

# Pickwick Academy Trust



## People Strategy 2024-2026



Working together to provide the best outcomes for our schools and children.



## Pickwick People Strategy: Our Aims...

### Leadership and Support

We are an employer of choice for staff in all roles within the organisation; we engage, listen and are committed to staff experience - we recruit, train and retain the very highest quality people.

### Reward and Recognition

We motivate and engage our team through a comprehensive rewards package, encompassing both financial and non-financial components, whilst acknowledging and appreciating outstanding performance.

### Ethics and Principles

We are not only an 'Employer of Choice', but also an 'Employer of Trust'. Trust is the basis of all relationships in the workplace and we do this by ensuring that we have a culture of fairness, kindness and compassion for all role types and levels within the organisation.

### Tools for the Job

We ensure that our employees have the right tools and resources they need to excel in their role, enabling the delivery of learning for outstanding attainment and empowering children to become life-long learners, global citizens and deep thinkers.

### Career Development

We motivate and engage the whole workforce with their learning and development, ensuring people have the right skills and capability for their role.

### Wellbeing

We provide a safe and healthy working environment for our people, placing wellbeing at the heart of staff experience, ensuring a positive work/life balance, and encouraging our people to maintain and promote their health and those of others.



## Introduction

The primary objective of our People Strategy Plan (version 2.0) is to build upon the positive work carried out since the initial implementation of the trusts People Strategy over the past few years. It has been an exciting and challenging time for the Trust in a post-pandemic era, characterised by welcoming new schools to the Pickwick family and the embracing of new ways of working across an expanded and talented Trust community.

We strive to be an employer of choice for staff in all roles, to effectively **attract, train, and retain** high-quality staff across our 15-school strong Trust, ensuring a dynamic and supportive environment for both professional growth and pupil success.

This People Strategy aims to create a thriving and supportive work environment within our Trust, fostering continuous improvement, innovation, and excellence in education. It is also a strategy so that through looking after our people our children in turn can flourish in all aspects of life, both physically and spiritually.

### The Trust's 2024 - 2026 main people goals are:

- There is a clear approach to wellbeing and workload
- Staff at all levels are supported and report a positive work experience
- Flexible working is encouraged to enhance a positive work/life balance
- Staff and schools are appropriately resourced
- Strong collaborative partnerships are built upon
- Staff performance and development opportunities are available across the Trust to enable success for all.

The purpose of the People Strategy is to provide an effective framework to achieve the above Trust people goals and commitments and is structured around the four pillars identified in 'Talent Architects' (2018). These pillars are reflected in our aims, values and focus:



OUR AIMS, VALUES AND FOCUS

## Attract, Train and Retain



This people strategy framework was used as a basis for our June 2023 Staff Survey to gauge how people in our organisation felt about working here, so we in turn could action and make improvements. The survey focused on 6 areas:

**Leadership and Support**

**Reward and Recognition**

**Ethics and Principles**

**Tools for the Job**

**Career Development**

**Wellbeing**

A more in depth summary of where we are, where we would like to be, our plans for the coming few years and how we will evaluate the success of any initiative for each section are on the following pages:



# Leadership and Support

## Our Aim...

We are an employer of choice for staff in all roles within the organisation; we engage, listen and are committed to staff experience - we recruit, train and retain the very highest quality people.

## Where are we now?

Recruitment levels at the Trust is reflective of the overall national picture, schools have experienced a turbulent three years and there is a national shortage of teachers and support staff. Applicants to UK wide teacher training courses fell by 20% in 2022/23 and is almost 30% down on the 2020/21 figure, the first year impacted by the pandemic (GOV.UK).

The Trust in 2023 implemented a new Applicant Tracker System, to make the application process as seamless and technologically proficient as possible, feedback from all stakeholders regarding this system has so far been very positive. The Trust's selection process ensures the validity of selection decisions to recruit the best candidates. Individual schools report levels of retention are currently stable, and leavers are invited to complete an exit interview to identify areas of improvement and provide valuable feedback.

Whilst the DfE is going to publish a revised Recruitment and Retention strategy in Spring 24, the priority for schools across the country is to attract and keep their staff, and that means addressing working conditions.

