

Violet Way Academy

Our Whole School Mental Health and Wellbeing Approach

Introduction

At Violet Way Academy, we are proud of their family ethos and the importance of knowing our children and families well. We encourage parents to participate in our school community, for example every class has a library morning once every three weeks throughout the whole academic year.

We believe that good mental health is essential in order for children to access learning. We ensure that we promote mental health and wellbeing for all. We encourage children to talk about their thoughts, feelings and strategies to manage uncomfortable feelings through our PSHE scheme and more personalised approaches, such as ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) and HOPE (Helping Our Pupils Emotions). We have invested in ensuring we have trained staff in school in order to offer our pupils support with their feelings and emotions.

In order to outline our approach to mental health and wellbeing, we have utilized the Anna Freud '5-steps Framework', including the action planning tool. The Framework was written in accordance with the Government's '8 Principles of a Whole School or College Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing', which are informed by evidence and practitioner feedback (1). The '5-steps Framework includes: Leading Change; Working Together; Understanding Need; Promoting Wellbeing; and Supporting staff.



Image 1: '8 Principles of a Whole School or College Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing'

We have outlined our approach to mental health and wellbeing at Violet Way Academy within the '5-steps Framework' below:

1. Leading Change

At Violet Way Academy, we believe in the collective and individual responsibility to promote and support mental health and wellbeing for all. Our Academy Trust (Fierte) have a wellbeing strategy and engage with academies through a wellbeing forum for SMHL across the Trust. The senior leadership team (SLT), along with our Wellbeing Champion and PSHE lead, champion efforts to promote mental health and wellbeing to ensure our approach is embedded. Staff with responsibility for supporting mental health and wellbeing at Violet Way are as follows:

Mrs Kee (Headteacher - Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL))with responsibility for the strategic leadership of the implementation of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing for all. Mrs Kee has attended SMHL training, delivered by Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, and regularly attends the Staffordshire Mental Health Leads in Education Network meetings.

Mrs Dawson – Inclusion Manager and Wellbeing Champion for pupils and parents within our school community.

Miss Wagg – PSHE Lead, supporting staff with the implementation of our PSHE curriculum and promoting positive wellbeing for all pupils.

We believe that our whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing benefits everyone, not just for mental health and wellbeing, but more broadly in terms of improved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier, more confident and resilient children and staff. We are committed to addressing mental health and wellbeing and this is reflected in our school improvement planning. We have created a 'waves' approach, which defines our wellbeing strategy for pupils and staff – they are illustrated below:

