Sir James Knott Nursery School and Nest

Staff Wellbeing Policy

Date policy last reviewed:	2025-26		
Signed by:			
J. Croft	Headteacher	Date:	20.10.26
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Statement of intent

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. Preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of the school's staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, the school understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed. The school also recognises that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of employees at work.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of the school and staff members in supporting wellbeing and promoting mental health, and to advise employees on how to deal with mental health issues and prevent stress.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Equality Act 2010
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Working Time Regulations 1998
- DfE 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Attendance and Absence Policy
- Induction of New Staff Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Capability Procedure

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.

- Ensuring the school's ethos reflects its commitment to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing.
- Ensuring staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored.
- Ensuring that all school policies are assessed for workload impact.
- Encouraging stress awareness throughout the school and promoting stress as a serious issue rather than a weakness.
- Consulting the headteacher on managing staff stress and promoting wellbeing, including them in any decisions that need to be made.
- Ensuring the headteacher puts measures in place to support staff wellbeing.
- Monitoring and supporting the wellbeing of the headteacher
- Actively trying to eliminate stressors in the school, e.g. by considering the format and quantity of information it requests from the SLT.
- Ensuring monitoring visits are strategic, focussed and reflective of its monitoring plan, and being clear with staff ahead of the visit about what the focus will be and the information that will be required from them.
- Recognising mental health issues and appointing a mental health and wellbeing governor who will oversee managing and supporting staff mental health.
- Establishing a wellbeing committee to ensure staff are supported in their roles and that actions are taken to mitigate overbearing stress in the workplace.
- Ensuring all committee meetings are purposeful, focussed, structured and relevant to the school development priorities.
- Ensuring that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing.
- Developing an annual schedule of work and ensuring work is not duplicated between meetings of committees and the full governing board.

The mental health and wellbeing governor is responsible for:

- Influencing the setting of a school vision which creates a positive wellbeing culture and is underpinned by equality values, a system of accountability, and robust policies and procedures.

- Ensuring the school's strategic plan includes objectives linked to improving, supporting and responding to the mental health of staff.
- Ensuring the school has appropriate policies in place that include objectives focussed on meeting staff needs.
- Ensuring there is a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing embedded within leadership practice, the curriculum, the school's values and ethos, and the social and physical environment.
- Ensuring **three** senior members of staff are identified as wellbeing officers to oversee the provision and support of mental health and wellbeing in school, and to ensure effective links exist with local mental health support.
- Meeting with wellbeing officers on a regular basis to monitor and review the impact of provision and interventions.
- Working with the headteacher to ensure that appropriate training is put in place to support staff.
- Reporting to the governing board on the successes and areas of improvement in planned interventions, and the resources that are in place.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Creating and promoting a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Implementing CPD which equips staff with the tools needed to effectively manage stress.
- Developing a sensitive performance management process that is linked to clear job specifications.
- Including all staff in the school's decision-making processes, where possible.
- Organising extra support for staff at times of increased stress, e.g. during Ofsted inspections.
- Encouraging staff to take advantage of any initiatives introduced to promote wellbeing and effective working, e.g. an employee assistance programme.
- Ensuring that all policies that affect staff wellbeing are properly adhered to and reviewed.
- Supporting staff who may require a period of absence relating to stress and/or mental health issues, as well as granting extended leave where appropriate.

- Monitoring employees' workloads and holiday entitlement, and providing regular updates regarding absence to the governing board whilst maintaining staff confidentiality in line with the Data Protection Policy.
- Making sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- Attending all necessary training, keeping skills current and setting a good example for staff.
- Regularly communicating with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress.
- Listening to the views of staff and involving them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk assessments, considering the causes of stress.
- Ensuring all staff have read and understood this policy.
- Organising thorough inductions for new employees, explaining the school's policies and code of conduct.
- Making reasonable adjustments for members of staff who are struggling with disabilities and/or long-term mental health issues.