Pickwick Academy Trust has strong ethical leadership, an excellent reputation and strong identity with opportunities for career development and job security. We see ourselves as an employer of choice -the vast majority of staff who participated in the Trust's latest survey agree. Pickwick Academy Trust aims, through our leaders, to foster a nurturing culture in which our people thrive.

As the Trust has evolved into three hubs, the executive, finance and business capacity has been expanded to match need. Each hub now has its own Director of Education, who has oversight of all aspects of education and standards in the hub.

The Trust has a generous Flexible Working policy, the leadership team firmly support opportunities for staff to work from home or flexibly, where possible depending on role.

Whilst a number of roles at the Trust have been difficult to initially recruit for, in the 2023 staff survey, overall staff satisfaction was very favourable, results showed that Leadership and Support are a particular area of strength at the Trust (92.5% positive, up from 89% in the 2021 Survey).

*"The overriding sense of life at Pickwick continues to be of a workplace that is positive, constructive, supportive, passionate and determined to get the very best results for the pupils in its care. Discovery sessions indicate that staff acknowledge that the Senior Leadership Team spend time trying to understand the reality of workloads and try to ensure that tasks given are necessary".*

Staff have expressed an interest in Governors being more present in schools and to speak about what their roles entail.

Schools across the Trust work together as an inclusive family in a variety of areas so that each school is supported and held to account for the attainment and progress of every child, which in turn ensures the highest quality teaching and leadership. Training is available for all roles, and role specific induction processes are evident in all schools.

Leadership and Teaching staff have opportunities to share best practice and resources through Professional Learning Communities Cluster Groups.

Finally, the general consensus of staff is that People Strategy initiatives already implemented have improved work efficiencies and increased feeling of fulfilment at work; however communicating actions taken to improve working conditions could be improved.

## How will we get there?

- We aim to build on the positive perception of the Trust as an employer of choice – with greater promotion of the Employee Offer to applicants and staff alike. Emphasising strong management, fairness, respect (professionally and also recognising that people have a life out of school) and our collaborative approach.
- Leadership and support will be available for all roles, additional help and guidance will be offered for those who need it.
- We will encourage continuous feedback from employees on how the Trust is managed through surveys, suggestion boxes or one to one meetings.
- We aim to act on feedback, and make continuous improvements providing better communications with all staff on the work that Pickwick Academy Trust does. We plan to achieve this through a regular staff newsletter to communicate information and success more clearly.
- We will explore opportunities to enhance staff awareness regarding Governance roles within the Trust, and invite Governors to meet and greet opportunities with staff, encouraging staff to provide feedback and understand the work they do, and vice versa.
- The recognition of the good work all support staff including Teaching Assistants and Parent Support Advisors do is an area we would like to focus on.

## How will we recognise success?

- The indicators for success will be highlighted through monitoring and reporting on employee turnover and favourable staff experience survey results for areas associated with leadership, support, the overall staff experience and engagement.
- Staff in place are equipped with the required skills, and perform highly in their role – quantified through monitoring and evaluation of their personal development.
- Staff report that they understand more about the leadership, Governance and the work that Pickwick Academy Trust does, especially in areas which improve staff engagement.

# Reward and Recognition

## Our Aim...

We motivate and engage our team through a comprehensive rewards package, encompassing both financial and non-financial components, whilst acknowledging and appreciating outstanding performance.

## Where are we now?

Core elements of employee reward are set nationally within the education sector. Both teaching and support staff pay awards are applied nationally. Other national negotiation includes some other elements of employee reward such as leave.

In 2023 the Trust implemented an inclusive Continuous Service policy which now recognises previous unbroken service in other schools, LA or Trusts. As a result of this, Support staff are now awarded 5 additional days of holiday pay after five years continuous service.

In addition to pay and annual leave, the reward offer for staff includes a career average earnings pension scheme (benefitting from generous employer contributions). Other leave entitlements are frequently above statutory requirements, such as special leave, family leave and occupational sick pay.