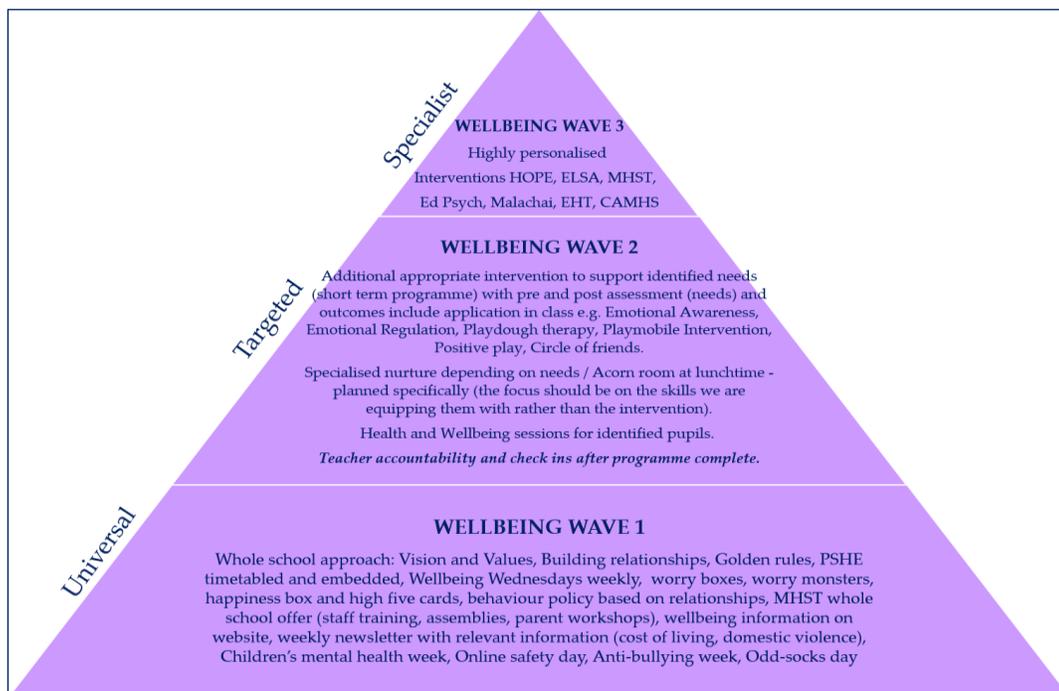


Image2: Waves Approach to Wellbeing for Pupils

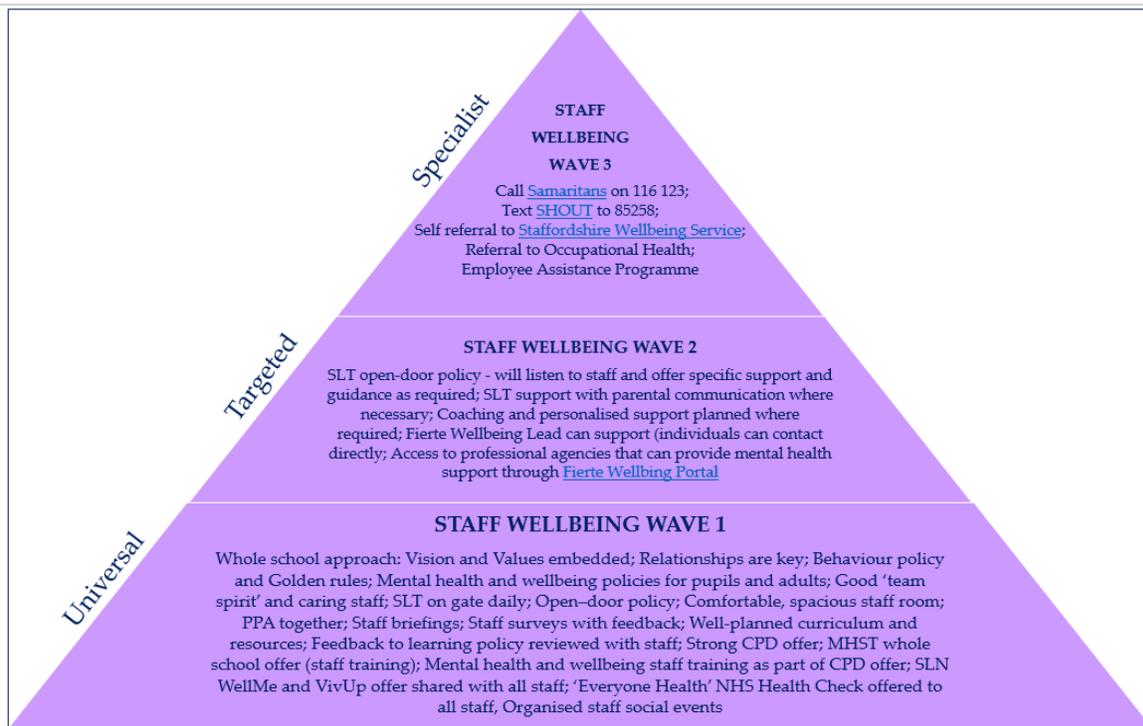


Image3: Waves Approach to Wellbeing for Staff

We ensure that we signpost information about mental health and wellbeing for staff, pupils, parents and governors in a number of ways. There is a Trust policy for Mental Health and Wellbeing for Pupils and a Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing for Adults policy. In writing the policies, staff, parents, pupils and Governors were consulted. The policies are reviewed annually. The SLT will also consider how mental health and wellbeing can be considered within our other policies as they are reviewed.

