

FIVE RIVERS
Multi Academy Trust



Workforce Charter

Latest review: January 2025 (addition of anti-harassment paragraph)

Approved by Unions: 03 February 2025

Foreword

FRMAT believes wholeheartedly that our continued success is a result of the high calibre of our entire workforce. Our team is made up of those who teach and those who give essential support to our teachers so that they can focus on delivering the highest of educational and developmental standards and opportunities for our children. **Every single role is imperative to our wider success** and for this reason, we want to create a culture where all roles are duly recognised and valued and whereby opportunities for development are equitable across the trust.

There is strong evidence to indicate that the education sector is experiencing increased pressures as we continue to navigate through the fragments of the pandemic, a cost of living crisis and worldwide uncertainty. With burnout and compassion fatigue being a very real occupational phenomenon, we are seeing a national shortage of teachers which is increasing the strain on the education sector as a whole.

In addition, the world around us is changing. There has been much progress in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion, social mobility and gender equality which has been kick started by social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too, and national legislation such as the Gender Pay Gap Regulations and the 'Good Work Plan' (2018). Globalisation is driving advances in technology, changes in demographics and the way in which people think about work. With an ageing workforce, generational diversity and an increasing focus on health and wellbeing, it is imperative that we think innovatively about how we intend to attract and retain good staff and continue to meet the needs of our workforce, responding to the value of life and the world around us as much as career.

Here at FRMAT, we are committed to taking firm action to respond to this in order to ensure our Trust is attractive to high calibre recruits and provides essential support, development, recognition and a sense of belonging for all staff so that we are able to retain and nurture the talent of our future.

This Charter sets out FRMAT's promise to its workforce and sets the tone for the way in which we intend to do business. All of our HR policies and procedures centre on this charter to ensure we apply the principles within it systematically and robustly.

This Charter sets out our approach to:

- Staff wellbeing
- Workload reduction for teachers
- Ethical leadership and ethical principles
- Talent management and succession planning
- Training and professional development for all
- Supervision, coaching and mentoring
- Meaningful employee voice
- Reward and recognition
- Belonging and inclusion

This may never be a finished article. We know that as the organisation develops and as we learn more about what our staff need in order to thrive in their roles and working environments, we will be adding to and shaping our approach.

I hope this document will serve as a guiding light, inspiring each individual in the MAT to trust in our collective contributions to ensuring this highly performing trust is one where we all belong, delivering a place of pride and fulfilment for all.

Becky Webb, CEO



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Section One: Belonging and Inclusion

At the heart of this charter lies our intent to build an organisation where every single staff member thrives in an environment of genuine inclusion and belonging. Our vision is characterised by a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and the promotion of psychological safety and belonging for all staff.

Inclusion and equity for all

We recognise that our team is a homogenous group; we celebrate and understand that our people are individuals with differing needs, characteristics and behaviours. This is why equality and equity form the basis of every policy, every procedure and every practice. We are committed to protecting all characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Discrimination has no place in our trust. Our charter is resolute in its dedication to tackling discrimination in all its forms, including unintended micro aggressions. We embrace a proactive stance, extending our commitment beyond legal obligations to ensure that individuals with protected characteristics are not only welcomed but actively supported. By fostering an environment that appreciates and celebrates the richness that diversity brings, we aim to create a school community where everyone can thrive and contribute their best.

At FRMAT, we maintain a zero tolerance approach to harassment and bullying in any form. We are committed to fostering safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for all, taking proactive measures to prevent harassment and address any issues promptly and effectively. While we uphold our responsibilities, we also urge all staff to play an active role in creating a positive workplace by being 'active bystanders'. This means that we will all safely intervene and challenge the behaviour to consistently reinforce the message of zero tolerance in our workplace. All staff are encouraged to immediately report bullying or harassment whenever it occurs and be safe in the knowledge that they will be fully protected under the Trust's whistleblowing procedure. All reports will be treated with the utmost seriousness and addressed in a fair and confidential manner, reinforcing our commitment to a culture of dignity and respect for everyone.

We have developed significant expertise and experience in meeting the needs of neurodivergent children, and we apply the same diligence, understanding and support to our staff team. We celebrate the rich diversity of our workforce and recognise and appreciate the unique talents and perspectives that neurodivergent individuals bring to our team. We are also acutely aware of the challenges facing individuals in working environments.

Understanding that neurodivergent individuals may experience the world differently, we recognise that we have a responsibility to ensure equity for colleagues to help them grow, belong and thrive in our trust.

Belonging

Belonging in the workplace is a sense of connection, acceptance and inclusion that individuals feel within the academy. It goes beyond mere co-existence and tolerance. We believe that staff members should not only fit into the workplace culture but also feel valued, respected and an integral part of the organisation. A strong sense of belonging contributes to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and overall wellbeing amongst employees. It is characterised by employees feeling comfortable expressing their authentic selves, having a voice and being confident that they are an essential part of the team.

It is for this reason that all our policies and procedures reflect a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), that we provide annual training on DEI, embed open communication and feedback channels (including the WIDE network– see section 2) and work closely with our leaders to ensure there is an active and demonstrable commitment to DEI which sets the tone for championing inclusive practices and creating a culture of belonging.

Psychological Safety

An essential part of this sense of belonging is psychological safety and the notion that we work in an organisation where it is safe to speak out. We are committed to developing a workplace where psychological safety is not just a concept but a living reality. We recognise that in order for our academies to flourish, every staff member must feel secure in expressing their thoughts, concerns and ideas without fear of repercussion or rejection. It is our promise to establish an environment that encourages open conversations, values diverse perspectives and ensures that everyone's voices are heard and valued.

