

## NSAT Pupil and Staff Wellbeing

The first meeting of the NSAT Staff Wellbeing group, which is focusing on the Trust's strategic priority of pupil and staff wellbeing, took place on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Teacher, Leader and Associate staff representatives came together to form a new group of **Wellbeing Ambassadors**, who each will represent their school in a positive light. The role is intended to help raise awareness of positive mental health and wellbeing and provide colleagues with information and share ideas and strategies. It is also about giving staff an open and honest voice to be able to shape Trust Policy, practice and priorities and, to support Trustees and Senior Leaders in all that we do to support our wider school communities.

The meeting was chaired by Jenn Plews (*Trust Leader*), who in her opening stressed the importance of using this time together in a positive and strategic way. She reflected the vision, mission and values of Northern Star Academies Trust and why it is so important that in a time of constant flux we are paying attention to our own mental health and wellbeing. She shared how we wish to use these sessions to uplift and empower colleagues to think differently about what we can do to influence and re-shape the Wellbeing agenda both for our children and ourselves. Specific focus at this meeting was given to Staff Wellbeing and shaping a new strategy for change.

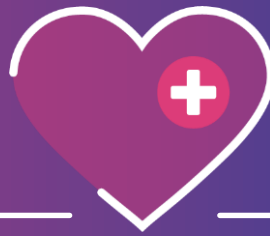
We heard from Sally Evans (*NSAT HR Manager*) about the role of the central team and Emma Dobson (*Associate Assistant Headteacher at Harrogate High School*) who during the pandemic has led, with the support of Vicky Green (*HHS School NHS Nurse*) the successful accreditation of the national Mentally Healthy School Award.

Ann Wheatcroft (*Primary School Improvement Director*) framed questions to provide the opportunity for the group to share strategies and reflect on the burning issues in their schools at this point in time.

### Key Takeaways included:

- **The little things go a long way** – the Thankyou's, the random acts of kindness, the small gestures have the biggest impact on how people can feel
- **Listening at every opportunity** – giving staff a voice in a positive and productive way – colleagues talked about how their leaders knew them inside and out and how they felt appreciated by leaders simplest of gestures. Wellbeing isn't about 'add ons' or tactics, it is about a cultural shift where the collective staff group take responsibility - where intentional behaviours are in place to support a positive culture
- **Effective Cross-Trust communication structures** –we were tasked to consider new ways to enable the sharing of workload and widen the CPD opportunities for all staff
- **Leaders acknowledging the challenges of remote teaching** has been so powerful – how we continue to provide tailored and timely support for teachers grappling with home/remote and blended learning?
- **We are all responsible for modelling 'Wellbeing'** – observing senior leaders gives others permission and having the ability to change the conversation to discuss staff wellbeing is very much welcomed.





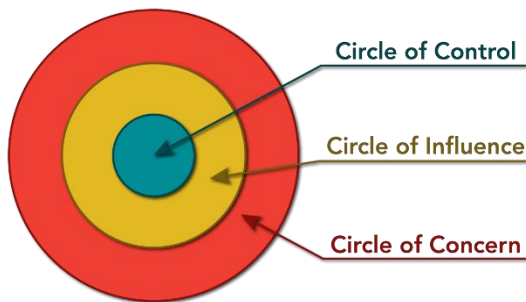
## Three Somethings....

**Something I have noticed... The school staffroom at the heart of each school is a much needed sanctuary.** On so many levels and for so many reasons we must protect and develop our school staffrooms (be it virtually for now) ...for new staff and new to the profession staff, a welcoming, open and collaborate staffroom is a place for growth and development – it is a safe place for reflection and peer support.

**Something I have read or heard about... the University of Oxford Mindfulness Centre** have a wide range of excellent free resources. Sally Evans has also shared **30 Brain and Body Break Ideas** (attached) and a **Wellbeing App a Day resource** (attached).

## Something I wish to share...

Particularly at this challenging time but also in our general lives it helps enormously to concentrate upon issues that are within your 'circle of control', and the value that sometimes just seeing those things that sit outside of your circle of influence as being 'white noise' that can be ignored and shelved. Focusing our time on what we can influence and directly impact, such as our personal health is where we should invest our energy.



## So, what next?

Our next Steps are to explore priorities for each of our schools and Trust as a whole. To this end, we aim to partner with an external organisation to conduct a **Trust-wide Survey exploring Staff Mental Health and Happiness** – fully understanding patterns, themes and our cultures in practice. We want to think about how staff can feel more involved in whole school planning, decision making and improvement and we want to gain an insight into the extent to which staff feel that they are an integral part of the 'shared mission' of the organisation.

## Our next planned meeting is on:

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021** (an agenda and foci to follow)

**'Self-care is not self-indulgence'**

**Jenn Plews**  
Trust Leader (CEO)

#Walk1000milesin2021

