



# **Stress Management Policy**

**March 2021**

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Stress Management Policy applies to all potential candidates and existing employees within Derby Diocesan Academy Trust and Derby Diocesan Academy Trust 2 (referred to within this policy as DDAT). The policy is not contractual and may be varied by the Trust following consultation with recognised Trade Unions. It has been implemented following consultation with all recognised Trade Unions.

## 2.0 Scope

- 2.1 DDAT has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees as far as reasonably practicable and to take reasonable care of the wellbeing of our employees. This includes taking steps to minimise the risk of stress and/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.
- 2.2 This policy sets out our approach to managing stress/wellbeing in the workplace, and provides a practical guide for managers and employees on how to manage stressful situations set out in **Appendix A**.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all employees who work for the DDAT, referred to as employer within this document.

## 3.0 What is stress?

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.

3.4 The HSE Management Standards for work related stress define the way an 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 lead 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 B).

## 4.0 Signs of stress

4.1 Some common signs of stress are listed below. However, experiencing one or more of these does not necessarily mean an employee is suffering from stress.

- Persistent or recurrent moods, for example anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness, mood swings (being tearful or oversensitive). ▪ 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 These should be acted upon promptly and discussed with the employee. This will include offering support, such as signposting them to the Trust's Mental Health First Aiders and encouraging the employee to seek advice from his or her GP, who will be able to make a diagnosis. If your school has an absence insurance policy, a counselling service could also be accessible as part of the package.

## 5.0 Support

- 5.1 We will monitor sickness absence and workloads, and ensure that there is clear communication within DDAT 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 any employee who has been absent in line with the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure to establish whether there is any underlying problem and, if so, what the employer could do to address it. As a preventative measure we will carry out an anonymous staff surveys annually and address any areas of concern.
- 5.2 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 for help and support in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact the Headteacher, Mental Health First Aider, Absence insurance company, Chair of Governors or DDAT HR Department.
- 5.3 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:
- carry out further investigations
  - review job descriptions to identify tasks that may involve stressors, and consider any reasonable adjustments.
  - 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 at **Appendix B** along with guidance notes for completion of the form in **Appendix C**.
  - 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 the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure.
  - if an employee is absent from work due to sickness, apply the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure, as applicable.
- 5.4 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, DDAT may consider implementing the Capability Procedure.

## **6.0 Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

6.1 Information in relation to the management of stress at the Trust will be kept to ensure an accurate record is available of what was discussed, actions taken and for monitoring purposes. In order to fulfil the employer's duty of care and to support the employee's wellbeing records will be kept on the employee's personal file. All records will be treated as confidential and kept no longer than necessary in line with the ICO guidance.

## **7.0 Helpful contacts**

7.1 Employees should contact their own individual school to enquire if counselling/support is available through the schools sickness absence insurance scheme.

7.2 Support is available via 0800 562561 or: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk>

7.3 Updated contact details can be sourced through the DDAT HR Department or the Trust's Mental Health First Aiders.

7.4 MIND - <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/coronavirus-and-work/tips-for-supporting-yourself-and-your-team/>

## Appendix A

### Guidance on Dealing with Stressful Situations in Academies

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 (particular issue for the Headteacher/Business Manager)
- premises matters (particular issue for the Headteacher/Business Manager and site team)
- 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 Grievance Policy, Whistleblowing Procedure etc...
- know that there is someone to speak to and that support is available – see the Support section 4 within the DDAT Stress Management Policy.
- admit that they are struggling before it becomes too difficult to cope with and seek help and advice – see the Helpful contacts section within the DDAT Stress Management Policy.

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 also advised to contact them for additional 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 at 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 which will require a review of strategies and or working practice. 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 Trust 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 he or she is experiencing stress. This should help to avoid the problem escalating and helps avoid liability if the employee ends up making a claim, and should help the employee to make a swift recovery.

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 he or she has 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 she is worried about you.” “Are there any problems at home or school 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 school’s counselling service (where applicable) in case this is something that you might find helpful.” Refer to the helpful contact’s section 6 of the DDAT Stress Management Policy. “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.”

“Have you been in touch with your Union Representative as they may also be able to give support and advice?”