Section Two: FRMAT's Ethical Principles: Humans first, professionals second

'There is a tendency for people to get rigid and caught up in their beliefs of what is right and wrong, and they lose sight of humanity. Being human has to come first before right or wrong'

Matisyahu (Jewish American reggae vocalist, beatboxer, and alternative rock musician)

If we are to foster a workplace culture that is harmonious, supportive and respectful, it is paramount that we recognise our shared values and ethical considerations which are outlined here and which serve as the compass guiding our collective responsibilities as employees of FRMAT.

'Humans first, professionals second' is at the very essence of our shared purpose and commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of our team. This does not translate into sentimentality, or an unwillingness to take difficult decisions or hold challenging conversations. We are committed to creating an environment where the conditions are right and our colleagues are happy to be held to account.

Our Ethical Principles are outlined below. They form the bedrock of this charter and shape our behaviour which resonates in every decision and interaction we make.

We expect all staff within our Trust to:

1. Show vision, conviction and authority and lead by example.
2. Understand what needs to be done, do it right and on time.
3. Be very organised.
4. Fulfil their role by positively upholding our procedures and strategic vision.
5. Uphold the trust's reputation, values and beliefs at all times and proactively promote the trust in positive light when engaging with others either internally or externally.
6. Proactively promote the positives of the communities that we serve and actively challenge any prejudice or negative assumptions.
7. Know the trust's core policies and plans and keep up to date with developments.
8. If leading the learning of others, do so by demonstrating high-quality work with excellent outcomes based on evidence.
9. Develop colleagues through encouragement, coaching, continuing professional development and providing opportunities, helping to create a no-blame culture where mistakes are learnt from. This means developing a culture whereby staff feel they can freely suggest, discuss, challenge, question - and be heard.
10. Support our children by maintaining good discipline and helping them achieve great outcomes.
11. Work with others by building and maintaining good links with other schools and outside organisations.
12. Trust in others and be trustworthy themselves.

13. Show integrity at all times. As a trust we are committed to fully consulting with staff on policies, procedures and key decisions; however we realise there will be times when staff will not agree with the decisions made. We therefore encourage staff to raise issues directly with leaders rather than engaging in dialogue with colleagues which could magnify the issue and create division.
14. Be consistent in the treatment of others all the time and take great care not to transmit their own anxieties or feelings on to others.
15. All staff, whether teaching or support staff, to commit to the philosophy: 'Every (teacher) needs to improve not because they are not good enough but because they can be even better' through a culture of deliberate and sustained practice (Dylan Williams).
16. Help to implement a 'growth mindset' culture throughout school.
17. Be sensitive to people's circumstances and understand that colleagues could be experiencing challenges we know nothing about.
18. Actively support the ethos of caring for the mental health of others, making us a place people do not want to leave!
19. Act as a role model always for staff, children and parents. Treat everyone with a high degree of respect dealing with all issues in a highly professional calm manner.
20. Promote a whole team culture by avoiding the use of behaviours that purposely exclude others. This includes challenging personal and sometimes subconscious bias in how we interact and treat others within the organisation e.g. the creation of 'cliques', favouritism of individuals over others and the subtleties associated with greeting and / or interacting with colleagues that can lead individuals to feel excluded, inferior, compromised, humiliated or overlooked.
21. Respect colleagues at every level within the organisation and understand that leaders have a very specific role to undertake and this involves holding individuals to account. Staff should respect the organisation's procedures and any challenges to these should be made professionally and ethically.

We will all aim to abide by the principles of public life:

- Selflessness – to act for the greater good, not for our own power, status or relationships.
- Honesty – to reflect issues as they are and to be honest with each other.
- Openness – to explain our actions and respond to criticism, not just demand compliance.
- Integrity – to do what is right, and what builds up a solid and reliable education system.
- Objectivity – to make decisions on merit not because they make life easier.
- Accountability – to take responsibility for our actions, as public servants.
- Leadership – to act according to these six principles and enable others to do so.

All leaders in our trust will be:

- Highly visible so we lead and support our colleagues and reassure our children and parents. We need to be systematic about visibility and holding other to account for it.
- Collaborative. We always strive to co-construct in collaboration with colleagues, where appropriate, based on a consultative approach. We work with colleagues to ensure that final decisions are properly understood.
- Able to see a broad picture and link it to the school's plans: resisting panic, fashions and gimmicks.
- Resistant to short cuts or easy answers, remembering that human interaction is rightly costly.
- Mindful of making ethical decisions that are based on the needs of our children, communities and staff without personal bias or agenda.
- Able to investigate, research, analyse, plan, implement and evaluate – and enable others to do so.
- Concerned for the work life balance of our profession and the future of school leadership by making sustainable choices; not modelling, promoting or expecting a damaging long hours culture. Wherever possible we should reduce demands and encourage professional freedom while maintaining success e.g. communication with others as per the Trust's [Communications Policy](#).
- United so that all team members support one another – but having difficult conversations when necessary, to ensure equity over equality by providing additional support for those who need it.
- Engaging and circulating at events such as briefings, PDMs and socials so we actively dispel any feelings of favouritism.
- Upholding importance and value of SLT being much more visible in classes so it becomes the norm and not feared.
- Reinforcing whenever we can the value of open-door culture for every classroom and office.
- Actively working together to mitigate against an 'us and them' culture, including everyone all the time.
- Handling complaints and challenge sensitively and seriously to ensure a fair and transparent process for all.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Ensuring that all forms of communication - including written, body language and spoken - are professional at all times, whether with parents, colleagues, children or visitors. Upholding the agreed Communications Policy.

