.gov.uk)

Guidance for all councils on stress prevention and management

Mindful Employer [www.mindfulemployer.net](http://www.mindfulemployer.net)

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

NASUWT [www.nasuwf.org.uk](http://www.nasuwf.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-judgmental 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](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/oehstress.pdf)

Publication on work organisation and stress

This policy follows guidance from and is supported by: Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and



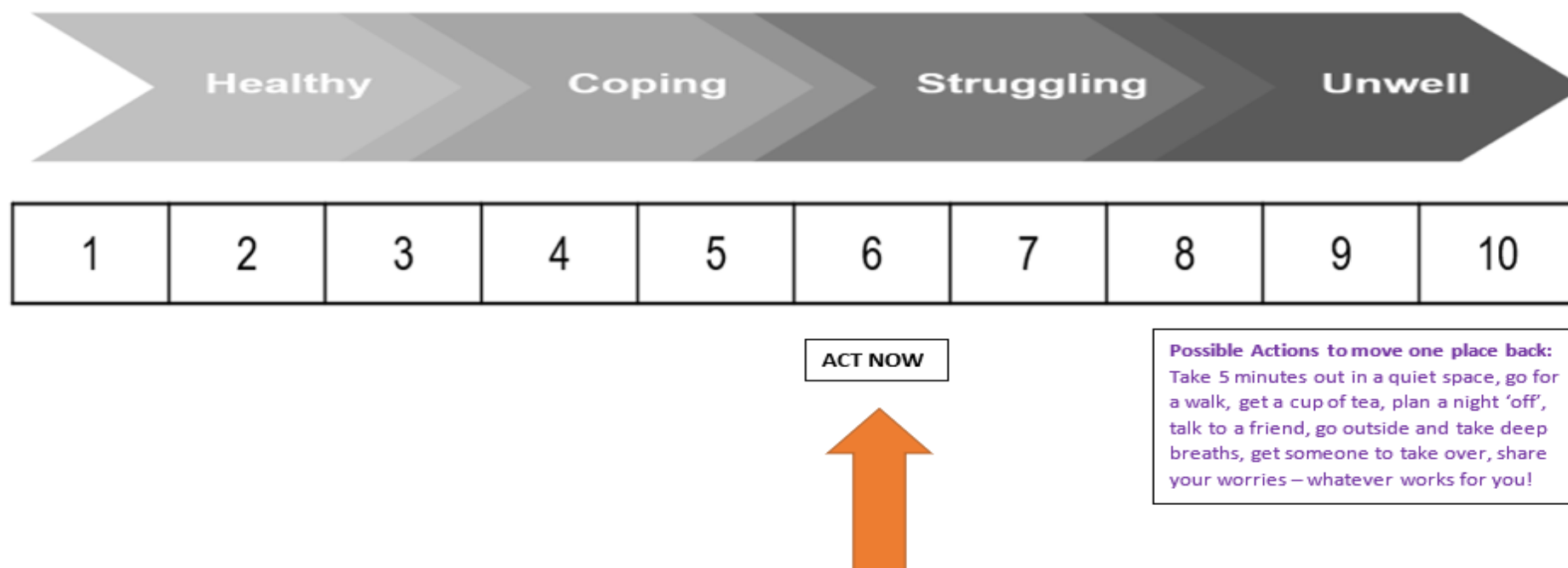
## Appendix 2



# Russell Lower School – Adult Well-being Scale

Everyone goes through challenging times and 'pinch-points'. We all **care** about each other at Russell Lower School and want to help each other as we are a **team**. You can use the **well-being scale** to **help** you, help yourself.

- 1) Recognise and 'label' how you are feeling using the scale as a guide
- 2) Talk to a trusted colleague, or speak to Nicki or Louise – they will ALWAYS make time for a well-being chat
- 3) Ask yourself – 'what can I do to move JUST ONE SPACE down the well-being scale towards a healthier me?'
- 4) Act when you are at 6 not 9!



## Appendix 3



### Russell Lower Well-being Scale



**3** I am feeling fantastic.

If you feel like a 3 you are full of energy, excited and overjoyed. You have a big smile on your face.



**2** I am feeling calm.

If you feel like a 2 you are calm and content. You are happy and focused.

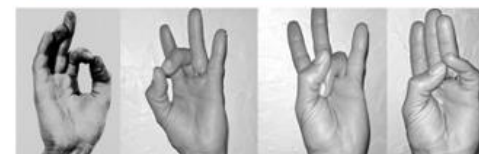


**1** I am feeling upset.

If you feel like a 1 then you are upset, angry or anxious about something. You might cry or need time to talk about why you are feeling so low.



USE THESE TECHNIQUES TO KEEP US CALM AND GIVE US TIME TO FIND OUR THINKING BRAIN TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES



Calm Starts With Me

BUBBLE BREATHING



Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Begin by imagining you are holding a bubble wand. Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you are blowing bubbles into the room. Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful, happy feeling. As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.

Deep breathing using your hand.



WE COULD ALSO:

- Talk about what is upsetting us – use our Network hand
- Do something to relax, like bubble breathing with your eyes closed
- Do Mindful Colouring for 5 minutes, then try again
- Count slowly to 10
- Listen to calm music
- Go for a walk
- Blow bubbles

I Can **calm down**  
When I have BIG emotions.

1. I can go for a walk.
2. I can push the wall.
3. I can count my breaths.
4. I can think happy thoughts.
5. I can trace my hand.
6. I can hug a toy.
7. I can ask for help.

## Appendix 4

### Emotion Coaching - simple but effective 3 step strategy

- 1) **We recognise, validate, label and empathise with the EMOTION** – E.g. *'I can see you are feeling really angry/worried and that's okay to feel angry/worried.'*
- 2) **We put limits on the BEHAVIOUR and say why it matters (called co-regulation)** – E.g. *'I understand that you feel angry/worried, but it is not okay to hit people/run out of class/school etc. At Russell Lower School (or in our house), we keep each other safe, because it is never okay to hurt anyone/leave school/the classroom and we all have the right to be safe (Russell Rights/house rules).'*

Once we are calmer – maybe via some deep breathing/mindful colouring/'down time' we...

- 3) **We problem solve together – the SOLUTION** – we think about what happened, how it made us feel (physically and emotionally) and talk about what we could do to help control those feelings (physical and emotional) and how we can BEHAVE differently next time. E.g. *'It is okay to feel angry/worried. I get angry/worried too; we all get angry/worried, but it is not okay to hit/run out the class etc. Next time you could get an adult to help you/use your words/count to 10/walk away/ignore it. (context dependent, ideally child comes up with the ideas for solutions, but you can give appropriate choices if they struggle, but ultimately let them choose the 'solution' – this is what makes it coaching and builds their self-belief and confidence to solve their own problems in the future). I am always here to help you.'*

#### Emotion Coaching

**We recognise, validate, label and empathise with the EMOTION** – *'I can see you are feeling really angry and that's okay to feel angry.'*

**We put limits on the BEHAVIOUR and say why it matters (called co-regulation)** – *'I understand that you feel angry, but it is not okay to hit people*

**We problem solve together – the SOLUTION** – we think about what happened, how it made us feel (physically and emotionally) , talk about what we could do to help control those feelings (physical and emotional) and how we can BEHAVE differently next time.