



Women at Work Policy Version 1.1

<p>Important: This document can only be considered valid when viewed on The Education Alliance website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the document online.</p> <p>Name and Title of Author:</p>	
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<p>Implementation Date:</p>	<p>Trust Board</p>
<p>Review Date:</p>	<p>December 2021</p>
<p>Target Audience:</p>	<p>December 2023</p>
<p>Related Documents:</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Policy Special Leave Policy Menopause Policy Domestic Abuse Policy Family Leave Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Prevent Policy</p>

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POLICY STATEMENT

We are here to make great schools and happier, stronger communities so that people have better lives. We do this by:

- Always doing what is right
- Trusting in each other and standing shoulder to shoulder
- Doing what we know makes the difference

Doing what is right means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others and being honest, open and transparent.

We want our staff to trust that they will be treated fairly, with dignity, respect, care and support at all times. We want to ensure that staff view their workplace as a safe environment that does not aggravate issues. We recognise that the majority of our staff are female, and we acknowledge that there are issues that affect women more significantly than men. The trust is committed to ensuring that we all feel confident in discussing women's issues openly, without embarrassment, and are able to reach out and to respond to each other with confidence, in a non-judgemental, supportive way. We acknowledge that women often face additional challenges both in and outside the workplace and we aim to support staff in achieving a healthy work-life balance.

We recognise that the definition of 'woman' can vary and this policy respects this and the policy applies to anyone affected by the issues detailed in it.

1. PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to encourage staff to talk openly about the challenges they face which can affect them at work, and to encourage managers and staff to work together to seek solutions to challenges and difficulties staff might experience or face. We also aim to ensure that conditions in the workplace do not aggravate women's issues, and that appropriate adjustments and support are easily accessible.

We aim to achieve a fair and consistent approach, whilst also recognising that each individual experience is unique to that individual. We intend to support the recruitment and retention of women, assisting them to achieve a good work-life balance, assisting them to maintain good levels of health and wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem.

We aim to raise awareness, remove the stigma associated with some issues, and provide useful signposting information to support not only women experiencing challenges, but also colleagues who may be affected by women's issues.

We aim to equip our staff to respond appropriately when a colleague reaches out, recognising that we are not experts, but we can listen, support and jointly seek solutions which enable women to remain at work.

This policy complements and works alongside other policies in the Trust. We are mindful that additional training may be required for managers and staff to ensure this policy is implemented successfully, and the trust is committed to ensuring appropriate funds are available to effectively deliver action this policy.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Trust Board** and the **CEO** are responsible for ensuring this policy is applied fairly and consistently across the Trust.

The **Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers** are responsible for monitoring the application of this policy within their respective schools.

The **HR Department** is responsible for overseeing the introduction, implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy and will report to the CEO, the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies as required. The HR Department will also provide advice, guidance and support in the implementation of this policy, acting as a point of contact for staff, managers, Headteachers and the CEO, encouraging staff who are members of a trade union to seek additional support, advice and guidance from their trade union. The HR Department will ensure that this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

Managers must ensure they respond sensitively, supportively, discreetly and professionally to staff experiencing challenges. Managers are encouraged to listen to their staff, give them time and space to share any issues they face, and in listening in a non-judgemental, caring way, we are more likely to develop our understanding of the issue and its impact for the member of staff. Managers are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from the HR Department as and when required, and to look to jointly solve problems, considering potential workplace adjustments as appropriate. Managers should listen and respond sympathetically. They should familiarise themselves with this policy, respond to staff sympathetically, and provide a safe place for staff to speak openly and honestly. They should encourage staff who are members of a trade union to seek additional support, advice and guidance from their trade union

Employees are responsible for looking after their health and being open and honest, contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment, and being willing to help and support colleagues. The ethical leadership framework supports this, and by encouraging staff experiencing challenges to talk to others and seek support, we hope we are able to alleviate symptoms, anxiety and worry. Employees who are members of a trade union are encouraged to seek additional support, advice and guidance from their trade union.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The trust is committed to:

- Promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures and guidelines, adhering to the Equality Act 2010.
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its student population and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged.
- Some conditions affecting women may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.
- Equality impact assessments will include a gender impact assessment, ensuring consideration is given to gender equality.

4. ISSUES WHICH AFFECT WOMEN MORE SIGNIFICANTLY THAN MEN

We are mindful that the list of issues detailed below is not an exhaustive list and should be viewed as a guide. They tend to fall within three categories: violence against women and girls, health and wellbeing and legal rights at work.