Section Three: Meaningful Employee Voice

If we are to keep our promise to develop FRMAT as an organisation that responds to the needs of our workforce and one that is focused on inclusion and belonging, we have to be able to find ways of obtaining meaningful employee voice.

Our commitment to achieving meaningful voice extends beyond a mere acknowledgment of diversity; it is a pledge to create a culture where diverse perspectives, experiences, and ideas serve as the driving force behind our collective innovation and progress. In valuing the richness that comes with varied viewpoints, we seek to empower each member of our organisation to contribute meaningfully, ensuring that their voices resonate in the decisions that shape our shared goals.

Through a variety of different employee voice channels, we aim to:

- Build trust through listening and responding to your ideas, suggestions and feedback
- Promote psychological safety by consistently validating opinion and feedback in line with our ethical principles (no question is stupid, no suggestion is ignored, no feedback is rejected)
- Implement positive and equitable change in line with your feedback where this aligns with this charter, with budgetary restraints and with organisational and operational strategy
- Retain happy and satisfied staff
- Improve inclusion and integration across our staff teams

We acknowledge the variety of factors that can affect staff engagement in providing feedback and suggestions; shift patterns conflicting with meeting times, confidence to speak up in large groups, etc.

In order to respond to this we have set out to provide a number of different voice mechanisms which we hope will increase contribution and help us to capture the important feedback that will lead to continuous improvement. It is our aspiration that through these mechanisms and with maximum contribution and participation we can embed trust and psychological safety which in turn helps FRMAT to become a better workplace for all.

In order to capture your feedback, suggestions and ideas, the following voice mechanisms are in place:

1) Corridor Conversations

Not everybody enjoys the formality of a meeting and we fully recognise that large groups can be intimidating for some. The FRMAT senior team (CEO and Director) as well as trustees of the board are regularly present in our academies to ensure visibility and approach. We have also set aside some regular opportunities throughout the year where we will be present for the sole purpose of 'corridor conversations'. The dates of these will be communicated to all staff each year.

This provides staff with an opportunity to speak to us directly about any issues, concerns, suggestions or general feedback. It is completely informal and can take place one on one or in small groups. We will capture the feedback received and use this to inform decisions and developments.

2) WIDE (Wellbeing, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) Network

The WIDE network was set up in November 2023 in response to feedback given to leaders through the annual staff survey. Staff members fed back a number of important issues which leaders felt needed to be unpicked further in order to make meaningful change that represents the views of the wider workforce.

The WIDE network has formal constitution and delegated responsibilities and is an important part of the strategic development of the trust. The issues discussed at the WIDE network (one in each academy) are reported to local governing bodies, trust board and to the central MAT team to ensure matters are heard and to ensure accountability for the implementation of agreed changes.

Representation from across all groups of staff form part of the constitution of the network and representatives work collaboratively with their colleagues to raise issues of importance.

The WIDE network is tasked with:

- Driving discussions on all areas of staff wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, belonging, compassion fatigue and psychological safety.
- Representing the views of themselves and their fellow team members in the academy by developing a mechanism for staff to feed into the group with ideas and suggestions.
- Considering experiences of other staff with a view to exploring initiatives to reduce workload. The group will put forward proposals for consideration by the Principal and their SLT and or Local Governing Body / CEO.
- Promoting activities and best practice to help achieve enhanced health (both physical and mental) and wellbeing of FRMAT staff.
- Receiving internal and external reports (e.g. staff survey feedback) and guidance on staff welfare and proposing actions for the Trust to respond to this.
- Promoting strategies for good mental health across the trust and supporting each other as appropriate

3) Annual staff survey

The annual FRMAT staff survey is a valuable opportunity for individuals to share insights and perspectives on various aspects of our work environment including but not limited to:

- Communication and decision making
- Wellbeing, health and work life balance
- Psychological safety and belonging
- The working environment (facilities and amenities)
- Roles and relationships
- Leadership, management and culture
- Equity, diversity and inclusion

The primary purpose of the survey is to collect your thoughts, opinions and feedback about your experiences at FRMAT. Your insights provide us with a comprehensive understanding of the workplace dynamics, allowing us to celebrate our strengths and identify areas that we can improve.

Your feedback is also instrumental in shaping the future of FRMAT. By highlighting areas that are working well and pinpointing those that may need attention, the survey enables us to implement targeted strategies for continuous improvement. It acts as a diagnostic tool to assess various aspects of our organisational effectiveness which helps us to make informed decisions and tailor our initiatives to better align with your needs. Finally, it helps us to gauge

your overall job satisfaction and engagement so that we can create a healthier, happier workplace.

In accordance with our commitment to wellbeing and workload reduction, time will be given during directed hours to allow staff members to complete the survey.

The survey results, once submitted, are seen only by the Clerk to the Trust Board who liaises solely with the Chair of Trust Board in providing an anonymised summary of the themes. This is then fed back to the CEO and Director, who work with Principals to consider the feedback in more detail. A summary of the findings is then shared with staff alongside a proposal of how we intend to respond to the feedback in a 'You Said, We Did' section of the FRMAT intranet.

Themes arising from the staff survey will also be put to the WIDE committee to unpick further with a view to helping leaders make meaningful change where appropriate.

4) Instant feedback facility

In the staff survey in 2023, you told us that you would like to have ways in which you can offer feedback year round instead of waiting for the next annual survey. Whilst there are other mechanisms that facilitate this (casual conversations with leaders and direct email to the central MAT team, open door leadership policy), we felt it was important to develop this as a facility.