There is a SMHL forum as part of Fiere Trust that meet regularly. There is an online wellbeing portal on the [Fierte Wellbeing Portal](#) for staff signposting them to different wellbeing and mental health support services within the Trust and beyond. There is a display in the staffroom a leaflet for staff about staff wellbeing. We have a leaflet for children about safeguarding and wellbeing, signposting them to support in school and beyond. Each class has an area to promote wellbeing and where children can express any worries they may have (with the class worry monster, books, leaflets and posters). There are posters for children displayed in each class and around school. There is [information on our website about mental health and wellbeing](#) for parents to access. Each year we engage with [Children’s Mental Health week](#) and our [Jigsaw PSHE](#) lessons include learning about mental health and wellbeing across different units of learning.

2. Working Together

Whole school community

At Violet Way Academy, we value positive relationships and recognise that positive, warm relationships are critical in promoting wellbeing. We know how important it is for all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging, trust and respect. We actively encourage

all staff to take time to build good relationships with each other and our pupils and we support and promote positive interactions and communication between peers. Members of the SLT, the office manager, the inclusion manager, our caretaker and a teaching assistant are on the gates daily to greet and welcome our pupils and families. Teaching staff build good relationships and communication with pupils and parents. The SLT have an open-door policy for pupils, staff and parents. We promote positive relationships and a feeling of community through our everyday interactions and a range of planned events in school.

Children

Our school vision and values are aimed at cultivating an inclusive and connected school, encouraging open communication. Our children are taught to embrace and value difference through our school values (We care, We are brave, We celebrate individuality, We leave no one behind), our interactions, assemblies and curriculum. Through our school values we promote respect, inclusivity and value diversity. For example, our assemblies are carefully planned and link to our values, they include the following themes or ideas:

- Helpfulness, thankfulness, caring for each other
- People who showed courage working for peace (Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Malala Yousafzai)
- Stories about celebrating difference
- Autism Awareness
- World Down Syndrome Day
- 'Ohana' (Family – no one is forgotten or left out)
- Respect in sport

Our Jigsaw PSHE curriculum includes a 'Celebrating difference' unit of learning, children in Reception learn about different countries and their traditions, children in Year 1 learn about two different polar explorers (Matthew Henson and Felicity Aston) and children in Year 2 learn about other significant people in history - Neil Armstrong and Mae Jemison.

We participate in anti-bullying week, including a whole school assembly, an 'Odd Socks' day to celebrate individuality and workshops and activities across the school to teach our children to address diversity in a positive way. We engage with Children's Mental Health week and children wear odd socks on World down syndrome day to raise awareness and further promote our 'We celebrate individuality' value.

At lunchtimes, staff support children in our 'Acorn Room' to develop social and communication skills, including strategies to manage conflict. They help children to develop positive relationships with others, provide co-regulation support and support the development of self-regulation strategies. Our lunchtime supervisors are receiving training and support to help develop active lunchtimes, cooperative learning and positive social interactions. We also utilise support from the local community, engaging with the 'Star Foundation' charity to provide a martial arts and dance lunchtime club.

We have a HOPE (Helping Our Pupils' Emotions) trained mentor and a trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) member of staff. Both members of staff receive support and supervision from trained professionals. They support children in school with emotional needs identified by staff or parents. In addition, we work closely with the Schools' Mental

Health Team, who offer support for parents and children as required and deliver assemblies to pupils, training to staff and workshops to parents.

In line with our safeguarding policy, and linking to wellbeing, we talk to the children about feelings of safety on and around school by talking to children about where they feel safe and unsafe. We had a well promoted Children's Mental Health Week and have weekly Wellbeing Wednesdays for all pupils.

Staff

The SLT value the importance of building a culture of trust where all staff feel valued, can be open about their health and wellbeing and know how to access support if they need it.