The SBM is responsible for:

- Encouraging all staff to attend events and training opportunities that promote wellbeing and health.
- Providing information that helps staff to manage stress effectively.
- Ensuring that regular contact is maintained with members of staff who are absent for long periods of time.
- Ensuring new members of staff have received all the relevant information they require, including the procedures for raising concerns about wellbeing.
- Gathering information where appropriate and in line with the Data Protection Policy, such as, but not limited to, the following:
    - Sickness and absence data

  - Staff turnover
  - Exit interviews
  - Referrals to the counselling service
  - Referrals to other mental health services
  - Grievance cases
  - Harassment cases
- Monitoring all staff absences and reporting this information to the headteacher.

All staff members are responsible for:

- Being able to recognise the early signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues.
- Treating other staff with empathy and respect.
- Supporting co-workers if they become stressed, which may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
- Maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
- Planning and organising their work to meet personal and school objectives.
- Promoting a positive, supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Being open to discussing stress.
- Reporting honestly about their wellbeing and any incidents of stress, e.g. being overworked.
- Where possible, asking for help when they feel under pressure or stressed.
- Attending events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health.
- Not acting in a manner which endangers themselves or others.
- Undertaking additional training and personal development opportunities.
- Reporting any concerns they have about their co-workers' stress and/or mental health to the headteacher.

3. Understanding stress and mental health

The school will acknowledge that stress is the adverse reaction individuals will experience when excessive pressures or demands are placed upon them. While stress will not be considered an illness, the school recognises that if sustained over a prolonged period, it may lead to mental and/or physical health issues.

The school will understand that mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It will influence how staff members think, feel, and act, and how they cope with everyday pressures. The school will recognise that positive mental health is not a fixed state; various internal and external factors will influence mental health, causing individuals to move along a spectrum ranging from good to poor mental health.

Pressure vs. Stress

The school will make a clear distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. It will recognise that certain levels of pressure will be both acceptable and normal in any role. This level of pressure can enhance performance, enable individuals to reach their full potential, and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, the school will also understand that when pressure becomes excessive, it may lead to stress and undermine mental health.

External Pressures and Their Impact

The school will acknowledge that pressures outside of the workplace—such as unexpected or traumatic events, accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown, or financial concerns—may contribute to stress and poor mental health. The school will recognise that these external pressures can also intensify the normal pressures experienced in the workplace.

Individual Reactions and Triggers

The school will recognise that each employee will respond to situations differently, and that what triggers stress and poor mental health will vary from person to person. Understanding this individuality will be a key part of the school's commitment to staff wellbeing.

4. Identifying warning signs

The school will recognise that individuals will respond differently to stressful situations and may experience stress from various situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. It will be important that all staff members understand the different factors that may cause stress for themselves or their colleagues. This awareness will form a crucial part of the school's approach to maintaining a healthy and supportive work environment.

The school will be mindful of the following sources of stress that can often be attributed to work:

- Overworking or undertaking work that does not match the employee's skills and abilities
- Fear of change and trying to cope with change, e.g. advancements in technology
- Insufficient workload or not being able to use skills
- Lack of job security
- Poor relationships with colleagues and a lack of involvement
- Harassment or bullying
- Crisis management
- Not having a long-term plan in place

The school will also acknowledge that pressures from home and personal life can contribute significantly to staff stress levels. Events such as bereavement, separation, financial difficulties, and family problems will be recognised as factors that can increase vulnerability to stress within the workplace. The school will understand that a combination of personal and professional stress may intensify overall stress levels, and it will be committed to supporting staff in managing both aspects.

The school will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace.

The school will uphold its legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.

All members of staff will be aware of the warning signs that can indicate that a person may be having trouble managing stress, and look out for the following indicators when identifying stress in themselves or others:

Behavioural indicators

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Isolation from friends and family

Physical indicators

- Tiredness
- Indigestion and nausea
- Headaches
- Aching muscles
- Heart palpitations

Mental indicators

- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Low self-esteem

Emotional indicators

- Anger or irritability
- Anxiety
- Hypersensitivity
- Feeling drained and lethargic

5. Actions to support staff

To positively impact wellbeing in the school, the headteacher and governing board will ensure that a whole-school approach is taken.

