



Workload Charter



The Stour Federation

“‘Busyness’ is a misnomer for this state of affairs, really, because certain forms of busyness can be delightful. Who wouldn’t want to live in Busytown, the setting of the iconic 1960’s children’s books by the American illustrator Richard Scarry? His grocer cats and firefighting pigs are certainly busy; nobody in Busytown is idle...What the aren’t, though, is *overwhelmed*. They exude the cheery self-possession of cats and pigs who have plenty to do, but also every confidence that their tasks will fit snugly into the hours available - whereas we live with the constant anxiety of fearing, or knowing for certain, that ours won’t.”

Oliver Burkeman (2021) *Four Thousand Weeks*

We are here to make great schools and happier, stronger communities so that people have better lives. The way we do this is by: always doing what is right; trusting in each other and standing shoulder to shoulder and 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. Our Trust continues to be about an ethic of excellence, but in a sustainable way. Our schools operate in an environment of high professional trust and with high levels of accountability.

A happy and healthy workforce is vital for the success of our children. Healthy includes organisationally healthy as well as physically and mentally healthy. The charter underpins our determination to ensure that our schools are great places to work.

To bring together some of our fundamental, guiding principles, we have developed our Workload Charter. The Charter clearly sets out our collective approach to day-to-day delivery and how we work together, providing a framework that covers the key challenges we face as a profession.

We recognise that the commitment and care shown by all staff are fundamental to the success of our students and we promise our staff that they will be supported, encouraged, respected and provided with an enjoyable and rewarding working environment.

The Trust is dedicated to developing, growing and retaining talented leaders and staff across the Trust and nothing is more important than staff development. We want our schools to be places where people want to work and choose to stay. We will do everything we can to support our staff to balance the demands of their jobs and those at home, and we recognise that in everyone’s life there are good times and bad. It is the job of all of us to support each other through both.



CULTURE

The culture of the Trust and our schools is critical in ensuring we have an enjoyable, rewarding working environment in which all colleagues believe the demands of their job are reasonable and manageable. It is essential that our schools are led in an ethical way that is driven by moral purpose. Many of the difficulties that staff experience in schools come from a high stakes accountability system that can drive leaders to behave in ways that increase stress and anxiety for staff. We insist that our leaders do everything they can to guard against this, that they set a good example in how they behave and that they try to reduce levels of stress and anxiety in the organisation. Seeking to reduce the number of tasks staff undertake is likely to have little effect on improving work/home balance if this happens within a toxic culture and an environment of high threat.

Values inform expectations. Expectations influence behaviour. Behaviour creates culture.



We start from an assumption of professional trust and the belief that everyone seeks to do a good job. Leaders should be clear that processes of quality assurance and appraisal are, for most staff, about recognising great practice and supporting colleagues in their professional commitment to get better at their jobs. They are absolutely not about surveillance and catching people out. In order for this to be a reality, processes must operate within a spirit of openness and transparency and staff must be made to feel confident to raise any concerns or issues they have. Part of the assessment of leaders' performance is the effectiveness with which they contribute to developing a thriving culture of organisational health openness, honesty and kindness, in which we make the lives of staff better as well as those of children.

We use four disciplines of organisational health as developed by Patrick Lencioni (2015) *The Advantage*:

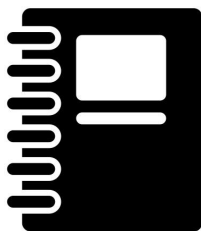


WORKLOAD

Workload can include various aspects of teachers' working lives, including marking, planning, preparation, monitoring, evaluation and data collection. The Trust recognises it has a duty of care towards its staff and is committed to working with its recognised trade unions to clarify workload expectations, supporting staff to achieve a healthy work-home balance. Leaders are expected to

demonstrate this commitment and to be mindful of what is reasonable for colleagues at all levels of the organisation.

The Trust recognises the important work unions have done in recent years on the issue of workload and supports the principle of 1265 hours for teaching staff. The Trust ensures that directed time for all teachers is below 1265, while recognising there will never be parity across all schools as the timings of school days differ across the Trust. Around 50% of our workforce are non-teaching staff. They form an integral part of our talented workforce and they represent a range of professions. They have clearly defined job descriptions, contracts and working hours, and they work collaboratively to meet the needs of our students. Whilst we appreciate that there are times where our non-teaching staff work outside their normal parameters to meet the needs of our children, we do not expect our non-teaching staff to work more than their contracted hours. We recognise that jobs can evolve over time, therefore we encourage non-teaching staff to work with their line managers to regularly review their job descriptions, ensuring they accurately reflect the work required and undertaken.



LESSON PLANNING

Planning is critical and it underpins effective teaching. The Trust employs highly skilled teachers who plan and deliver high quality teaching and learning. Staff are not expected to submit daily or weekly plans and they are encouraged to spend time collaboratively planning, sharing resources, knowledge and expertise within schools and across the Trust. We facilitate this further by actively planning calendared joint training sessions, with joint moderation and joint planning as teams. Our Google Workspace platform provides systems and processes that minimise the replication of effort across different schools. We promote the use of high quality professionally made resources to ease workload whilst maintaining high quality teaching and learning.



DATA COLLECTION

The Trust continues to explore greater use of technology to reduce aspects of teacher workload involved in data collection. Currently, schools collect children's performance data only three times a year to ensure they can monitor progress without over-burdening staff. Teachers are only asked to input data that requires their professional judgement. This ensures more meaningful data on children's progress and has reduced workload. Only one written report to parents is required each year.