Our supportive and nurturing team of staff recognise and respond to individual needs. We understand that behaviour is a form of communication and take time to listen and respond to our pupils. Staff surveys demonstrate that 100% are proud to be a member of staff at Violet Way and all agree that leaders support staff well in managing behaviour. We work closely with all staff to ensure they feel fully supported within their roles. Support is provided for pupils who are demonstrating behaviours as a result of their SEND needs and we also provide support for staff and families, signposting to other agencies where required.

The Trust, as part of the wellbeing strategy, has carried out a whole trust confidential wellbeing survey for all staff and have used the findings from this to formulate the Trust strategic plan for mental health and wellbeing.

There is a wellbeing tab on the [Fierte Wellbeing Portal](#) which provides links to sites and is available for staff to seek support for their mental health and wellbeing. The Trust has signed up to 'welbee' and all staff across the Trust are able to access the Employee Assistance Programme through Education Support for support, including for wellbeing, financial and legal advice.

Parents and families

Building good relationships with our parents and families is very important to us. We have an open-door policy for staff, pupils and parents/carers. SLT are on the gate before and after school daily. Staff aim to build good relationships and communication with all parents.

We provide parents with information about mental health and wellbeing in our newsletters and on our [website](#). All of our awareness days or weeks are promoted with parents through our weekly newsletter, our enrichment overview and information about our school values and mental health and wellbeing are included on our website.

We have a HOPE (Helping Our Pupils' Emotions) trained staff in school who can support pupils and signpost support for parents and families as required. We also include information in our newsletters about HOPE Parent and Carer support online sessions. In addition, we can support families with referrals to Malachai (a therapeutic family support organisation) for specific support at home.

Each year we engage with [Children's Mental Health week](#) and our Jigsaw PSHE lessons include learning about mental health and wellbeing across different units of learning. We provide regular SEND workshops to support our parents who have children with additional needs. There is a Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for Children available to view on the website. Our Inclusion Manager, Mrs Dawson, works closely with families who are struggling to provide additional support, signposting and referrals to other agencies as appropriate.

3. Understanding Need

As part of our safeguarding strategy, all staff share any concerns they have about pupils so these can be addressed. Staff can share concerns at termly Pupil Progress meetings or at any time with a member of SLT. Parents, or children themselves, may also share a concern about a child's mental health or wellbeing.

We identify children who might be more vulnerable (we consider risk factors, such as parent wellbeing, exposure to domestic abuse, LAC, CIN/CP, behaviour). We have a safeguarding meeting each week, which includes discussing pupils with mental health or wellbeing concerns. Risk factors are helpful to help us better understand which children or young people that may require additional support or monitoring. We have a 'waves' approach for supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing (see Image 2), which includes universal support, targeted support and specialist support, which may include recommending a GP referral.

We currently use the Boxhall Profile or Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for pupils and access support from Behaviour Support and Learning Support (Entrust). We have started completing some simple pre and post assessments of interventions for wellbeing, completed by the class teacher. We are currently working with other agencies with a focus on measures for interventions.

4. Promoting Wellbeing

Children

At Violet Way Academy, we believe that involving children in decisions can help them to feel more connected to our school and to have some control over their lives. Our curriculum, including our values, PSHE and enrichment activities, helps children to develop their belief in their own capabilities, learn how to make healthy choices and develop their ability to work with others and independently. Feedback from pupils shows that pupils value our Marvellous Me thumbs up points and prizes, Reading Rockets, Acorn Room, Merit Awards, Star Learner badges, Headteacher Awards and photographs in the weekly newsletter.

At Violet Way Academy, our 'Well-being Wednesdays' are planned to support children to develop holistic understanding of their own health, including their physical, emotional and mental well-being. We utilise the 'Jigsaw' PSHE programme, which is a whole-school 'mindfulness' programme with carefully sequenced, weekly lessons. Jigsaw PSHE connects the pieces of Personal, Social, Health and Well-Being Education, teaching our children and emotional literacy, social- and lifelong skills, relationship and health education and resilience in

an age-appropriate manner. There is a half termly whole school assembly to introduce each new Jigsaw piece (unit of learning), which also includes 'calm me' time. The units of learning (Jigsaw pieces) are sequenced in a way that supports specific focuses, such as 'Changing Me', where there is a focus on transition and coping with change. All children receive a timetabled slot every week for personal, social, emotional and health education, with a big focus on emotional literacy and mental health. 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' also include an 'active blast' exercise session in class and music lessons with Rock it! We have introduced myHappymind, which is grounded in positive psychology and neuroscience, as part of our Wellbeing Wednesdays to teach children preventative habits that support positive mental health, resilience and self esteem.