To help manage wellbeing, the headteacher will:

- Lead by example and encourage staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a full life outside of work.
- Make the most of team bonding; using INSET days to build positive relationships, as feeling comfortable amongst colleagues will make discussing wellbeing easier.

- Assist with work and help to manage employees' workloads.
- Reach out to staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g. bereavement, allowing sufficient time off and supporting them when they return to work.
- Arrange a meeting with all members of staff in which the current working times and practices will be discussed.
- Research and implement an employee assistance programme relevant to the needs of all staff, regularly monitoring its effectiveness and impact on wellbeing.

To effectively address workload issues and support staff wellbeing, the headteacher, working with the SLT, will take the following actions:

- Measure staff wellbeing and identify workload issues by:
  - Commissioning staff workload and wellbeing surveys on a **termly** basis and organising structured conversations about workload with staff.
  - Arranging workshops and drawing together a summary of outcomes from staff surveys and questionnaires.
  - Analysing staff diaries and identifying which members of staff are spending too much time on certain aspects of the job.
  - Conducting impact graphing exercises to visually assess where workload issues lie and identify key areas of focus.
- Review the areas of workload that have been identified using a workload impact assessment matrix and producing an evaluation of the school's current workload to highlight the actions that will be taken.
- Address the workload issues that have been identified, e.g. by undertaking a data collection audit and action plan and developing an action plan.
- Implement a Staff Workload Charter to outline the commitment and expectations between the governing board, SLT and school staff regarding the wellbeing and mental health of school staff.
- Evaluate the impact of the actions taken on a **termly** basis, measuring staff wellbeing and identifying new workload issues to address during the next term.

The headteacher will ensure that all changes proposed as a result of the actions outlined above are communicated to all members of staff.

A mental health and wellbeing governor will be appointed by the governing board who will be responsible for monitoring the wellbeing of staff.

A wellbeing committee will also be appointed by the governing board to ensure all staff are supported in their roles and that actions are implemented to mitigate stress in the workplace.

All new members of staff will be provided with a comprehensive induction and their duties regarding their own and their colleagues' wellbeing will be made clear.

The school will adopt a sickness plan which will promote a positive, caring strategy for staff who are returning to work following sick leave.

The governing board will be allocated funds for a wellbeing budget – all members of staff are welcome to make suggestions for the use of this fund. The headteacher will have the final say as to how the fund is spent.

The school will ensure wellbeing is promoted and stress is prevented through good management practices, including the following:

- Recruitment and selection procedures
- Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure the right candidates are recruited
- CPD procedures to ensure all members of staff have the necessary skills and abilities to undertake the duties required
- Promotion and reward procedures
- Performance management procedures
- Capability and absence management – return to work procedures will ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness
- Suitable adaptations for disability
- Harassment and anti-bullying resources
- Flexible working arrangements, in line with the Flexible Working Policy

- Annual surveys to better understand the areas of work that have a negative effect on staff wellbeing

6. Self-management

Staff can make changes to avoid and prevent stress and/or poor mental wellbeing, as it is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored.

Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are struggling with their mental wellbeing or feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work.

Staff are encouraged to take action to manage their own mental wellbeing. These actions will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Keeping active as a way of releasing emotional intensity and any negative feelings; exercise will also help to clear thoughts and deal with problems more calmly
- Managing their workload, and establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life
- Prioritising their workload throughout the workday, leaving the least important tasks until the end of the day and concentrating on the work that will make the biggest difference
- Avoiding unhealthy habits, such as drinking and smoking
- Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives, training and support offered by the school
- Speaking to the headteacher about any concerns they may have regarding their workload, stress, or mental wellbeing

7. Reporting procedures

The following **three** senior members of staff will be designated as wellbeing officers; this is in the event that one of the wellbeing officers is the subject of the complaint:

- **John Croft**
- **Judith Fraser**
- **Nicki Battensby**

If any member of staff wishes to raise a concern about wellbeing, one of the three wellbeing officers will be notified.