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, he or she should explore what steps the Trust could take to alleviate the situation.



## Appendix B – Template Risk Assessment

<b>DDAT– Risk assessment of HSE Management Standards for</b>				
Activity being assessed:		Location(s) affected:		<b>Insert logo</b>
Person(s) completing assessment:		Date original assessment completed:		
Date of review:		Review completed by:		

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed

<p><i>Excessive job Demands?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People unable to take leave entitlement?</li> <li>- People regularly working longer than their contracted hours?</li> <li>- People regularly working longer than 48 hours per week?</li> </ul> <p>Individuals working noticeably longer hours than others</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal work plans are developed to ensure employees know what their job involves;</li> <li>• training is provided to help employees prioritise, or information on how to seek help if they have conflicting priorities;</li> <li>• a system is in place to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours;</li> <li>• job descriptions match the work being carried out;</li> <li>• person specifications match the requirements of the job;</li> <li>• flexibility in work arrangements are in place</li> </ul>			
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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed

doing the same/similar jobs?		<p>to enable individuals to cope with domestic commitments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular team meetings or individual work reviews are held to discuss and anticipate workload;</li> <li>• reasons for tight deadlines are identified and actions to resolve problems are sought.</li> </ul>			
<p><i>Lack of <b>Control</b> over work?</i></p> <p>Do individuals have any control over the timing and/or pace of work? Do others often change deadlines? Is all work allocated by the line manager?</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems are in place that enable employees to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken;</li> <li>• regular discussions are held at the planning stages of projects to talk about outputs and methods of working;</li> <li>• Employees are involved when decisions are made;</li> <li>• Hold work reviews to monitor ongoing workload.</li> </ul>			
<p><i>Lack of <b>Support</b>?</i></p> <p>- Individuals raising concerns about a lack of</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular team meetings and/or one-to-ones to talk about emerging issues take place;</li> <li>• appraisals to identify training needs are carried out regularly;</li> </ul>			

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed
<p>management support?</p> <p>- Appraisals and work reviews are not taking place as planned?</p> <p>Absence due to stress taken seriously and handled in line with sickness absence procedures?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information on other areas of support (Counselling Support Service, work-life balance, etc.) is disseminated;</li> <li>• talk regularly about the ways the school/establishment could provide support for someone who is experiencing problems outside work;</li> <li>• examples of how employees would like to, or have received good support from managers or colleagues are sought.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Relationships within the team?</b></p> <p>- Have there been any complaints of bullying or harassment during the past year?</p> <p>- Have there been any incidents of unacceptable behaviour?</p> <p>- Does the</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards are agreed with employees for acceptable behaviour at work;</li> <li>• employees are aware of confidential routes by which they can report unacceptable behaviour;</li> <li>• Training is provided to help employees deal with difficult situations;</li> <li>• employees are aware of where they can access Bullying and Harassment</li> </ul>			

team work					
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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed
cohesively and supportively in dealing with day-to-day work?		<p>procedures and Grievance procedures;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people are aware of grievance and disciplinary procedures;</li> <li>• success is celebrated in ways agreed by employees;</li> <li>• team building exercises take place.</li> </ul>			

<p><b><i>Role ambiguity or confusion?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individuals mentioning conflicting goals?</li> <li>- Individuals not prioritising correctly?</li> </ul> <p>Induction for new employees not being completed?</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appraisals and one-to one meetings are used to help individuals clarify their roles and priorities, and to discuss any possible role conflicts;</li> <li>• key team objectives and targets are communicated;.</li> <li>• standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks are agreed;</li> <li>• personal work plans are developed that are aligned to outputs;</li> <li>• job descriptions are written in such a way as to ensure core priorities of posts are clear;.</li> <li>• existing team members understand the role and</li> </ul>			
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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed

		<p>responsibilities of any new team members;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new employees receive an adequate induction into their role and objectives, and the team's role.</li> </ul>			
<p><i>Managing Change?</i></p> <p>- team/unit has been through a period of significant change.</p> <p>team/unit is about to go through a period of significant change.</p>	<p>Employees</p> <p>Depression / Anxiety / Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employees are aware of why change is happening and the key steps of the change;</li> <li>• individuals directly affected are involved in the change process;</li> <li>• regular and clear communication with those indirectly affected;</li> <li>• there are agreed methods of communication/update;</li> <li>• Ensure employees are aware of the impact of change on their jobs, terms and conditions, etc.;</li> <li>• there is an 'open door' policy to help individuals that have concerns.</li> <li>• employees receive relevant training for new changed/roles;</li> <li>• work plans and objectives are reviewed after</li> </ul>			

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed
		change to ensure they are valid and clear.			