Violence, abuse and harassment against women and girls

- Domestic abuse (see the Trust's Domestic Abuse Policy)
- Sexual harassment at work (see the Trust's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Grievance Procedure and the Expectations and Code of Conduct)
- Forced marriage (see the school's Prevent Policy)
- Female genital mutilation (see the Trust's Domestic Abuse Policy)

Health and wellbeing

- Female reproductive issues, including periods, contraception, miscarriage, abortion, fertility, surrogacy and the menopause (see the Trust's Menopause Policy, the Health and Wellbeing Policy and the Family Leave Policy)
- Maternity leave and breast feeding (see the Trust's Family Leave Policy)
- Musculoskeletal issues (see the Trust's Health and Wellbeing Policy)
- Achieving a healthy work-life balance (for example, where childcare and household responsibilities affect an individual's ability to take care of themselves, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion)

Legal rights at work

- Flexible working (see the Trust's Flexible Working Policy)
- Gender equality (see the Trust's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy)

The trust has a range of resources that may be helpful for a range of women's issues, and they can be accessed via HR. Those resources can be helpful for employees experiencing issues, and for colleagues and managers wishing to increase their knowledge and understanding to enable them to support colleagues more effectively.

5. EDUCATION AND RESPONSE

We aim to develop a culture across our trust where staff feel comfortable and able to reach out and discuss challenges they face; where sensitive issues can be discussed openly, without fear of embarrassment, in an environment where employees can trust that they won't be judged and that they will be supported with care, discretion and sensitivity. It is crucial that managers and colleagues feel equipped to respond appropriately, and that staff have a choice (as some staff may not wish to have discussions and we are respectful of those choices). Whilst meetings are informal, managers may prefer for a HR colleague to attend the meeting to provide additional guidance, support and signposting as appropriate, and staff may prefer to have a trade union representative with them, as we appreciate that personal conversations can be difficult.

In raising awareness, we hope managers will feel more confident in discussing personal issues that staff may raise. We recognise that managers and leaders are solution focussed, and we would encourage managers to make space for employees to talk to them. A coaching style can be useful as it enables staff to remain in control of their personal circumstances, it reduces the risk of managers making assumptions about situations based on their knowledge and expertise, and instead provides an opportunity for employees to talk about how the situation affects them and to jointly consider what support employees need. Each case is different as each individual will experience similar issues in a different way. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a guide and a template for managers, to support them in having good conversations.

We encourage employees who are members of a trade union to contact their trade union for additional support, advice and guidance.

The trust will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of the impact of a variety of women's issues. Where employees feel uncomfortable talking about their issues with their line manager, they can contact the HR Department, who will be happy to support them sensitively and discreetly.

Whilst we appreciate that managers may wish to support staff in a solution-focused way, we also understand that this might not meet the needs of an individual, who may wish to simply share information and raise awareness of their circumstances. Unless there is a significant risk to the individual or others, managers are encouraged to ensure staff feel in control of the situation and the manager's response may simply be to listen, and to check with the employee if there is anything they wish their manager to do. They may help staff consider options, signpost and share information. In responding to staff, risk assessments and wellness action plans can assist in enabling the individual's specific needs and issues to be fully considered and potential options explored. They may include consideration of potential reasonable adjustments, which may be temporary or permanent, depending on the circumstances. The trust aims to support requests for flexible working where operationally feasible, and the Flexible Working Policy details the process in which staff can request changes to the working arrangements. The trust has a variety of roles and risk assessments will be individual and specific to the person and their circumstances.

Where actions and adjustments are agreed, managers should make a note of them (e.g. via a risk assessment) and the manager and employee should jointly monitor the achievement of actions and adjustments and their impact on the issues initially highlighted. Risk assessments and wellness action plans should be regularly monitored and reviewed by the employee and their manager, and where circumstances change, or adjustments do not have the desired impact, further discussion can take place to enable other options to be considered.

The trust recognises that women's issues affect men too, and men are encouraged to seek support from their managers, colleagues, HR and Trade Unions and other supportive mechanisms, such as the Employee Assistance Programme. They may find it helpful to talk and to seek information and advice that develops their knowledge and understanding, and helps them feel more equipped and able to support others and take care of themselves.

While in most circumstances, the issue will remain strictly confidential, there may be times where issues require escalation, for example where an employee may be at significant risk. Managers and colleagues are encouraged to make staff aware of this and they should contact the HR Department if they are unsure and require further guidance and support.

6. STAFF AFFECTED BY WOMEN'S ISSUES

The trust recognises that women's issues often affect those around them, such as family members, friends, managers and colleagues. Employees affected by women's issues are encouraged to seek support from their managers, colleagues, HR and Trade Unions and other supportive mechanisms, such as the Employee Assistance Programme. They may find it helpful to talk and to seek information and advice that develops their knowledge and understanding, and this may help them feel more equipped and able to support others and take care of themselves.

