



# Stress Management Policy

<b>Version</b>	1.1
<b>Approving Body</b>	Trust Board
<b>Date ratified</b>	27th September 2023
<b>Date issued</b>	1st October 2023
<b>Review date</b>	30th September 2026
<b>Owner</b>	Director of Resources
<b>Applies to</b>	All Trust Schools, all Trust staff

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason</b>
1.0	October 2020	To establish a Trust wide policy
1.1	October 2023	Periodic review

## Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	What is stress?	3
3	Signs of stress	3
4	Support	4
5	Record keeping and confidentiality	5
6	Review of policy	5
	Appendix 1: Guidance for managers and employees on dealing with stressful situations in schools	6

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 We have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the employees as far as reasonably practicable and to have reasonable care for the health and safety of our employees. This includes taking steps to minimise the risk of stress or stress-related illnesses. We are committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work related stress and aim to promote a culture of care and mutual support to minimise stress and to ensure all employees are able to do their job to their best ability. This in turn will help us provide high quality teaching and learning for our students.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to managing stress in the workplace.
- 1.3 Also contained within the policy is practical guidance for managers and employees on how to manage stressful situations set out in **appendix 1**.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all staff at the school (teachers and support staff), referred to as employee within this document.
- 1.5 This policy has been implemented following consultation with the staff and the recognised trade unions.
- 1.6 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

## 2 What is stress?

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related stress as ***“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work”***. They state that stress is not an illness but a ***“state”*** and that illness, whether mental and/or physical, develops as a result of stress which is prolonged and excessive.
- 2.2 A certain amount of pressure is a normal part of most jobs and it can be beneficial in helping to keep an individual motivated. However, there is an important distinction between working under pressure and when pressure becomes excessive and produces stress, which can be detrimental to health. We recognise that what triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person.
- 2.3 Stress may be experienced as a result of the workplace, external factors or a combination of both. Workplace factors could include the nature of the employee's work, the volume of the work, working hours, environmental factors, changes such as a restructure or redundancy programme or bullying or harassment by colleagues or third parties.
- 2.4 The Management Standards for work related stress define the way and organisation manages the risks from work related stress. There are six key areas that cover the primary sources of stress at work that if not managed effectively could leads to poor health, and reduced productivity and increased absence. These are Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change. An examination of these areas forms part of the stress risk assessment process that demonstrates good practice in managing stress (see **appendix 2**).

## 3 Signs of stress

- 3.1 Some common signs of stress are listed below. However experiencing one or more of these does not necessarily give an indication of stress.
  - Persistent or recurrent moods, for example anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness, mood swings (being tearful or over sensitive).
  - Physical effects e.g. aches and pains (headaches, back ache, neck ache), raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.
  - Poor and/or changed behaviours for example, increased absence levels (including arriving late at work), difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, loss of motivation, making more errors (poor performance), double checking everything, covering up mistakes by lying, working long hours/not

taking a break, changes to sleeping or eating habits, increased use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs, poor attitude, behaviour and relationships with colleagues.

- Prolonged or extreme exposure to the possible symptoms of stress is associated with serious chronic diseases such as heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety or depression.

- 3.2 Signs that an individual is experiencing stress will vary according to how the individual reacts to stress. Key for the line manager to be aware of, are changes in an individual's behaviour that are more than just a "one-off" incident.
- 3.3 These should be acted upon promptly and discussed with the employee. This will include offering support, such as encouraging the employee to seek advice from his or her GP, who will be able to make a diagnosis.

## 4 Support

- 4.1 We will monitor sickness absence and workloads, and ensure that there is clear communication within the school to promote a culture of open communication and encouragement. We will create reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss areas of concern in an environment where stress is not considered as a weakness or a failure. We will also hold return to work interviews with employees who have been absent in line with our Sickness Absence Policy, to establish whether there is any underlying problem and, if so, what the employer could do to address it.
- 4.2 We have measures available to support staff who may be suffering from stress.
- Online training on stress management, to assist staff and managers in recognising and coping with stress.
  - Access to telephone counselling and referral services for employees, with the potential for face-to-face counselling if required.
- 4.3 We will be alert to the possibility of stress as set out in paragraph 3. However, employees who believe they are suffering from stress should also ask their line manager, the Headteacher or another manager for help and support in the first instance.
- 4.4 Once an issue affecting an employee's health is brought to our attention, steps will be taken to support the employee to minimise the risk of harm and to identify additional arrangements to reduce the risk of work-related stress to as low a level as reasonably practicable. This may include the measures set out at 4.2 and in addition we may:
- carry out further investigations
  - review job descriptions to identify tasks that may involve stressors
  - carry out a risk assessment to evaluate the risk of work-related stress, considering the existing arrangements that are in place and ensure that significant findings of the risk assessment are recorded
  - carry out a stress risk assessment with the employee to identify whether stress is an issue with a view to addressing the situation. A stress risk assessment pro-forma is available from Judicium via your school office.
  - provide information and training, such as identifying opportunities for development relevant to the employee's position
  - refer the employee to occupational health in line with our Sickness Absence Policy
  - if an employee is absent from work due to sickness, apply the Sickness Absence Policy as applicable.

- 4.5 If stress is having a negative impact on an employee's performance, and his or her performance does not improve despite the manager having taken reasonable steps to alleviate pressure on the employee, it might be necessary for the school/academy to follow the Capability Procedure.