The wellbeing officer will provide the member of staff with information about the support that is available to them; this includes both within the school and outside sources. These resources include:

- **Still Human App**
- **Occupational Health Referral**
- **SAS Insurance**

The wellbeing officer will treat all cases confidentially due to information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing being highly sensitive. Real names of staff will not be used when wellbeing officers are reporting to the headteacher. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

In some cases, such as those that directly impact day-to-day activities, where medical advice is required, allegations of harassment, bullying or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or where the employee presents an immediate danger to themselves, or others confidentiality will not be guaranteed. If this is the case, staff will be made aware of the situation. The wellbeing officer in receipt of the complaint will investigate and report this to the headteacher.

The headteacher will decide whether any further action will be taken.

8. Response actions

Where problems with wellbeing arise, the necessary support and appropriate actions will be considered. This may include support from HR advisers and/or external services, e.g. occupational health.

The school will continue to support staff when external services are involved.

Support will be provided to staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances outside of the workplace. The school will direct staff to support, both internal and external, and consider a plan of work and duties that can be managed differently during challenging periods.

Support for staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances within the school will be provided following the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.

9. Absence due to stress or mental ill health

If an employee is absent due to work-related stress or mental ill health, the school will follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in the school's Staff Attendance and Absence Policy.

In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in the school's Staff Attendance and Absence Policy and Capability Procedure.

10. Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

Employees who report that they are suffering from work-related stress or mental ill health, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

If an employee feels as though they have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, they should seek support from the headteacher. Employee's may also raise a complaint in accordance with the school's Grievance Procedure.

If, after investigation, an employee is found to have provided false information in bad faith, the employee will be subject to action under the school's Disciplinary Procedure.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the governing board and the headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **October 2027**

Staff workload charter

Our aims

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest is committed to supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of all staff members. In alignment with the DfE's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, we recognise that promoting staff wellbeing is critical to delivering high-quality education and fostering a positive working environment.

We pledge to:

- Prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of all staff.
- Ensure fair and manageable workloads that support a healthy work-life balance.
- Create an environment where staff feel valued, supported, and equipped to thrive.

Our Wellbeing Principles

We are committed to the following:

1. **Prioritising Mental Health:** Recognising the importance of mental health and providing appropriate support and understanding for all staff.
2. **Fair Workloads:** Monitoring and adjusting workloads to prevent overburdening and promote wellbeing.
3. **Work-Life Balance:** Encouraging practices that support a sustainable work-life balance for all staff.
4. **Supportive Work Environment:** Maintaining a culture of openness, collaboration, and mutual respect to foster positive staff experiences.
5. **Professional Development:** Providing opportunities for growth, training, and career development to all staff members.
6. **Staff Voice:** Listening to staff feedback and acting on concerns related to workload and wellbeing.

Wellbeing Initiatives

To uphold these principles, we will implement the following:

- **Workload Reviews:** Regular assessments of staff workload to identify areas for improvement and address potential stressors.
- **Clear Communication Protocols:** Establishing expectations around response times and communication methods to support effective and respectful interactions.
- **Access to Support Services:** Ensuring staff have access to confidential wellbeing services, such as occupational health and counselling, when needed.
- **Fair Behaviour Management Policies:** Implementing clear and consistent policies for managing behaviour effectively, supported by the SLT.
- **Reduced Administrative Burdens:** Streamlining data collection and management practices to minimise unnecessary workloads and improve efficiency.

Leadership Commitments

The Headteacher and SLT will:

- Conduct regular staff wellbeing surveys to identify concerns and areas for improvement.
- Actively seek feedback from staff on workload pressures and implement targeted solutions.
- Simplify processes and reduce unnecessary administrative tasks where possible.
- Foster a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, and work-life balance.
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of marking, planning, and data collection, focusing on impactful and meaningful practices.

Governing Board Responsibilities

The Governing Board will:

- Monitor the implementation of wellbeing policies and support workload reduction initiatives to maintain a positive working environment.
- Receive regular updates on staff wellbeing, workload management, and absence patterns to support strategic planning.
- Promote a culture that values staff wellbeing as integral to the success of the school.

- Establish governance procedures that champion mental health and wellbeing across the school community.