7. SUPPORTIVE SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of specialist organisations who can offer support to individuals, and their details are included in a variety of trust policies (for example menopause and domestic abuse). Support can be accessed in work via managers, Be Well Champions, the Be Well Programme, the Employee

Assistance Programme, Occupational Health Services, HR colleagues and Trade Unions. A number of staff have accessed additional training, such as Adult Mental Health First Aid Training, to develop their knowledge and understanding and increase their ability to confidently support colleagues with mental health issues, in the workplace.

8. MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

The HR Department, Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers will monitor effectiveness and compliance of this policy and procedure in schools, and the wider impact of this policy will be reviewed through the LGA MAT HR Forum in the first year of its implementation.

9. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed within the first year of implementation via the trust's JCNC.

Guide for Women at Work Discussions

Introduction

We acknowledge that the majority of our workforce are women and women can experience a variety of challenges during their working lives, which can significantly affect their ability to maintain a healthy working life. We would like to encourage staff to reach out to talk, seek support and share their experiences, and we wish to equip managers and staff to enable them to respond appropriately, with care, sensitivity, empathy, understanding and kindness. It can be helpful to have a positive mind-set, and to use a coaching style, encouraging staff to talk frankly in a non-judgemental way. Employees may wish to explore options and a way forward, or they may wish to simply talk, be heard and raise your awareness of their circumstances and what they might need from you.

This guide aims to support managers and staff to feel confident and prepared to have a good conversation with staff about the issues they may be experiencing. Managers and colleagues may need to seek their own support from their line manager or HR, to develop their understanding, escalate any significant concerns or seek additional guidance. We recognise that there may be times where there isn't a solution, and it is advisable, where it is possible and appropriate, for managers and colleagues to assist individuals in considering their options, rather than taking control and attempting to resolve personal issues for others. Where staff ask questions that their colleagues or managers can't answer, it's OK. Managers and colleagues shouldn't feel that they need to be experts in all women's issues. They should trust that by giving a colleague time and space to talk, listening and helping them to consider the risks, challenges and options, assisting them to find a way forward, is helping them. Managers and colleagues may wish to offer colleagues another discussion to enable them to support colleagues in monitoring actions and checking that interventions are having the desired effect. You can jointly review risks, improvements, circumstances, needs and options.

Guide

Preparing for the meeting

Ensure you have a confidential space for the discussion (book a room if you don't and be mindful of being discreet). Also check that you have enough time for the discussion (if the employee has reached out, they can quickly close up if they feel rushed). Consider where you and the employee need to be after the meeting, as there are things you may need to do (e.g. seek advice) and they may feel upset afterwards, and may need time away from the classroom following the discussion. Whilst the meeting is informal, consider whether you would prefer to have a HR colleague at the meeting, and also check with the employee if they would prefer to have a trade union or work colleague with them, as they may find it easier to talk with a colleague beside them. Ensure the room has tissues and water available.

Opening

You may start with an opening question, such as 'how are things with you?', 'what do you want to talk about today', 'where do you want to start', 'how are you, are you OK?', 'what would you like to get out of today's chat'.

You might then funnel down a bit:

- 'is there anything we can look to change at work that would help you'
- 'are there any specific challenges at work that you would like to address/change'
- 'what kind of routine do you have in place at the moment?' 'when is this working well and what doesn't work well'
- 'what do you do to look after yourself?'
- 'is anything causing stress/frustration/upset for you?'
- 'anything I can help you with'
- 'if you could change one thing, what would that be'

- 'what are the options here' 'let's explore each one' 'how might that help' 'how long might it take' 'where would you start'
- 'following today's chat, what are your next steps' 'is there anything I can do to assist'

Risks

- 'do you have any issues or concerns that you would feel comfortable talking to me about?'
- 'are things OK for the moment?' 'and the future'
- 'is there anything you think we may have missed?'
- 'let's think about your working day. Is there anything more we need to consider to enable you to continue to perform well at work and to keep you safe'

Fears and Anxieties

- We may experience challenges and worries during our lives. Staff may have concerns and challenges outside of work which affect them at work (e.g. health, finances, caring responsibilities). Please remind staff of our support mechanisms, such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Salary Finance, HR and Trade Union support. We can signpost, listen, care and try to help colleagues consider changes that may enable them to improve their health and wellbeing. We all have different levels of tolerance, and by having a positive, solution-focused approach, this may allay fears and build trust and confidence.