Staff can now use the instant feedback button which is located on the intranet (Trust News and Communications Page). The feedback can be submitted anonymously, or you can choose to include your name and email if you require a direct response. Your comments will be viewed by the CEO and Director and responses will be provided regularly in the 'You Said, We Did' section of the intranet.

5) Staff forums

Every half term, the CEO holds a staff forum.

The main purpose of the forum is to deliver important messages and trust developments with academy staff. However, the forums also provide a question and answer session giving an opportunity for all staff to raise questions or ideas. The dates for forums are published at the start of the year to give advance warning and are held during directed time.

The forums have an open invitation to all FRMAT staff and can be held in person or remotely. Whilst we appreciate not all staff members are able to attend these forums (due to shift patterns or other reasons), we take steps to ensure anyone who isn't present receives a summary of the discussions in written form or via team meetings.

6) Open door policy

All leadership within the MAT adopt an open door policy. This means that staff are able to access leadership advice, support and ask questions at any time of the day (as long as children are appropriately supervised). If the door to the Principal / leaders' office is closed it is because a meeting is in progress.

Section Three: Wellbeing

Our academies have developed significantly under the leadership of the MAT and we have seen transformational and positive change in all areas of school operations and outcomes. We know that in order to support our commitment to be a 'great place to work', we need to further embed the principles of ethical leadership and create a supportive culture which puts staff wellbeing at the forefront of our strategic development.

Wellbeing is influenced by a myriad of factors encompassing physical, psychological and social dimensions. We recognise that wellbeing in its widest sense is holistic and incorporates our personal lives as well as our working lives.

In the embedding of this charter and in creating cultures that promote collaboration, fairness, happiness and inclusion, we feel confident that we can continue to develop the right strategies that support the whole person. The following outlines the strategies already in place to support wellbeing and work life balance in FRMAT:

1) Mental and Physical Health

Good health is the cornerstone of overall wellbeing, influencing how we think, feel and navigate the challenges of life. It enables us to form healthy relationships, make sound decisions and cope with the stresses of daily living.

However, the journey to positive mental and physical health is complex and dynamic, with various factors contributing to our state of health at different junctures in life. Stressful life events, trauma, genetic predispositions, neurodiversity, global events, biological factors and societal pressures are just a few of the multifaceted elements that can have an impact on us.

Whilst we recognise that we cannot prevent these challenges from occurring, we can offer support and strategies that promote good physical and mental health in the workplace and help to reduce stigma and encourage open dialogue about mental health. The following outlines some of the strategies in place:

2) Mental Health Policy and Trained Mental Health First Aiders

The Trust team have co-constructed the [mental health policy](#) through consultation events and partnerships with psychologists. The intention of the policy is to establish a comprehensive framework that prioritises and promotes the mental wellbeing of our team.

In each of the academies and within the central trust team, there are several fully trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs). MHFAs play a crucial role in the workplace by providing initial support to individuals experiencing mental health challenges. Similar to traditional first aid for physical health, MHFA is designed to offer immediate assistance to someone dealing with a mental health issue or crisis until professional help can be obtained (where appropriate). MHFAs are trained to recognise the early signs and symptoms of a range of mental health challenges. They help to create a safe and non-judgmental space for individual by offering empathy, active listening and effective signposting.

3) Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The trust has invested in an Employee Assistance Programme for every member of staff. This programme offers a completely free and confidential telephone 24/7 helpline for every staff member and their families (16 years and over). The helpline offers counselling and advice on a variety of personal, family or workplace issues including bereavement, financial advice, divorce and separation and others. The package also includes six counselling sessions each year (face to face or telephone) for every staff member, as well as exclusive access to a website which is full of resources and links for external support.

4) Progressive policies

We understand that life is filled with both joyous and challenging events. In times of challenge we believe it is essential that we are able to take an empathetic approach in our HR policies and procedures. In addition, with the application and embedding of this charter, we will be able to help individuals, even in a small way, to navigate life altering events such as bereavement, divorce and separation, ill health, and care for dependents.

We also recognise the events and moments that are integral to individual lives. We understand the importance of religious events and that these hold significant personal and cultural meaning. We strive to accommodate reasonable requests to ensure that everyone can participate without undue stress. Moreover, we acknowledge that family plays a pivotal role in our team's lives. Events such as dependents' performances in plays, graduation ceremonies and family weddings are important milestones and as such we always strive to apply flexibility to allow attendance where possible. We aim to strike the right balance between organisational effectiveness and continuity of service for our children with positivity and empathy for staff.

We work closely with all major unions through our JCNC (Joint Consultative Negotiation Council) to review policies on behalf of our team. Our intention is to challenge traditional norms and embrace progressive policies that go beyond mere compliance.

Examples of such policies include: Menopause (supporting women in the workplace), Family Friendly Policy (including generous maternity and paternity packages), Flexible Working Policy and Religious Observance.

5) Healthy Meals and Exercise

Within all our academies, we commission catering services that include provision for staff. Part of our rigorous contract management include quality assuring the provision for staff and that healthy, balanced options are available at affordable prices.

Physical activity is a good way of maintaining positive mental health and as a trust we fully support staff members to be active during the school day. We have preserved the use of academy sports halls to facilitate several fitness sessions for staff led by in-school sports coaches. Our trustees have also led mindful walking sessions and our trust events have given opportunities for staff to sample different types of physical activity (e.g. Yoga, Tai Chi). Cycle storage is available at each site and national cycle purchase schemes have been promoted to staff. We are committed to doing more in consultation with our staff team to promote physical activity across the trust.

6) Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in neurological development, encompassing conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and others.

In FRMAT we embrace the rich diversity of our workforce and recognise and appreciate the unique talents and perspectives that neurodivergent individuals bring to our team. However, we also understand that neurodivergent individuals may face specific challenges in the workplace, including difficulty with social cues, sensory sensitivities, demand avoidance, communication differences and executive functioning.