Staff also have access to a range of other employee benefits such as an emergency salary advance scheme, free eye tests and flu jabs, retail, leisure and gym discounts, the Trust also offers the option for staff discounts when purchasing a new car.

Opportunities are available for flexible working to support work-life balance. Pickwick Academy Trust is partnered with a local Flexible Working Ambassador School and Pickwick Academy Trust's Flexible Working offering is more generous than the statutory norm.

In the 2023 staff experience survey, staff generally indicate that their role and working in the Trust is a rewarding experience and that they are recognised and valued for the work they undertake. Staff also indicated that they feel that they are able to influence their school and Trust in a positive way.

Overall, 85% of respondents thought the reward and recognition offering from Pickwick Academy Trust was positive.

## How will we get there?

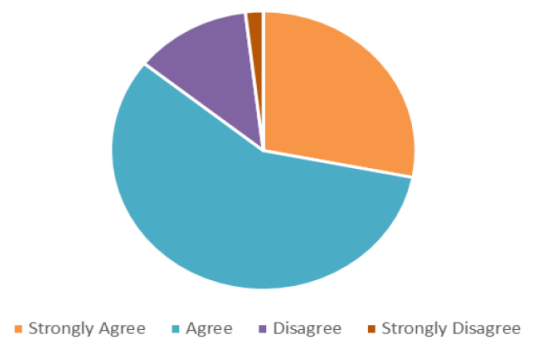
- Pickwick Academy Trust will continue to implement national pay and other reward elements of terms and conditions.
- Awareness raising of the reward offer and how to access these rewards will be undertaken for staff.
- Exploration of the use of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to boost recognition for all levels of staff for the positive work they undertake.
- Further opportunities to enhance employee benefits will be explored and developed.

## How will we recognise success?

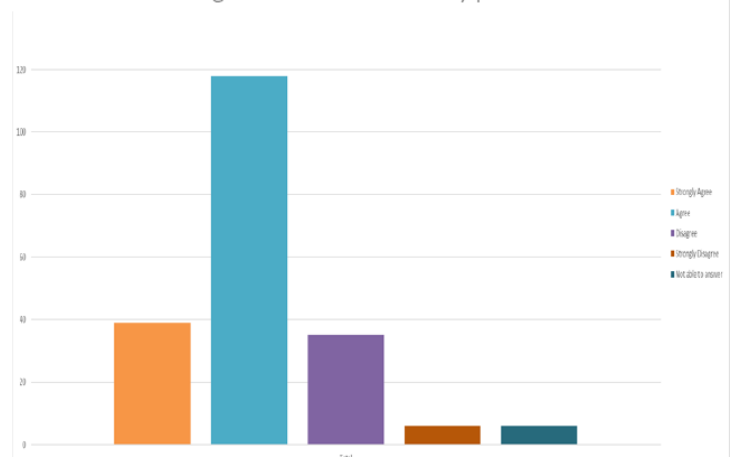
- The indicators for success will be highlighted through ongoing monitoring and reporting on metrics such as employee turnover, performance and favourable staff experience survey results for areas associated with reward and recognition.

- Providing staff with the opportunity to provide instant feedback on how they feel about rewards and recognition, what works well, and what can be improved.
- We aim to continually review competitive offerings, to ensure that the overall employee offer at Pickwick Academy Trust is an always improving reality.

Summary of Reward and Recognition Question Responses



I receive regular feedback about my performance



# Ethics and Principles

## Our Aim...

We are not only an 'Employer of Choice', but also an 'Employer of Trust'. Trust is the basis of all relationships in the workplace and we do this by ensuring that we have a culture of fairness, kindness and compassion for all role types and levels within the organisation.

## Where are we now?

Ethics and Principles are another area of strength at Pickwick Academy Trust, in the 2023 Staff Survey, all responses to questions relating to ethics and principles of the Trust showed a very strong level of support amongst employees for the way the organisation conducts itself.

Over 92% of respondents indicated that the Trust and its schools has a good set of ethics and principles (up from 89% in the previous survey).