Closure

- Check your understanding (e.g. correct me if I am wrong, but I think what you are saying is...)
- Have we covered everything?
- Is there anything you want to add?
- I think we have agreed that (summarise key actions, timeframes, who is doing what)
- Thank you so much for your time today. Would it be helpful to catch up again to review things? When would work best to do this?
- Reminder of support available and to contact if anything changes in their situation/circumstances/worries
- If the issues requires further escalation, let them know and reassure them that the trust will do all it can to support them in a sensitive, discreet way.

Women at Work Discussion

Employee name:

Role:

- Own health and wellbeing
- Health and wellbeing of family member/friend/colleague
- Violence/abuse/harassment concerns for self or others
- Procedural queries (e.g. Menopause, Family Leave, Special Leave, Domestic Abuse Policy, Health and Wellbeing, Equality and Diversity)
- Other concerns

Key issues/concerns:

Key aspects of the discussion and agreed outcomes:

Are any reasonable adjustments required at work to support the employee:

If yes, please detail the type of adjustments	
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required and, where possible, a timeframe and operational feasibility	
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Is there anything more the member of staff needs to support them at this time? (e.g. EAP/OH support)

--

Agree how and when this form will be reviewed.

--

Manager/Leader

Employee

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date:

Appendix 3

Wellness Action Plan

A wellness action plan is a proactive approach we can all use to improve and maintain our mental health wellbeing at work. It helps us to be aware of what we need to do to stay well at work and also what our managers can do to support us. It also helps us develop an insight into our working style, stress triggers and responses and enables us to share this with our manager and improve our own personal resilience.

You only need to share information that you are comfortable with and that relates to your role and this form will be held confidentially and be regularly reviewed by you and your manager. Information in this plan is confidential and will not be shared with others without your consent; however we have a duty of care to keep staff safe at work and if we become aware that you or someone else may be at serious risk of harm we may have to share information on a need to know, discreet basis.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

(For instance taking a lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work, light and space in the office, opportunities to get to know colleagues)

2. What can your manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy?

(For instance regular feedback and catch-ups, team meetings, explaining wider organisational developments)

3. Are there any situations at work that may trigger poor mental health for you?

(For instance conflict at work, organisational change, incompatible priorities or conflicting deadlines, a chaotic working environment, things not going to plan)

4. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

(For instance you may find it difficult to make decisions, prioritise work or find it hard to concentrate?)

5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are experiencing poor mental health?

(For instance changes in working pattern, irritability, over-reacting or moody, withdrawing from colleagues?)

6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact?

(For instance extra catch up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising work?)

7. Are there any elements of your working style that it is worth your manager being aware of?

(For instance preference for face to face contact, having a written plan of work, access to a mentor, clear deadlines?)

8. If we notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor mental health - what should we do?

(For instance talk to you discreetly about it, e-mail you or contact someone you have nominated?)

9. What steps can you take if you start to you experience poor mental health at work? Is there anything we can do to facilitate them?

(For instance time out to discuss with your manager or HR?)

10. Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss?

Helpful Definitions

Mental Health

We all have mental health just as we have physical health and how we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing, to difficult feelings, to more serious problems.

Mental Wellbeing

The ability to cope with the everyday stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential.

Poor Mental Health

A state of low mental wellbeing leaving you unable to cope with day to day life and situations.

Mental Health Problems

We may all have times when we struggle with mental health for a short period or due to a particular situation but when these difficulties continue and impact on our day to day lives for a long time this is a mental health problem.

Work-related Stress

The HSE definition - an adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other demands placed on them at work. Stress is not a medical condition but if it is prolonged and severe it may lead to depression, anxiety or other mental health problems.

Employee signature:.....

Date:.....

Line manager signature:.....

Date:.....

Date to be reviewed:.....

Workplace Risk Assessment Template

School		Decide who may be harmed (insert ✓):				
		Staff (Permanent)				
Name & Department		Staff (Temporary)				
Conditions Notified:		Supporting Documentation:				
Hazards Identified	Initial Risk Rating	Existing Control Measures (select all that are in place)	✓	Actions / Comments	Residual Risk Rating H/M/L	

Risk Rating Guidance: H= High M= Medium L= Low TBA = To Be Assessed - Assessment of the likelihood and or impact of injury and or damage. Initial assessment has been undertaken, complete the residual assessment based on your control measures/findings/additional actions etc.					
Other Hazards Identified		Additional Control Measures to be Put in Place			
Any other foreseeable hazards that are associated with the activities being carried out to be listed here.		<i>Where you have identified other hazards record the additional control measures you are going to put in place to mitigate these below:</i>			
Other Relevant Notes or Comments					
Date of Assessment:		Carried out by:		Signature:	
Date of next review:		Carried out by:		Date Review Completed:	
Review Notes:					
Also refer to these other relevant risk assessments or safety advice documents:					
Action by other Department(s)	Department				
	Department				