## 5 Record keeping and confidentiality

- 5.1 Information in relation to the management of stress at the school/academy will be kept to ensure an accurate record is available of what was discussed, actions taken and for monitoring purposes.
- 5.2 Records will be kept on the employee's personal file or with the school/academies H&S records. As part of the application of this policy, the [School/Academy/Trust] may collect, process and store personal data and special categories of data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of **Data Protection Legislation** (being (i) the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) (unless and until the GDPR is no longer directly applicable in the UK) and any national implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in the UK and then (ii) any successor legislation to the GDPR or the Data Protection Act 1998, including the Data Protection Act 2018). Records will be kept in accordance with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

## 6 Review of policy

- 6.1 This policy is reviewed every 3 years by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

## Appendix 1

### Guidance for managers and employees on dealing with stressful situations in schools

There are many different times in the school year that can provide additional pressure to employees. These may include:

- dealing with bad behaviour
- Ofsted Inspections
- report writing
- parent consultation/open evenings
- meeting with/calling parents
- accountability (targets)
- finance
- premises matters
- recruitment/ staffing issues
- conflict in the workplace

It is strongly advised that in order to combat these areas of pressure, employees should:

- attend all relevant induction/training/ Inset sessions that are provided so that they are aware of all school processes
- make themselves fully aware of the procedure to follow for each circumstance, for example. the School's Behaviour Policy, Grievance Procedure
- know who to call on for support if they need it
- admit that they are struggling before it becomes too difficult to cope with, and seek help and advice

Other ways that can help you at work and therefore deal with stress include:

- good diet (e.g. eat breakfast and lunch)
- drink plenty of water throughout the day
- learn to manage your time effectively
- exercise (including yoga and relaxation)
- take time out (e.g. don't work all weekend and evenings)
- avoid procrastination

All employees who are members of a Union or Professional Association are advised to contact them for support and guidance.

The headteacher/line managers could take the following steps to help to prevent stress:

- **encourage communication within the team:** Where employees feel that they can discuss problems with their colleagues this can help to reduce the risk of stress. This could be achieved by holding regular team meetings and encouraging staff to approach their manager and colleagues informally with any issues that they have.
- **foster good relations with employees:** Line managers should take the time to get to know their team members, so that changes to their normal behaviour are easier to spot.
- **ensure that employees have an appropriate amount of work to do:** Where employees feel that they are unable to cope with their workload, this can cause stress. Managers should review regularly the amount of work employees have, for example one to one meetings and regular appraisals. They should consider the impact of absences and departures on remaining staff and how the work can be shared fairly within the team.
- **ensure that individuals take proper breaks:** Managers should check that employees are not regularly working long hours and that they take regular breaks. If an employee is consistently working through lunch or beyond his or her contracted hours, the line manager should try to establish if this is because of a short-term increase in work or if it is a longer-term issue. The manager should set a good example by taking breaks and working appropriate hours.

- **have regular meetings with employees:** Having regular meetings with team members about their work will give line managers a good idea of what employees are doing and any problems that they have.
- **conduct performance reviews:** Line managers should carry out formal performance reviews with the individuals in their team in line with the school/academy policy and give employees the opportunity to raise concerns during these meetings. This process should include setting clear, achievable objectives for the individual.
- **provide appropriate training:** Line managers should conduct regular reviews to identify training needs for the members of their team. Employees could be involved in identifying their own training needs. Where training needs are identified, the line manager should provide training. Training is particularly important for employees who have additional responsibilities following a promotion.
- **be alert during periods of change:** Line managers should keep employees well informed and encourage them to raise concerns during periods of change, for example when the organisation is going through a restructure.
- **recruit employees who have the skills to perform the role:** When recruiting, line managers should consider what the duties of the job will be and what skills and experience the successful candidate will need. This will help to ensure that the right person is recruited to the job, so the job-holder does not feel out of his or her depth.
- **do not delay:** Line managers should take immediate action when they suspect that an individual is stressed or when an employee informs them that they are experiencing stress. This should help to avoid the problem.

If the headteacher/line manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress they should arrange to meet with the employee. This meeting should be held in private and be kept informal in nature. The line manager should ask the employee whether or not they have been experiencing stress and what the employee considers to be the contributing factors. Questions that may be appropriate to ask including:

“I’m concerned that you appear to be under some pressure. Can we talk about it?”

“One of your colleagues has told me in confidence that they are worried about you.”

“Are there any problems at home that you want to talk about?”

“I want to help resolve this issue. Do you think that some extra training or support might help?”

“Have you mentioned this to your GP? I will send you some information about the organisation’s counselling service in case this is something that you might find helpful.”

“I think we should meet again in a couple of weeks to see how things are going, but in the meantime please come and talk to me if you have any concerns.”

After the meeting the headteacher/line manager may need to conduct a more detailed investigation to establish the causes of, and contributing factors to, the stress, particularly where the employee alleges that it is a result of poor management or bullying, for example. Once the line manager has established the reason behind the stress, they should explore what steps the organisation could take to alleviate the situation.

Steps that could be appropriate for the line manager to take to help relieve the employee's stress include:

- a phased return to work (following sickness absence)
- temporary or permanent flexible working arrangements, for example reduced hours
- redistribution of some of the employee's work

- a temporary or permanent change in duties
- providing training for the employee
- referring the employee for counselling
- putting in place a mentoring arrangement.

What action is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, including the reasons for the stress, the nature of the job, and what is considered reasonable.