Pickwick Academy Trust is a friendly and welcoming organisation, and the executive and central team is committed to fostering a workplace and learning environment that celebrates diversity, promotes equity and values inclusion. We believe that a diverse and inclusive workforce not only enhances our organisational culture but also drives innovation, creativity and provides a supportive and enriching atmosphere for our children. We currently cultivate a culture where every staff member is treated with dignity and respect, recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion. Our recruitment processes ensure that individuals are selected based on their skills, qualifications, and the sharing of our values.

As a result of this, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement has been added to our new recruitment applicant pack and recruitment panels are encouraged to complete Unconscious Bias Training. We also are actively searching for alternative areas and ideas to try to attract a more diverse workforce. Reasonable Adjustments are made for those who fall under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure everyone has the same opportunities to be able to do their job to the best of their ability.

There are robust HR policies in place to ensure that all people are treated fairly, with dignity and respect throughout their time at the Trust. We regularly evaluate and refine our HR practices and policies to align with employment law changes and evolving ethical standards, for example our Family Policy has been recently updated in terminology to foster a more inclusive policy reflective on today's society.

Schools are notified in advance through termly HR newsletters to any changes to legislation or practice, this ensures a unified and collaborative approach to change.

Pickwick Academy Trust is transparent and consults directly with staff in updating any policy which relates to their employment, and is informed of the rationale behind any changes. There is a culture of openness, and all staff are provided with, and have access to, details of the Trust's whistleblowing policy.

Overall, we are committed to open communication channels, actively encouraging employees to voice concerns without fear of reprisal and hold us to account by engaging with their Unions.

## How will we get there?

- Regularly communicating the Trust's values to indicate a long-term strategic commitment to building and maintaining an ethical culture. Regular internal communications via an all staff newsletter that refer to the values and ethical expectations of staff to ensure embeddedness.
- A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion terms of reference will be drafted to examine how the core principles of diversity and inclusion are embedded within working practices such as recruitment and report on the extent which the Trust attracts and employs staff reflecting the diversity of the local community.
- Ensuring that a constructive approach is taken in terms of employee relations, people are treated fairly and inline with policy. A HR department is in place to ensure that proper employee relation processes are followed with an emphasis on informal resolution.
- Ensuring that Pickwick Trust Academy regularly reviews its HR policies, to update those which are affected when employment law changes come into effect, and to ensure they reflect the changing social landscape and demonstrate current best practice and regulations. Changes are communicated directly to schools and to staff, who are encouraged to provide their feedback.

## How will we recognise success?

- The reputation of the Trust remains high within and beyond our communities.
- All staff are able to articulate the Trust's vision and strategy.
- Other Indicators for success include the ongoing monitoring and reporting on metrics for areas associated with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Success can also be determined by favourable staff experience survey results for areas associated with Ethics and Principles.
- Schools remain compliant in employment law.
- Toolkits are followed to ensure schools follow proper procedures and processes in terms of employee relations.

# Tools for the Job

## Our Aim...

We ensure that our employees have the right tools and resources they need to excel in their role, to enable the delivery of learning for outstanding attainment and so empowering children to become life-long learners, global citizens and deep thinkers.

## Where are we now?

The Institute for Fiscal Studies provides an overall national picture of Education, whilst Education spending is 4.5% of national income, they state that spending per pupil in 2024 is approximately the same level as in 2010. Whilst this reverses past cuts, it does in reality mean 15 years with no overall growth in spending, which results in tight budgets, especially for small schools. With stretched budgets, schools in general have to adopt a creative method to provide the appropriate resources.

In the 2023 staff survey direct feedback commentary included 'Educational resources are of high quality and in good condition' and 'I have all of the educational resources I need to do my job to the best of my ability'. Employees in the survey were asked about the tools and resources they need to do the job, the responses were generally positive but not in strong agreement that they had all the things they needed to perform well.

