

ABERCORN PRIMARY SCHOOL



Teacher's Health and Wellbeing Policy

Ratified:

Review: January 2024

A STRATEGY FOR TEACHER HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

“The importance of a healthy teaching workforce has long been recognised as a contributing factor in ensuring the provision of an effective education service. If schools are to operate to their optimum capacity in providing a rich learning environment for pupils it is vital that teachers are well motivated, that sickness absence is kept to a minimum and that morale is high”.

1. Background

The Employing Authorities and the Department of Education commissioned an independent survey carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers into teacher health and wellbeing. The Report was published in December 2002.

A Strategy Steering Group comprising representatives of the Department of Education, the Employing Authorities and the Teacher Unions together with experts from the Public Health Agency and the Health and Safety Executive considered the recommendations of the Pricewaterhouse Coopers Report. The Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) then established a sub-group, comprising representatives of the Department of Education, the Employing Authorities and the Teacher Unions.

Another critical factor in developing a workforce strategy for Health and Wellbeing is the statutory obligation on the employer to ensure that legislative requirements are being met. European directives covering Health & Safety, Working Time, Disability and Sex Discrimination provide a legal imperative for developing good practice in relation to the teaching workforce.

The “raising standards” agenda requires that the link between the wellbeing of school staff and school performance be investigated. In support of Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement, the Department of Education published revised regulations and guidance on school development planning in January 2011. One of the areas schools are required to address when carrying out self-evaluation to inform their development planning is its strategies for ‘managing the attendance and promoting the health and well-being of staff.’ The priorities identified by the school and set out in its SDP will inform decisions on its uptake and allocation of school development days (SDDs). Circular 2010/05 provides that, in the 2011/12-2014/15 school years, schools can take up to 5 additional school development days (giving up to 10 days in total) for the purposes of whole-school improvement and staff development. This is to enable schools to devote time to matters they identify as priorities for their school, such as ‘issues related to the professional development, health, attendance and wellbeing of staff’.

Vision and Aims

The vision of the Health & Wellbeing Policy in Abercorn is to create a safe and supportive working environment for teachers in which they are valued as individuals, supported in maintaining good health and treated with dignity and respect. This in turn will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the work of teachers and result in positive outcomes for pupils.

Internal Staff Welfare Service:

The Board of Governors will ensure that all teachers are aware of the EA Staff Welfare Service. This service is staffed by experienced personnel with specialist skills who have

developed expertise in the areas of staff welfare and wellbeing. Staff welfare officers provide an easily accessed, confidential welfare support service for teachers who are experiencing problems arising from work, personal, domestic or social situations.

Staff welfare officers are available to –

- meet confidentially with individual teachers to offer welfare guidance and support.
- facilitate discussion as appropriate between relevant individuals (e.g. teachers, principals, trade union representatives, human resource staff) to help address teachers' welfare concerns at work.
- assist individual teachers to identify and access external specialist organisations such as Relate, Cruse Bereavement Care and Women's Aid, to seek the right kind of professional help to solve the problem.
- promote teacher health and wellbeing at work through awareness raising and training.

External Counselling Service and Telephone Care-line:

In addition to the Staff Welfare Service, the EA provide access to an external counselling service for teaching staff. This is provided by a regional network of professionally qualified counsellors who are external to the Employing Authorities. The service consists of a 24-hour free telephone Care-line manned by qualified counsellors and normally up to four face-to-face counselling sessions (or more in exceptional circumstances) are provided. It is confidential and independent, and is funded by the EA.

Flexible Working Arrangements

A comprehensive set of flexible working arrangements have been negotiated for teachers:

a. Job Share Scheme Job share is a method of working where teachers share one full-time post and together take joint responsibility for the full-time post and are regarded as a full-time unit. The scheme enables greater flexibility in working patterns and enables teachers to combine personal goals and circumstances. In assessing an application for Job Share, the Board of Governors will consider both the advantages to and needs of the school. They will refer to The Job Share Scheme Circular TNC 2009/4 The Board of Governors have made available to teachers the job share scheme and currently the year 4, 5 and 7 classes avail of this.

b. Career Break Scheme This scheme facilitates teachers taking a break in their teaching careers. A Career Break is defined as "a period of special leave of absence without salary for a period of not less than one year and not more than five years" It aims to provide teachers with flexibility, widen their experience, enhance their skills, provide an opportunity for professional development and enables teachers to return and continue their teaching career. In assessing an application for a Career Break, the Board of Governors will consult with the principal to ensure the proposed arrangements to be put in place will ensure the continuation and quality of teaching for the duration of the Career Break. They will make reference to The Career Break Scheme outlined in circular TNC 2009/5 To date, the Principal and one teacher have benefitted from this scheme.

c. Flexible Working Scheme: The Flexible Working Scheme aims to assist teachers with caring responsibilities to balance these with their role at the school and to enable teachers to accommodate other personal circumstances with their role at school. Although teachers with

caring responsibilities have a legal right to request flexible working, the Board of Governors recognises that other teachers may also wish to make such requests. Governors will attempt to accommodate a teacher's needs and balance those with the educational needs of the school. They will comply with the Flexible Working Scheme presented in circular TNC 2009/6. The scheme enables eligible teachers to request a change to the hours they work or a change to the times when they are required to work.

d. Temporary Variation of Contract Circumstances may arise where a teacher may seek a short term, temporary change in working hours which is not facilitated within other schemes. It enables a temporary reduction or, if available, additional hours for a permanent part-time teacher. The temporary variation may be for up to one year, with possible extension in extenuating circumstances. The Board of Governors will adhere to the procedures as determined in circular TNC 2009/7.

Promoting Good Health

Abercorn Primary School will include teacher health and wellbeing as an integral part of its Health Promotion activities. The Board of Governors will consider annually how well the school is implementing its Health and Wellbeing policy and to what extent the Governors statutory responsibilities are being met. Good health promotion emphasises the need for early detection of health problems. Teachers will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and should seek medical advice at an early stage where they have health concerns. Teachers' attendance for health checks will be facilitated as much as is practically possible.

Pupil Discipline Poor pupil behaviour is seen as a source of stress for teachers. In accordance with its statutory requirements, Abercorn has formulated a discipline policy which will be applied rigorously with immediate support provided where necessary to any teacher experiencing difficulties with discipline. The Discipline Policy has been made known to parents. Parent representatives helped review the school's discipline policy.

Transferred Redundancy: The Board of Governors will avail of the transferred redundancy procedure to assist in the management of staff reductions or to facilitate those teachers who wish to retire.

Staff Turnover/Absence: The Board of Governors recognise that high staff turnover in a school may be symptomatic of underlying problems. This may also be true for high levels of staff absence.

Governors will monitor both staff turnover and absence but note staff turnover within Abercorn is low as is the absentee rate.

Managing Workload:

The school will make effective use of Staff Development Days, Baker Days and Curriculum Meetings to manage curriculum development. Realistic, manageable targets will be laid out in the School Development Plan and accompanying Action Plans.

ICT - teachers will be encouraged to complete and store all long, medium- and short-term planners etc on their assigned Surface Pros.

Engagement with Outside Agencies

Abercorn sees the benefit to children of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities provided at either no cost or minimal cost to parents. Currently Abercorn avails of a variety of music support provided by private teachers, SELB peripatetic music service and the Ulster Scots Agency. The school will endeavour to use these and other services to provide additional time within the school day for teachers to plan, prepare and reflect.