Neurodivergent individuals can also be adversely and disproportionately affected in relation to mental wellbeing and discrimination. Deciding whether to disclose neurodivergent conditions can be challenging for individuals. Fear or stigma of negative perceptions may influence an individual's decision to disclose. It is therefore important that we develop cultures that openly embrace differences and provide an organisation-wide strategy of support. We have developed significant expertise and experience in meeting the needs of neurodivergent children and we apply the same diligence, understanding and support to our staff team.

Understanding that individuals within this group may experience the world differently, we aim to treat neurodivergent people in a way that respects and accommodates their diverse strengths and challenges. This may mean that HR policies and procedures are applied in a different way for some staff to ensure we can provide the support necessary. This is the same for those with disabilities or long term conditions who may need innovative measures of support in order to succeed. Our tailored approach is not about singling out individuals but rather ensuring that everyone has equal and equitable opportunities to thrive.

We recognise the importance of educating the wider workforce about neurodiversity to ensure individuals' needs are met across the board and recognised by colleagues. Our senior team are undergoing training on this topic in order to enable in-house training and development for all staff.

7) Workload Reduction

We are acutely aware of the pressures on individuals working within the education sector.

According to ASCL, the majority of organisations who participated in a survey (2022) reported that retaining teachers in their school or trust had been difficult and that the prominent reasons cited for this was workload. But we also recognise that this nationwide shortage of teachers alongside public sector budget pressures has led to an increased strain on support roles and the sector as a whole.

We continually consult with staff to identify ways to reduce workload. An example of this is a move to 'in the moment' feedback instead of lengthy marking comments. Planning and resources are created in year group networks supported by senior leaders. This has reduced workload and improved quality by distributing subjects across the team so each teacher can concentrate on fewer subjects in greater detail. Members of the team can play to their strengths with the narrower focus on areas of interest and expertise.

There are many more workload reduction measures such as: reduced assessments and data collections, parent meetings during directed time, additional PPA time for early career teachers, accrual of time to be used flexibly, management time, early closures for training,

PPA time at home, no email responses expected outside agreed hours, and reviews of policies to reduce unnecessary tasks.

FRMAT is committed to going even further to address workload reduction. It is our ultimate goal to achieve efficiency in everything we do and only continue to develop procedures where they are absolutely necessary. We regularly review our policies and procedures and where an aspect of it increases workload but is not adding value, we remove it. FRMAT continually seeks feedback from staff members and unions to ascertain what is working well and how we can further reduce workload and enable a better work life balance.

The WIDE network is also tasked with identifying additional strategies to support workload reduction and this is always a priority for our Principals and Senior Teams.

8) Safe and comfortable working environments

The trust invests a lot in ensuring our premises are safe, comfortable, and conducive to working and learning. Our schools have undergone significant transformation since the academy trust formed and we are proud of the improvements made. Our premises are subject to regular inspections, spot checks and audits to ensure our high standards of safety and security remain intact for staff and children. There are rigorous health and safety policies in place, and risk assessments are conducted regularly to ensure the academies are safe and free of unnecessary risk to health and safety.

The trust is responsible for the condition of the academy buildings and grounds. There are detailed capital asset plans which set out the repair, maintenance and building projects necessary to keep the buildings safe and comfortable for our employees.

A clean and hygienic workplace not only creates a healthier environment for employees but also helps to create a more efficient and productive workforce. Across the Trust we have robust cleaning schedules in place to ensure the highest of standards are maintained. Our team are fully trained and onward CPD is facilitated and supported by the Trust and led by the MAT Facilities Manager.

It is important that the working environment is aesthetically pleasing. This helps us to create a good first impression to visitors and it also helps our children and staff to feel happy and comfortable in their surroundings. An asset management plan is agreed by the trust annually and ensures the rolling redecoration and regular maintenance of our schools to prevent deterioration and the need for larger scale, more costly repair.

We have improved site security by installing better cameras, fencing, gates, access systems, doors and windows. We take staff safety very seriously so have staff parking available on each site. Personal safety alarms can be requested for anyone who feels vulnerable on their journey to work.

9) Socialisation

Socialisation is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, contributing significantly to overall wellbeing and mental health. Research indicates that social connections play a crucial role in reducing stress, fostering emotional resilience and promoting a positive sense of self (Uchino 2006, Holt-Lunstad et al 2010). However, individuals, especially those who are neurodivergent, may face challenges or exhibit a preference for limited socialisation.

Within FRMAT we recognise the importance of socialisation while respecting individual differences and we therefore adopt a supportive approach rather than imposing social norms.

We have put in place several initiatives to facilitate and encourage different methods of social interaction in our schools, including:

- The preserving of comfortable and inviting **staff rooms** across the trust. No matter how limited the space, we ensure there is a protected, dedicated staff room – this ensures that colleagues have somewhere they can relax and socialise away from the classroom. We believe these areas should be attractive, have comfortable seating for eating at tables and for relaxing. We also promote the furnishing of staff rooms with cushions, plants and books to create a feeling of relaxation and belonging. We encourage all staff to spend time away from their desks and take a break in the staffrooms to provide opportunities for social interaction every day.
- **Social events** are important in all workplaces as they create opportunities for staff to develop friendships, seek support, interact with each other and de-stress after a busy term. All our social events are publicised and open to all, though the trust does also support smaller team bonding experiences. Quizzes, celebrations, festivals and end of term socials can be planned by colleagues and publicised on the networks and staff notice boards to allow an inclusive and friendly culture.