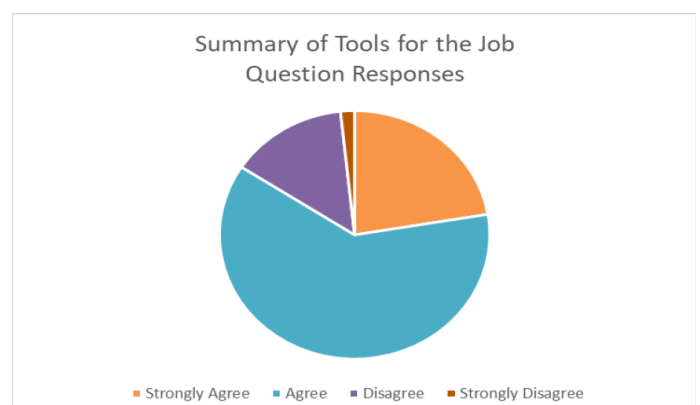
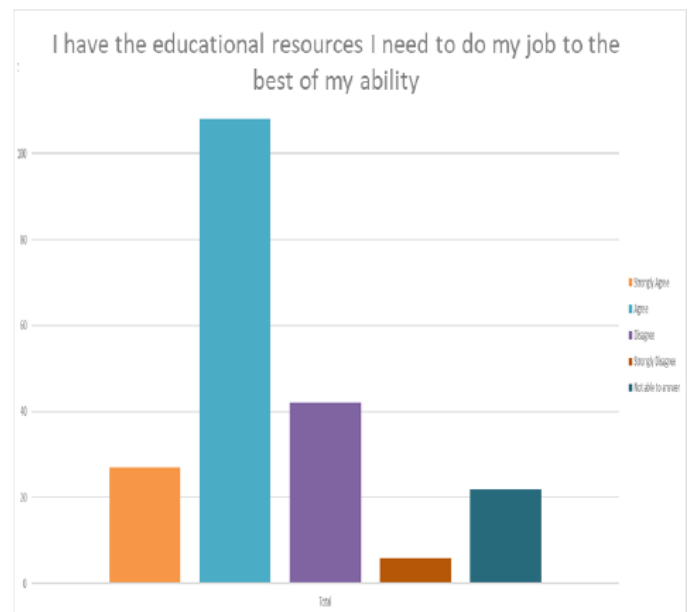
The Trust has an IT infrastructure that enables staff across all member schools to communicate, connect and access joint resources. This allows for an outwards collaborative approach to working, which enhances the level and quality of resources on small budgets and cuts down on workloads.

## How will we get there?

- Continue to provide staff with the IT resources necessary for them to be able to perform their role and collaborate across the Trust.
- Promote opportunities to support and work alongside other similar academy trusts and schools.
- Bring together staff with teaching responsibilities and specialisms from across the Trust to develop high quality provision across the organisation.
- Facilitate collaborative learning hubs for local areas and key aspects of educational provision.
- Facilitate opportunities for Administrative staff and TAs to meet for training, updates and the sharing of good practice.
- Facilitate opportunities for Middle Leaders/Deputy groups to meet, share and collaborate.
- Share resources (school improvement, teaching and learning, administration documents) across the Trust, where appropriate.

## How will we recognise success?

- Pickwick has a reputation for high quality outward-facing collaborative working.
- Staff report that they have the necessary resources available to them which enables the delivery of learning.
- Pupil attainment increases, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 and for disadvantaged learners.





# Career Development

## Our Aim...

We motivate and engage the whole workforce with their learning and development, ensuring people have the right skills and capability for their role.

## Where are we now?

Career development is fundamental to our HR strategy, we recognise that our staff are our most important resource and to ensure exceptional education for our children we need to invest in our people.

We have established a clear 'Pathway of Development' for staff at all levels in Pickwick Academy Trust. However, staff survey results indicated that staff are not always aware of opportunities nor how to access them, therefore awareness and capacity for career development was an area of improvement that the Trust could focus on.

Professional Development across the Trust is overseen by our Professional Development Director who works with school leaders to identify opportunities for professional growth for staff at whatever point they are at in their career.

Staff are encouraged to make a personal commitment to their own professional development and have a number of cluster and network groups within schools and across the Trust where best practice is shared. On previous feedback, we have implemented a regular Admin Staff cluster group, for the sharing of ideas and best practice, and are also working on process manuals to support these roles.