Our PSHE curriculum helps children to learn to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, how to seek support. This is supplemented by wellbeing areas in classrooms and our emotions tree, where children can let us know about how they are feeling, including any worries.

Through our school council, children have opportunities to influence decisions and express their views. We ensure children have opportunities to vote in school e.g. for the book they would like the teacher to read, to vote for school council members.

The SMHL has created a leaflet for children about safeguarding and wellbeing, signposting them to support in school and beyond. The posters are displayed around school and the leaflets are in every classroom. We participate in [Children's Mental Health Week](#).

Staff

The Jigsaw PSHE scheme is carefully planned and sequenced, including lesson plans, scripts, resources and support for teachers, helping teachers confidently teach a well-being curriculum. Staff have welcomed the scheme and our PSHE subject lead, Miss Wagg, is available to support and provide additional help and advice where needed.

Staff wellbeing is an important part of our whole-school approach and is explained in more detail in section 5.

Parents and families

We are proud that our school has a family-feel and we work hard to build good relationships and communication with parents. We greet children and families every day on the school gate and are available to listen to any questions, ideas or comments parents have.

We seek views of parents through surveys and provide feedback to how we have responded to the findings and comments. For example, when seeking views about cost of living and curriculum enrichment, we created a curriculum enrichment overview and reduced the number of dress up days in response to comments about parents wanting to plan ahead (booking time off work and make / buy costumes). It is important to us that our parents and families have a voice and are listened to.

We provide parents with information about our curriculum on our school website and newsletter. There is a page dedicated to PSHE within the curriculum area of the website and information about mental health and wellbeing in the 'supporting your child' section. Parents are invited into school to find out more about the PSHE 'Changing Me' unit. There are also a wealth of opportunities where parents can come into school for curriculum-focused events (Reading sessions, Parent Forest School Sessions), annual events (Harvest Festival, Mother's Day, Father's Day, May Day, Easter Bingo, Y2 graduation), Inclusion Sessions (with external agencies such as Autism Outreach and the Mental Health Support Team) and regular library sessions throughout the academic year.

Our weekly newsletter regularly includes information to support and promote children's wellbeing and to support parent wellbeing too. Our SENDCO and Inclusion Manager offer wellbeing support for parents, signposting to other agencies, such as Malachai, where appropriate.

5. Supporting Staff

At Violet Way we are committed to staff health and wellbeing. We utilise a 'waves' approach (see Image 3) to support positive mental health and wellbeing for staff. We ensure staff have opportunities to reflect on and take actions to enhance their own wellbeing. For example, we have provided INSET training delivered by the Mental Health Support Team and staff meetings delivered by our Trust wellbeing lead or SMHL. Staff briefings and meetings ensure staff are kept informed and have an opportunities to contribute their ideas and staff surveys enable staff to anonymously respond to questions about mental health and wellbeing. Feedback from staff surveys is always provided to staff as whole school wellbeing actions. Where there are individual concerns raised (that are not anonymous) these are addressed privately with the individual. Email and Teams communication is also used to share information about staff wellbeing and what staff can do to look after their own health and wellbeing. The [Fierte Wellbeing Portal](#), is available for all staff and is regularly highlighted to staff. It can be accessed from the main Fierte page when they login. The Wellbeing portal includes website link, mobile apps and further support (such as how to make a wellbeing request).

At Violet Way, staff are supportive of each other and offer peer support, helping each other, listening and talking to each other and offering support or signposting where support can be sought. The Trust provides an Employee Assistance Programme through Education Support for all staff to seek advice about anything that is worrying them, including wellbeing and finances.