Signature of Employee:.....

Date:..... Signature of Line

Manager:.....Date:.....

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## **Appendix 3**

### **Guidance Notes on Completing the Stress Risk Assessment Form**

Things to consider when assessing the role:

#### **1. What job does the individual do and at what level?**

Examples:

- SLT
- Manager – teaching or non-teaching
- Teacher
- Teaching assistant
- Admin staff
- Site team
- Cleaner
- Catering assistant
- Invigilator

#### **2. What are the potential hazards and stressors?**

Examples are provided below:

##### **Demands**

- Long hours
- Unreasonable deadlines
- Excessively busy periods
- Inadequate rest and holidays
- Inadequate staffing
- Inappropriately qualified for the job
- Over promotion
- Skills not recognised – promotion prospects not fulfilled •

Boring or repetitive work

- Too little to do
- Employees experiencing excessive workloads
- Employees working under excessive pressure
- Inability to cope with key aspects of the role

##### **The physical working environment**

- Poor temperature control
- Noise

- Lack of facilities for rest/breaks
- Poor lighting
- Poor ventilation
- Badly placed or designed workstations

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### **The psychological working environment**

- Threat of aggression or violence
- Disruptive, angry or stressed children
- Angry or stressed parents/members of the public
- Difficult colleagues
- Verbal abuse
- Poor management practices

### **Control**

- Not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside work •
- Rigid work patterns and breaks
- Fixed deadlines occurring in different parts of the year
  - Lack of control over work
  - Conflicting work demands

### **Support**

- Lack of effective return to work system
  - Non-compliance with sickness and absence management policy •
- Lack of managerial support through emotionally demanding work •
- Inadequate inductions
- Reaction to post disciplinary, grievance, capability or suspension •
- Lack of adequate training

### **Relationships**

- Poor relationships with others
  - Staff complaints or rising absence trends
  - Perception of bullying or confrontational communications styles from others •
- Bullying, racial or sexual harassment
- Lack of support or fear culture from management and co-workers

### **Role**

- Lack clear lines of accountability and responsibility
- Lack of communication and consultation (both sides)
- Perception of a culture of blame when things go wrong, denial of potential problems
  - Failure by the organisation to recognise success
- A culture that considers stress a sign of weakness
- Personal risk in relation to the role (e.g. money, lone working)

**. Is there a high, medium or low risk of stress, and why?**

- Does the type of job in combination with the working environment and organisation result in a high, medium or low risk?
- What does history / experience tell us?
- What are the worst problems?

**4. What control measures can be put in place?**

- Training for job
- Job organisation
- Rest and meal break arrangements
- Job rotation
- Good working environment
- Security measures such as alarms, or buddying
- Local policy defined and upheld
- Counselling (last resort as this is not preventive action)
- *Origination Authorised by Issue No. Page 17 of 17 Date **KWI BOARD 1 2018***
- Stress Management Policy and Risk Assessment

**5. Priority and Timescale**

Some suggested goals:

**Change**

- Fears about job security / grading
- Poor communication – uncertainty about what is happening
- Not enough time allowed to implement change
- Inexperience / fear of new technology
- Lack of skills for new tasks
- Not enough resource allocated for change process
- Other personal fears, relocation

**High risk: Priority 1 (fix first)** - Initiate simple actions immediately, and devise a plan to review longer term other actions within 3 months.

**Medium risk: Priority 2 (fix after all priority 1 have been attended to)** - Systematically review and initiate actions within 12 months.

**Low risk: Priority 3 (fix last)** - Document the risk assessment and revisit after 12 months