Pickwick works closely with other schools and Trusts to ensure we remain outward-facing, and there are many opportunities for staff to receive as well as provide support across our education system. At Pickwick, we have trained over 90 teachers in recent years, working with the University of Gloucestershire and then North Wiltshire SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training). Many of these teachers are now working in our schools or in our network of schools locally. We are also collaborating with the OTT SCITT, using our expertise and using existing partnerships.

We have recently launched our 2023/24 Targeted Leadership Programme (TLP) aimed at middle and aspiring middle leaders. This programme helps participants to develop their leadership skills and behaviours, allowing them an opportunity to learn more about how we manage change, support our teams and ensure school improvement strategies make a positive difference to our children's outcomes.

All staff have access to our Professional Development Library, which offers text on subject knowledge and teaching strategies.

At Pickwick, we also provide termly coaching sessions with a professional coach for many of our leaders across the Trust, also running workshops to help them develop their own coaching skills so they can support others. Our ECT and ITT mentors receive coaching training through our programmes to help them support their new teachers. We recently delivered an accredited instructional coaching programme, training eight of our Pickwick teachers and leaders across our Trust to support them in using this technique to help less experienced colleagues to improve their practice in the classroom.

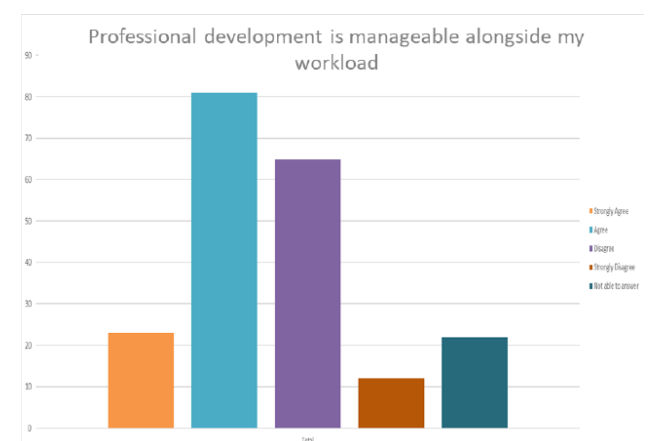
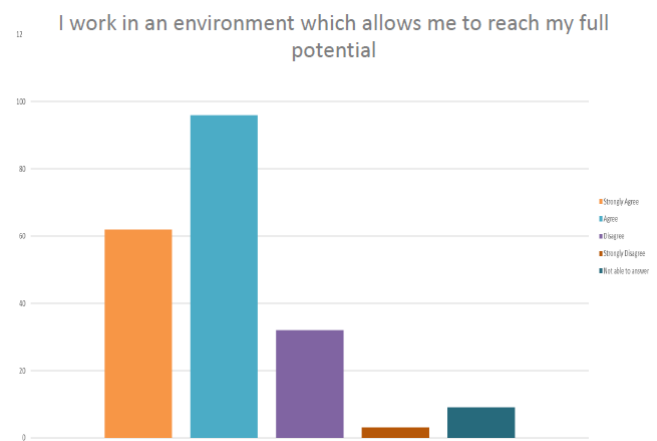
One area to focus on is career development for TA roles, who have indicated that they would like to be consulted more on the best way to support pupils.

## How will we get there?

- The Trust has newly implemented an all staff newsletter. This platform which will be utilised to advertise, signpost and inform staff of the pathways and development offer available to all staff.
- Career Development and Training will be reviewed for all support staff roles, recognising that staff may not want to complete a qualification as such, but that a level of CPD is expected and provided each year to enable them to feel more equipped and qualified to complete their roles.

## How will we recognise success?

- The indicators for success are having staff with the required skills, performing highly in their role, and in return pupil attainment increases.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the personal development process and activities which are undertaken.



# Wellbeing

## Our Aim...

Providing a safe and healthy working environment for our people, placing wellbeing at the heart of staff experience, ensuring a positive work/life balance, encouraging our people to maintain and promote their health and those of others.

## Where are we now?

Pickwick Academy Trust provides a safe and healthy working environment for staff through Health and Safety initiatives, induction processes and a supportive management team.