10) Support for our most senior leaders

Research indicates that that almost 1/3 of head teachers intend to leave the profession early and a further 10% are undecided about their future as a head (Greany et al 2022). A key reason for this cited by the head teachers surveyed cited workload and burnout as key reasons.

According to the World Health Organisation (2019) burnout is “an occupational phenomenon” and whilst it is not yet classified as a medical condition, it has been identified as a definitive cause of health decline and a specific reason for making contact with health services. It can be defined as a “syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” (WHO 2019).

This charter and the components of it (our strategies to reduce workload and improve wellbeing and mental health) will go some way to helping us to support our most senior leaders and reducing the risk of burnout in our organisations. In addition, the excellent support they receive from the wider team every day is imperative in order to achieve academy wide success.

However, we recognise that we need to do more to support our Principals and senior teams if they are to succeed in balancing the significant demands of the role.

FRMAT therefore provides wrap around support to Principals in the trust. This is an advantage that is not universally afforded by maintained schools and many large trusts. All our Principals receive one to one support from the CEO and Director and ‘Team Around The Academy’ (TATA) meetings to help navigate the sometimes unique challenges that arise in our schools.

In addition, we provide essential central services to help reduce workload for our senior leaders and help them to focus on teaching and learning. Central services include HR advice and guidance, financial budgeting, monitoring and reporting, financial audits and health checks, payroll services, estates and facilities support including health and safety audits,

governance support and risk management assistance. Our academies also receive intensive support on improvement planning and curriculum development.

We are committed to seeking further ways in which our most senior leaders can be supported so that we reduce the risk of burnout, maintain our schools as good places to work and help our staff and children to thrive.

Section Four: Supervision

Some roles in schools are inherently emotionally demanding. The daily interactions with children, the responsibility for their wellbeing and the exposure to various challenges they may face can contribute to compassion fatigue – a state of emotional exhaustion and reduced ability to empathise with others (Figley 1995).

Recognising the potential toll on the emotional health of school professionals, FRMAT has introduced the use of supervision. Supervision refers to a structured and supportive process where professionals receive guidance, feedback and an opportunity to debrief on the day's challenges, helping them to navigate the complex emotional landscape of their role.

We apply a system of peer supervision and group supervision for targeted roles which offers a platform for reflection, skill development and the sharing of experiences. Enhanced training has been provided for those providing supervision and they themselves also receive the same support.

Section Five: FRMAT's Approach to Professional Development

a) Professional Development NOT Performance Management

FRMAT has taken a transformational approach to professional development. We have taken the bold decision to decouple pay from performance which means all staff (except senior leaders) automatically increment through the pay scale annually.

This strategy supports FRMAT's goal which is to build trust and retain happy, autonomous staff because it removes the need for individuals to justify their in-year performance in order to progress through the pay scale. It is now assumed that staff will progress unless exceptional circumstances exist, e.g. if a formal capability process is underway.

Individuals receive an annual personal development review which focuses on areas for professional development and takes individuals beyond the basic expectations of the role and identifies stretching personal objectives that link to the development of essential skills related to sociability, thinking, aspirational, resilience and knowledge (STARK).

This reflects the trust's rejection of traditional 'high stakes' accountability and data driven targets in favour of a professional development culture where staff are able to focus on CPD, innovation, research-based reflection and skill development.

b) Coaching

'In high-functioning settings, people want to be held to account for their work. But no one wants to be made to feel stupid. Good leaders understand that everyone wants to get better at what they do. It is so rewarding to track our progress from novice to expert, from clumsy to proficient, from unsure to confident. But we can't do this on our own. Individuals will want to do their best work and acknowledge that they may need advice and support along the way.'

Mary Myatt, Back on Track, 2020.

Coaching and mentoring play a pivotal role in the professional development and overall effectiveness of staff in our academies. In the dynamic field of education, where individuals face diverse challenges and opportunities, coaching serves as a catalyst for growth and improvement.

FRMAT has a wealth of expertise and experience and we have invested in further training and CPD for senior leaders and teachers so that they can lead and coach with confidence. Through this approach we are able to empower staff to reflect on their practices, set meaningful goals and refine their skills.

Senior leadership teams use a wide range of approaches including lesson study protocols, research teams, peer support networks, team teaching, reciprocal coaching and instructional coaching.

Through the instructional coaching process, individuals are encouraged to use their reflections to plan their actions and consider how and when they will act and review impact. This involves the questioning skills needed in the GROW model but allows the coach to provide expertise and experience to guide and support the coachee as appropriate.

The GROW model of coaching is very much embedded into the professional development review process and forms an annual entitlement for every member of staff so that they are supported and encouraged in their onward growth and development.

c) Networking

As a MAT which is committed to collaboration, we fully encourage and support networking opportunities across the trust. Professional networking provides a multitude of benefits beyond individual career advancement. The importance of professional networking lies in its capacity to create a web of meaningful connections, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation within and beyond the organisation. As individuals we can gain access to diverse perspectives, expertise and resources, enabling us to tackle challenges more effectively and stay abreast of educational and related practice. This serves to support our individual and professional development.

Networking opens doors to enhanced team dynamics, improved communication and a more cohesive and integrated workforce, which leads to collective intelligence and success for the entire Trust.

Across the MAT we have established several internal networks which bring together staff from across the trust and enable individuals to work together to share practice and ideas. These include teaching and learning (key stages / subject specific), SEND, pastoral, admin, finance, HR etc.

Through the teaching networks, teachers are able to plan and resource topics collaboratively, thus reducing workload and sharing expertise to ensure lessons are of high quality.

Leaders also work beyond the organisation in collaboration with other leaders both regionally and nationally.