At Violet Way, we believe good communication is vitally important in ensuring our staff are well informed and have a voice. In staff meetings, INSET days and briefings, staff are invited to ask questions and contribute to whole school action planning. For example, teachers and teaching assistants are asked to reflect on our progress towards Academy Improvement Plan (AIP) targets and identify next steps. This information feeds into our next AIP.

The Senior Mental Health Lead has created, with contributions from staff, a staff wellbeing leaflet, which provides information about what wellbeing is, strategies to support self-care,

information about how school supports staff mental health and wellbeing and where they can get help if needed (see Appendix).

Difficulties or challenges with mental health and wellbeing can be addressed if support is sought. All staff have a responsibility to their own mental health and wellbeing and this includes when they are struggling. Support is available in many forms and staff can seek support by talking to Michelle Kee (Headteacher and SMHL), the Deputy Headteacher or through the Employee Assistance Programme (leaflets and business cards are available in the staff room).

References

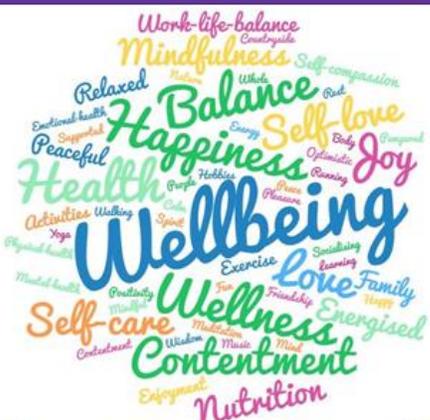
1. Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing A whole school or college approach
2. Cemalcilar Z. 'Schools as socialisation contexts: Understanding the impact of school climate factors on students' sense of school belonging' Applied psychology 2010: volume 59, issue 2, pages 243-272
3. [3rdanna-freud-booklet-staff-wellbeing-final.pdf \(annafreud.org\)](#)
4. [school-staff-wellbeing-report-final-corrected-512.pdf \(annafreud.org\)](#)

Appendix – Staff Wellbeing Leaflet



The Violet Way Academy

Staff Well-Being





We care



We are brave



We celebrate individuality



We leave no one behind



VIOLET WAY ACADEMY

At VWA, we all have a vested interest in ensuring the best possible outcomes for all of our pupils – they are why we are all here. Our shared vision of 'Inspiring All to Excellence' and enabling our pupils to 'Reach for the Stars' is what we all want for every VWA pupil.

We care about our pupils and intend that all pupils, regardless of background, develop the knowledge and character needed to thrive in life. To achieve this, we are fortunate to have a committed team of staff who work hard. Enabling our pupils to flourish academically and personally takes time and effort from all the staff here at VWA. We all work hard to ensure that our vision for our pupils becomes a reality.

We expect that all staff are reflective on their own practice, working hard to 'keep getting better' and we pride ourselves on looking after our team. It is important that we consider staff mental health and wellbeing and enable them to flourish in their roles.

Staff wellbeing is all about our holistic health, including the physical and emotional. When we have good levels of wellbeing we feel that life is in balance and that we can generally cope well. We feel motivated and engaged, we're resilient and able to deal effectively with daily troubles, as well as 'bounce back' from life's challenges. Staff need to understand their own wellbeing and self care is important. In education, we all have to juggle a multitude of different tasks and demands. At Violet Way, we want to ensure our everyone is given the right emotional and practical support.

What is mental wellbeing?

The 'Mind' website states: Mental wellbeing doesn't have one set meaning, We might use it to talk about how we feel, how well we're coping with daily life or what feels possible at the moment.

Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean you're always happy or unaffected by your experiences. But poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to cope with daily life.

10 WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

 Talk about your feelings	 Keep active	 Eat well	 Take a break
 Drink sensibly	 Keep in touch	 Do something you're good at	 Accept who you are
 Ask for help	 Care for others	 mentalhealth.org.uk	

At Violet Way, we aim to ensure that all staff have good work-life balance and this is supported by ensuring we consider staff workload. We know that many factors can impact wellbeing, not simply workload. Personal life and circumstances also impact wellbeing, for example, bereavement, health and relationship difficulties. All staff should expect leaders to show genuine understanding and compassion when personal situations occur.