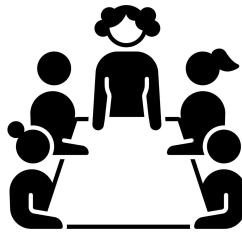
MARKING AND FEEDBACK

Our approach to marking and feedback is based on 3 key principles:

- Improving children's knowledge and understanding..
- Based on evidence of what works.
- Manageable and reasonable in terms of workload.

Our approach includes the following features that help to address workload issues associated with marking:

- There is no centrally prescribed frequency of written feedback.
- Each subject may have a different approach developed by our Curriculum leaders and teams.
- We mark less in terms of the number of pieces of work but with greater impact.



MEETINGS

Meetings will usually be arranged in normal working hours. The Trust recognises that there may be times with mutual agreement where meetings may take place outside normal working hours, e.g. parent workshops to maximise attendance of working families. The Trust will be mindful of staff health and wellbeing in such circumstances, ensuring staff have reasonable time for breaks and refreshments and attendance at such meetings will be voluntary.

It is important that meetings only take place where they are the most efficient and effective use of staff time. Meetings should never take place simply because they are on a calendar. If there is no longer a need for a planned meeting, leaders are asked to cancel the meeting. Similarly, it is important that the right people are in each meeting so leaders are asked to excuse colleagues whose time could be used more usefully on other things. Meetings should have clear agendas, enabling focused discussions with tangible actions agreed. Where using technology to hold meetings remotely can improve wellbeing or flexibility for staff, we will do so.



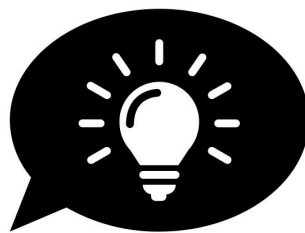
EMAILS

There is no expectation that staff respond to emails outside normal working hours. We want all staff to be able to achieve a healthy work-home balance and we trust the professional judgement of our staff to make decisions about when they work outside school hours. While it is appropriate for a member of staff to read and send emails at times that work for them, the sender should not expect the recipient to respond outside normal school times. Staff are encouraged to schedule emails using the 'Send Later' feature. We ask all staff, including leaders, to refrain where possible, from sending group emails and to think carefully before using the "reply all" function. Messages to all staff should only be sent when they are important and significant for every recipient.



INSPECTION

We believe that the best preparation for external inspection is for staff to be able to do the best job they can do, without the additional stress that can be caused by the prospect of the process of inspection. It is the responsibility of the leadership team to prepare the school properly, but this should be done in a way that does not cause significant additional workload for teachers. The Trust does not conduct 'mocksteds' that require teachers to provide lesson plans or that involve processes outside the normal monitoring and evaluation and performance management policies. Leaders should be mindful of the messages they send to staff.



WORKING PRACTICES

Information regarding how schools might achieve a reasonable approach to workload is emerging and there are an increasing number of case studies available. We will consider all ideas sympathetically and in an open-minded way. Rethinking undertaken within the Trust will be evidence-based. The Trust is committed to keeping the issue of workload at the forefront of all our work, providing cohesion, clarity and over-communication, which is developed and reviewed through staff consultation. Where new initiatives are introduced, they should be based on

evidence that they are likely to improve pupil outcomes and serious consideration must be given to what we are going to stop doing to 'make space' for what is new.

The Trust and its schools regularly review policies and procedures linked to teacher workload. All new and revised policies are workload impact assessed, ensuring that staff workload is considered in the development of the policy. An essential responsibility of Headteachers and Heads of School is to monitor workloads within their schools through staff surveys and regular discussions with staff and to report to the Local Academy Councils and the CEO. An essential part of the CEO's role is to monitor workloads across the Trust. The CEO reports to the Trust Board and workload forms a part of the reporting and quality assurance process.

FAIR WORKLOAD CHARTER QUESTIONS

A reasonable time is available to allow me to complete my leadership duties?
The school calendar is within the 1265 hour limit of directed time, including parents evenings.
I receive my 10% PPA time.
I know and understand the expectations of my role as a teacher and I am able to secure a reasonable work life balance?
Do you agree with the statement that I am not directed to work during the schools lunch break.
Lesson planning requirements are realistic and not over-burdensome.
Do you agree with the statement that daily written lesson plans are not formally expected.
Feedback requirements are sensible and not overly bureaucratic.
Feedback in school is designed to be meaningful, manageable and motivating.
Pupil performance data is formally requested no more than three times a year per pupil.
The time requirements of data collection are reasonable and proportionate.
Written communication to parents is manageable and includes the annual report?
Are staff meetings focused and do they follow a clear agenda?
Lesson observation expectations are reasonable.
I know who I can go to for support/supervision when appropriate?
I know who to approach on the governing body/MAT/Trust when issues need to be discussed?
I am aware of the schools wellbeing strategy that is used across the school at all levels?
The school leaders are aware of Infection Control protocols that may be required in school and resources are made available to address these?
The school pay policy is equivalent to both the National Pay Award and local agreements.
When any change that impacts my role is proposed at my school, I am involved in the consultation.

Changes are accompanied by appropriate support and training, where necessary.
There are measures in school to monitor the workload of staff to ensure that it doesn't become too high.
The school email and communications policies help to keep communication relevant.
My physical working conditions are acceptable.
A school calendar of meetings and events I am expected to attend is produced annually, in time for the beginning of the school year.
Deadlines and time pressures are achievable and reasonable.
I'm clear about what is expected of me at work.
I have control over how I organise my workload.