In addition to networking across schools, we work hard to forge and maintain networks with local groups and businesses within the community.

d) Research-led practice and Innovation

FRMAT is committed to being an organisation that is outward-looking and continually adapts in line with research-based good practice and innovation. This is crucial for fostering continuous improvement and ensuring the delivery of high quality education for our children. By maintaining an outward focus we are able to tap into the latest advancements, methodologies, strategies and best practices that emerge from ongoing research in education and support services.

This research-led approach extends to our professional development of our staff and we are unapologetic about our expectations in relation to this.

We encourage research-led practice and innovation in the following ways:

- Subscribing to Professional Associations (Geography Association, History Association, CIPD etc.)
- Promoting networking and collaboration beyond the trust
- Providing dedicated time for professional development (subject leadership time / management time, SENDcO time etc.)
- Participating in research projects and inquiry based learning within our academies
- Providing investment in the professional growth of individuals in accordance with individual training needs arising from the professional development review

- Encouraging school professionals to embrace challenges and view setbacks as opportunities for growth, creating a positive atmosphere for research-led practice
- Incorporating research in decision making
- Encouraging internal research initiatives amongst teachers, allowing them to work together on projects that address specific challenges or areas of interest.
- Creating a centralised hub on the staff intranet where teachers and other professionals can access the latest research articles, educational journals and relevant publications. They can also access quality curriculum resources and good practice lesson plans.

e) Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Training and Development

Mandatory training in school settings is of utmost importance to ensure the safety, wellbeing and professional development of staff and children. Mandatory training includes safeguarding, diversity, equity and inclusion, health and safety, fire safety etc. Most mandatory training is repeated annually and is delivered in a variety of methods including face to face training, reading and online e-learning modules.

The trust utilises the Virtual College for most mandatory training and staff are sent links to e-learning modules periodically to ensure they can stay abreast of important topics and refresh their knowledge.

The Virtual College is an online platform which houses a variety of certified training courses which also cover non mandatory topics to support personal and professional development such as resilience, emotional intelligence and imposter syndrome. The platform includes podcasts, presentations and short courses that are available to all staff.

Section Six: Talent Management and Succession Planning

FRMAT recognises the importance of talent management which is the process of attracting, developing, nurturing and retaining skilled staff within the trust. It involves identifying and developing potential leaders within the organisation and ensures a pipeline of qualified individuals ready to progress into leadership, thus helping the trust to ensure sustainability and succession.

The professional development review process includes a competency succession matrix based on the Huntington 9 Box Model. Please see below:

P E R F O R M A N C E	Expert	Strong Performer	Peak
	Truly great performance in current role. Backbone of the school. Little aspiration for a leadership role. <i>Celebrate contribution: ensure opportunities to maintain commitment to the job and to share / deepen expertise.</i>	Truly great performance in current role. Key member of staff. Shows some capacity for (further) leadership roles. <i>Provide more breadth or complexity in current role: develop further STARK characteristics explicitly for leadership role.</i>	Truly great performer in current role. Shows significant capacity for future leadership roles. Versatile with a high probability of success when promoted. <i>Focus on securing a promotion into a new leadership role ASAP.</i>
	Fit for current role	Good	Rising
	Good performance in current role. Currently shows limited readiness to perform beyond current role. <i>Support development to improve current practice and discuss developing STARK characteristics through development opportunities.</i>	Good performance in current role. Shows some capacity for (further) leadership roles. <i>Focus on strengthening performance whilst exploring how to develop specific STARK characteristics through appropriate development opportunities.</i>	Good performance in current role and showing clear signs of improvement. Shows significant capacity for (further) leadership roles. <i>Support to stronger performance whilst identifying a suitable leadership role and honing STARK characteristics through specific development opportunities.</i>
	Learner	Developing	Unrealised capacity
	Potential to improve in current role. Currently shows limited readiness to perform beyond current role. <i>Support to improve performance in current role.</i>	Potential to improve in current role. Shows some capacity for leadership roles. <i>Support to improve in current role and begin discussion about developing STARK characteristics through development opportunities, when timely.</i>	Potential to improve in current role. Shows significant capacity for leadership roles. <i>Provide mentoring support to improve performance in current role, whilst planning to build upon clear STARK characteristics.</i>
	CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP		

The individual reflects on where they think they are positioned on the grid as part of the professional development process. A shared discussion then takes place with their reviewer to come to an agreement.

The STARK model provides an integrated and collaborative approach to identifying, mapping, nurturing and honing talent whilst informing effective retention strategies and robust succession plans. It also provides a tool for assessing and driving up equality within our MAT to ensure employees with all protected characteristics, and particularly people of colour and other minority ethnic groups, have equal access to career opportunities and receive fair treatment in the workplace.

Once collated, the information provided to MAT leaders will help to identify:

- Whether or not there are immediate successors for key roles across the trust and what actions need to be taken to secure these
- Where there are commonalities in development needs that would suggest a need for themed, cross MAT CPD
- What needs to be done as a matter of priority in order to retain key staff and prepare them for future leadership roles within the MAT

Such analysis supports the Executive Leadership Team and Trust Board to validate and or challenge their intuition about where the skills lie within the trust and put into action some solid plans for ensuring effective onward succession.

Talent management is carefully planned to ensure that promotion opportunities and professional development is available to all eligible members of the trust teams. The skills, experience and ambition in our workforce is vast and it would be remiss not to take steps to retain and nurture this talent. All internal jobs are advertised across the trust before going out to external advert and we support individuals with bespoke CPD opportunities in order to invest in their future potential as well as their current role.

