

Soar Valley College



Our Staff Wellbeing Charter

Introduction

Our school motto is not just three words, really does mean something, and we believe Soar Valley has a unique ethos.

Aspire – we aim high and expect everyone to do so, students and staff alike. Our mantra of ‘effort is everything’ means all can succeed, and they do. Each child is encouraged to be the best version of themselves, and the same is true of our staff, who are fantastic!

Enjoy – we aim to make the school and work experience as enjoyable as possible. Working in education can be fast-paced and demanding, it is important to have fun too!

Achieve – we are a highly successful school, and that is not all about exam results. Our staff turnover is very low, and there are even those who have come back. All are highly valued; without any one person, the school would not be as effective, we are indeed the sum of our parts.

This means that we take the wellbeing of our staff seriously.

We recognise that staff who are valued are at the heart of the success of the school.

We recognise that excessive hours of work and unrealistic deadlines can be detrimental to staff wellbeing and their effectiveness and, ultimately, to the outcomes for the children in our care.



In light of this, leaders will:

- Be mindful of and encourage a healthy work-life balance for all staff.
- Actively look to develop and adopt efficient and effective working strategies.
- Acknowledge that the needs of the school and its staff are not static but change over time.
- Seek the views of staff on their working life on a regular basis, through both formal and informal methods.
- Respond sensitively to external pressures which affect the lives of staff members.
- Consider all new developments, and filter those which will impact positively on our school and implement them in a measured way.
- Consider the effects of any new initiative on workload, considering and balancing impact on workload carefully.
- Regularly review and if an initiative/change is not having a reasonable impact it will be removed.
- Make staff members aware of the channels which can be used to manage and deal with stress or work related health and wellbeing issues.
- Ensure an effective professional development programme for all, to ensure staff are developed in their roles and achieve a sense of satisfaction.
- Be open and receptive to feedback about policies and developments and their impact on staff wellbeing and workload.

All staff will:

- Assist in the development of good practice and ensure they do not, through their actions or omissions, create unnecessary work for themselves or colleagues.
- Ask for support as and when required.
- Identify opportunities for development and take advantage of those offered by the school.
- Apply for any requests for absence in advance and be open about sickness absence.
- Share their views, ideas and feelings in both formal and informal settings.
- Make sure that all feel supported and welcome, offering support as appropriate for each other.

Some of the strategic measures to support staff wellbeing

The focus on staff wellbeing and workload is not a new one for Soar Valley. There are a number of strategic measures which have been taken to support all staff over the past few years. The list below is not an exhaustive one but illustrates the approach.

- All teachers have a minimum of 14% non-contact time, with additional time for those with leadership responsibilities.
- There have been no written reports at Soar Valley since 2005. A review was undertaken and a simple data collection system implemented.
- There are three formal data collection points and reports home to parents during the year, one per term.

- A structured CPD programme is in place, being reviewed and revised each year to meet the needs of both the school and individuals. There is also a strong induction programme for new staff and development programmes for both newly qualified and recently qualified teachers.
- Those new to the profession receive more than the nationally recommended amount of time for planning, preparation and professional development.
- An extensive CPD library is available for staff, another opportunity to supplement professional development of staff.
- There are regular briefings for staff, both teaching and support staff, so all can remain informed and involved in developments and news in the school.
- Meetings are carefully planned so as to meet professional development and college improvement priorities, with only one meeting a week for most members of staff. Every effort is made to start them promptly and ensure they do not overrun.
- Considerable investment in the pastoral and inclusion teams has led to strong support in these areas with high quality staff and effective structures.
- The high quality SEND team, with well qualified and trained teaching assistants, means detailed and supportive strategies and information are always available.
- Investment in a small but high quality EAL team means those students with the highest level of need can receive targeted intervention until they are able to access the curriculum.
- Policies and procedures which have been introduced for behaviour management are clear and effective. The Step system means that any student behaving inappropriately is removed from the lesson.
- Centralised detention systems support staff in ensuring high standards of behaviour.
- Much of our policy is written by staff, either through working parties or middle leader groups. Examples are the assessment policy, homework policy, marking policy, all of which have been written by staff and for staff. Where not directly written by staff, they are fully consulted in any new/amended policy through our meeting structure.
- Subject teams have a high level of autonomy to teach and structure in the way they think best. There will always be challenge to improve, and indeed often do so themselves!
- Staffing levels are high, with additional groups in many subject areas, especially at key stage 4. Class sizes at key stage 3 have been kept to an average of 26 or lower.
- There is administrative support for each department in school, as well as a full complement of technical support staff.
- All teachers and many members of the support staff team are issued with laptops.
- The rarely cover policy means that teachers will only provide cover for absent colleagues if they are timetabled for a 'support lesson'. We employ three Cover Supervisors so that students have known cover staff, which also leads to calmer lessons.
- We have created a culture of mutual respect amongst the staff, and there are positive working relationships across the school. Support and teaching staff are all vital in the success of the school.
- Communication is open and transparent. We ensure emails are useful and endeavour to make the number sent and received manageable.

And some of the 'nice to haves'

Sometimes the little things really matter, and whilst not strategic in nature, these are examples of some such things at Soar Valley:

- The Fitness Suite is available for staff to use before and after school each day, and a staff sport session is a regular feature on a Friday, allowing the more energetic amongst us to work off the week.
- There are outdoor areas where staff can relax in summer months which are not accessible to students, such as the allotments and memorial garden.
- There are occasional staff workshops (such as making pottery decorations at Christmas).
- Free flu jabs are offered each year for staff.
- Lunch is always provided on training days and food is available prior to parents' evenings.
- Our Christmas lunch at the end of the autumn term is an annual event.
- Tea and coffee are always freely available for staff and visitors in the main staffroom.
- Samosas – we love our samosas, which appear for birthdays, other celebrations and thank yous.
- The Unicorn of Appreciation comes out about once a term, for staff to recognise others, just say thank you or well done.
- We party impressively at the end of terms, and there are various other social events.

Useful contacts:

Through our Health & Safety provider, staff can access a confidential staff counselling service by emailing counsellingandwellbeing@leics.gov.uk or calling the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Duty line on 0116 305 5515. Your call will be transferred to an available Wellbeing Adviser. The service is free for all employees.

Support offered covers a variety of issues including;

- Abuse
- Anxiety and depression
- Bereavement
- Bullying and harassment
- Family/relationship issues
- Legal and debt advice
- Mental health
- Physical violence
- Psychological trauma
- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Work stress

<https://www.leicestercityccg.nhs.uk/my-health/leicesters-health-priorities/mental-health/lets-talk-wellbeing-leicester-leicestershire-rutland/>

National Education Union - <https://neu.org.uk/advice/keeping-happy-and-healthy>

NASUWT - <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/news/campaigns/mental-health.html>

www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/

<https://www.headspace.com/educators>

www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk

www.Mindfulteachers.org

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxietydepression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/how-to-manage-and-reduce-stress.pdf