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

Connect...

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Supporting your own wellbeing

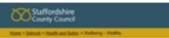


All staff have access to the Fierle Wellbeing Portal

Staff can access the portal through Teams and on the school's landing page

wellbeing.fierleportal.org

Welcome to the
Staffordshire Learning Net



Wellbeing - WellMe

Wellbeing (noun) - the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

- All staff have access to the SLN (Staffordshire Learning Net) Wellbeing WellMe website.
- WellMe aims to support our staff to develop skills and strategies to help improve their own wellbeing in whatever areas they choose.
- WellMe includes invitations to live and recorded Wellbeing Webinars, for example, How to make and break habits / Heart Health / Mindfulness / Digital detox / Eating on a budget
- WellMe includes a Menopause toolkit, a Men's Health and Women's Health section and information on Domestic Violence
- WellMe includes the Recalibrate wellbeing programme, an approach for everyone that will help to cultivate healthy habits, improve overall wellbeing, nutrition and health
- All staff have access to Vivup employee benefits, including access to savings from some of the UK's leading retailers, restaurants, food delivery services and attractions to help you manage the cost of living.

What do our staff say?

SLT are always approachable and make time for everyone. Staff meetings are very useful for highlighting expectations and practise in our own classes.

Violet Way is a lovely school to work at, where all staff respect each other and do their best to work collaboratively. The school is well managed and we are kept up to date with changes and given time to adjust where possible.

Leaders are approachable, always generous with expertise and time, encouraging and supportive. Leaders have supported staff through excellent coaching sessions and followed this through to develop teaching practice to bring the best outcomes for children and staff. Staff wellbeing is considered and planned for - a strong sense of team is prevalent across the school.

When surveyed, 92% of staff feel supported working at Violet Way and 100% of staff agreed with the statements 'Leaders and managers are considerate of my well-being' and 'I enjoy working at this school'

How do we support staff wellbeing?

- Agreed and embedded vision and values, making it clear what behaviours, values and beliefs underpin our school ethos
- Headteacher has completed Senior Mental Health Lead training and is committed to creating a whole-school approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing as well as an open culture in which staff and children feel confident to talk about their mental health and wellbeing openly
- We have an embedded 'culture of kindness'
- Staff feel comfortable and can share any issues with SLT
- An open door policy in both classrooms and offices- staff are always happy to support each other
- Our curriculum is well-planned and resourced
- Teachers have PPA together in their year group
- Strong support from SLT in all aspects of behaviour, teaching and learning
- Leaders are sensitive of workload
- Good training and development opportunities for all staff through our planned programme of CPD, which includes internal and external training (studies show that CPD increases job satisfaction and contributes to good health and wellbeing).
- Coaching and personalised support for staff development from SLT and Fierle leaders
- Staff are not expected to answer emails outside of work hours - encouraged to use 'send later' and have 'silent hours' set
- Parental communication assistance from SLT on the gate and office
- Whole school assemblies on Monday and Friday so we start and end the week feeling like a team

How do we support staff wellbeing?

- Support and advice from external agencies sought where appropriate (for example behaviour support, learning support) to ensure teachers are supported
- Performance management is encouraging and concentrates on the 'praise' aspect and supports individual development. Agreed targets are realistic and focus on raising standards of children and young people.
- Staff consulted through briefings, surveys and other communication and their ideas and contributions are valued
- Planned events inside and outside of work
- Access for all staff to a range of wellbeing support through the Fierle portal and Staffordshire SLN
- 'Everyone Health' NHS Health Check offered to all staff in school
- Staffordshire SLN VivUp employee benefits, Fierle Wellbeing Portal and WellMe website access

Ask yourself at the end of each day:

What do I feel good about today?

Who have I helped today?

What am I grateful for today?