Section Seven: Trust Communications

Working in a busy trust can bring challenges in relation to achieving effective communication. Time is precious and dedicated as much as possible to teaching and learning for children. With this in mind, we have had to think creatively about how we communicate effectively with our team.

Clear and open communication is essential as it provides our employees with a comprehensive understanding of their roles, expectations and the broader context in which the trust operates. We recognise that good communication enhances trust, as individuals feel valued when they are kept informed about important decisions, changes and achievements. Additionally, a robust communication framework encourages an open exchange of ideas, feedback and concerns, creating a culture that values diverse perspectives.

We have put in place the following initiatives to support effective communications across our trust:

- Open door policies in all our academies whereby issues can be discussed in the moment
- Staff forums (with the main aim being to provide essential communications about the developments within the trust)
- Quarterly trust newsletters
- Team meetings
- The publishing of core governor and trust meeting minutes on the intranet and internet
- Children's Newsletter
- Staff intranet

The staff intranet provides a central platform for all trust related information including: policies and procedures, newsletters (past and present), HR related news, Finance information, Health and Safety guidance, resources on Health and Wellbeing, information about trust governance and resources to signpost individuals to support and advice.

Section Eight: Pay and Reward

FRMAT is committed to being an employer of choice, recognising that attracting and retaining top talent requires a comprehensive approach to pay and reward. We are clear therefore that our pay and reward offer should be competitive. Our total reward model encompasses not only competitive teacher and support staff salaries but also a range of tangible and intangible benefits that contribute to the overall wellbeing and job satisfaction of our team.

a) Base Pay for Teachers and Support Staff

In England, the approach to pay and reward for teachers is primarily structured based on the national framework (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document STPCD) which is agreed upon through negotiations between government representatives and teaching unions. The document outlines the minimum and maximum salary scales, as well as criteria for progression, ensuring a degree of consistency across the education sector.

For support staff, the approach is typically guided by a combination of national frameworks and local discretion. The National Joint Council (NJC) for local government sets the pay scales for many support staff roles in schools with negotiations between unions and local government representatives influencing annual pay awards. New roles are often emerging as the demands on the education sector increase. When new support roles are identified, they are subject to job evaluation which is a system in place to fairly and consistently grade roles in line with responsibilities, demands and scope.

The Trust has unapologetically decided to align with the national pay scales for teachers and support staff. This decision was taken to ensure fairness and transparency across the sector. This ensures employees in similar roles receive comparable compensation, contributing to an equitable work environment. National negotiated pay also helps the trust to maintain compliance with legal and regulatory requirements such as Pay and Gender Equality. In return, it helps provide stability and predictability for staff and peace of mind in the knowledge that pay scales have been subject to rigorous negotiation and challenge.

The most up to date pay scales for teachers and support staff are available on the trust intranet for easy reference.

While we adhere to national pay negotiations, we believe that individuals are motivated by more than just pay. That is why we offer a total reward package which includes the following elements:

b) Competitive Pension Scheme(s)

Staff members in FRMAT benefit from participating in highly competitive pension schemes. Exclusively for teachers, the Teachers Pensions Scheme (TPS) is a nationwide pension scheme that offers several advantages, including a defined benefit structure, which ensures a predictable and reliable income during retirement.

The employer contribution paid by FRMAT for members is 10%

For support staff, the South Yorkshire Pensions Scheme (SYPS) provides equally complete retirement benefits.

The employer contribution paid by FRMAT for members is:

Band	Pensionable Pay 2023/24	Contribution Rate Main Scheme	Contribution Rate 50/50 Section
1	Up to £16,500	5.50%	2.75%
2	Above £16,501 up to £25,900	5.80%	2.90%
3	Above £25,901 up to £42,100	6.50%	3.25%
4	Above £42,101 up to £53,300	6.80%	3.40%
5	Above £53,301 up to £74,700	8.50%	4.25%
6	Above £74,701 up to £105,900	9.90%	4.95%
7	Above £105,901 up to £124,800	10.50%	5.25%
8	Above £124,801 up to £187,200	11.40%	5.70%
9	Above £187,201	12.50%	6.25%

c) Retirement planning and support

FRMAT is in the process of designing a comprehensive package to support those who are nearing retirement. This programme aims to empower employees with knowledge and tools needed to make informed decisions about their financial wellbeing in retirement. Benefits will include retirement planning workshops, access to expert financial advice and guidance as well as optional flexible retirement options.

d) Employee Assistance Programme

Please refer to section 3b

e) Generous and progressive policies and procedures to support wellbeing and work life balance

Please refer to section 3c.

f) Employee Recognition and Rewards

Please refer to section 9.

Section Nine: Recognition and Rewards

In order to recognise and celebrate the contributions of our team members, FRMAT leaders are committed to designing a Recognition and Rewards programme in collaboration with colleagues through the WIDE network.

The aim of the programme is to create a culture whereby appreciation is not only expressed but also formally acknowledged. It goes above monetary incentives, encompassing a range of rewards to cater to diverse preferences. It is hoped that this will help to maintain good morale, job satisfaction and respond to the feedback that staff provided in the annual survey.

Examples of recognition might include long term service awards for excellent team work and recognition for research projects within the trust. An example already in place across our academies is the 'Golden Ticket' scheme. This rewards staff annually in the form of a day or half day gifted time off. This is offered in recognition of the fact that we know all staff go the extra mile in our academies.

These are just examples, however, and we have deliberately chosen to delegate the components of the recognition and reward strategy to the WIDE network. This decision was taken to allow staff themselves to design awards and rewards that are reflective and representative of trust wide preferences and collaborative voice.

We will update this Charter to reflect the rewards and awards that have been selected in due course.

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