The Trust has a holistic framework in place to support people's health & safety and mental wellbeing and offers sources of support such as an Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and counselling. All staff also have access to free flu vaccinations and eye tests are subsidised for regular VDU users.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that people are treated fairly and reasonably and line managers have guidance on how to support their teams.

National stress levels for those who work in Education are often high. Staff at Pickwick Academy Trust were asked to rate their stress levels between 1 and 10, with 1 being low and 10 being high. Although there was a spread across the range, it was noted the majority of staff recorded scores between 5 and 8, which is likely to stem from a post Covid landscape, increasing challenging behaviours from children and parents and strike action in the last academic year.

The Trust has implemented a number of initiatives to ensure a positive work/life balance for its people, for instance working with the local Flexible Working Ambassador School, and providing above the statutory norm in flexible work options.

Workloads are monitored and wellbeing teams lead ongoing efforts to improve efficiency and 'Bin, Tweak, Keep' sessions reduce unnecessary workstreams. There is a clear move towards improving wellbeing and workloads across the Trust which identifies actions to support staff at all stages of their career.

79% of respondents of the 2023 staff survey cited they agreed or strongly agreed that there was a positive work/life balance at Pickwick Academy Trust. The Trust would however like to improve this statistic.

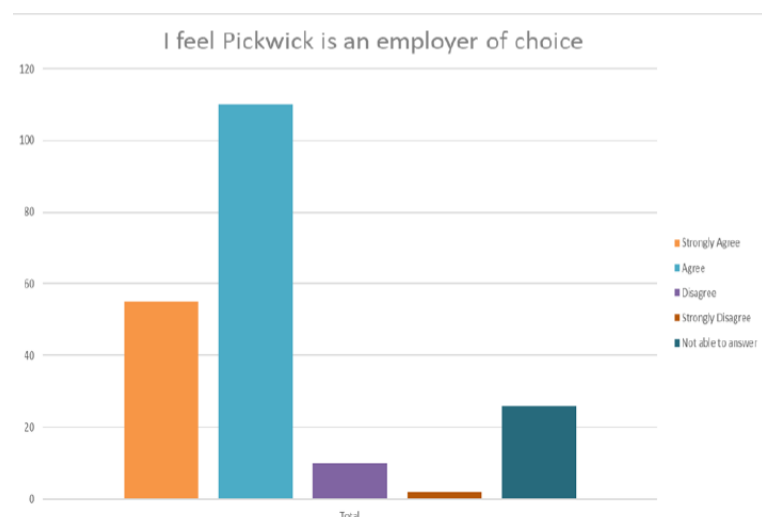
## How will we get there?

- Further promotion of our Flexible Work Policy.
- Continuation of coaching and wellbeing sessions for all staff.
- Continue to monitor and reduce workloads through 'Tweak, Keep and Bin' sessions and collaborative working across the Trust.
- Instil and promote a Health and Wellbeing Hub for all staff, providing information and guidance for staff on different aspects of mental and physical wellbeing.
- Supporting the health needs of women in the workplace, signing up to the Menopause Pledge.

- Providing support to staff and providing more detailed guidance to managers to be more confident about their role in managing and supporting colleagues.
- Ensuring all schools have a school wide stress management plan.
- Encouraging honesty and providing regular one to one's outside of appraisal meetings to provide the opportunity for staff to discuss how they are.
- A focus on supporting managers in managing and raising the topic of health and wellbeing within teams, promoting flexible working opportunities and collaborative working to aid workload.

## How will we recognise success?

- Favourable feedback and metrics from staff through surveys, meetings and access to an anonymous pulse survey on the Health and Wellbeing Hub.
- The Health and Wellbeing Hub indicates that staff are using the resources available to them.
- Sickness absence for staff in schools are at or below the national teacher workforce average of 6.3% (2021/22 School Workforce Census)
- Stress levels Staff survey indicates a decline in stress levels and more staff record stress levels on the lower to mid-range part of the 1-10 slider scale.



**Pickwick**  
**Academy Trust**

