



Stress Management Policy

September 2024

New or updated policy	Updated
Page	Summary of Change
1	Removed reference to DDAT2. Added 1.2 and 1.3
3	Establishing cause of stress and signposting to additional services
4	Responsibilities added for Line Managers and Employees
9	Appendix B updated in accordance with HSE
10	Added Central Team Roles
Throughout	Reference to Executive Headteacher / CEO rather than just Headteacher

Approved by the Trust Board on: 18th July 2024

To be reviewed: 18th July 2026

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (referred to within this policy as the Trust) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the DDAT Sickness Absence Policy, DDAT Wellbeing Policy and DDAT Menopause Policy where appropriate.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 'Line Manager' support for Headteachers / Executive Headteachers is available via the SSIO's. For the CEO, support is available from the HR Team.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The Stress Management Policy applies to all potential candidates and existing employees within the Trust. Headteachers / Executive Headteachers / CEO are responsible for implementation.
- 2.2 The Trust 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 at work. 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.
- 2.3 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**.

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”***. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health. 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, or as a result of performance and/or capability processes.
- 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 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.
- 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, referral to Occupational Health, 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. It is recommended that any

wellbeing services you have available to employees are communicated to them on a regular basis. E.g. SAS wellbeing services.

5.0 Support

- 5.1 We will monitor sickness absence, employees' workloads, and ensure that there is clear communication within the Trust 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 recommend that anonymous staff surveys are circulated 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 / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Trust Board / Mental Health First Aider / Absence insurance company / Chair of Committee or DDAT HR Department. The Line Manager should explore if the stress is work related or due to external factors. Please also refer to the helpful information section 8 of this policy for further signposting / helpful information. Trade Union members may also seek the support of their Trade Union representative for signposting and support.
- 5.3 Once an issue affecting an employee's health is brought to our attention, Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Chair of Committee / Chair of Trustees / DDAT HR Department will take steps 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:
- Carrying out further investigations to identify all workplace stressors.
 - Reviewing job descriptions to identify tasks that may involve stressors and consider any reasonable adjustments.
 - Carrying out a risk assessment to evaluate and eliminate stress or control the risks from stress, considering the existing arrangements that are in place and ensure that significant findings of the risk assessment are recorded and regularly reviewed.
 - Carrying 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**.
 - Providing information and training, such as identifying opportunities for development relevant to the employee's position.
 - Providing training for managers and senior staff in good management practices.
 - Referring the employee to occupational health in line with the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure.

- Providing access to confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors is made available.
- Providing adequate resources to enable managers to implement the Trust's agreed stress management strategy.
- Applying the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure if the employee is absent due to sickness, as applicable and continue to monitor accordingly. Please seek HR advice as required.
- Signposting to the helpful information section 8 of this policy, and/or a Mental Health First Aider.
- Signposting to the DDAT Wellbeing Policy and / or DDAT Menopause Policy as appropriate.
- Providing a 'buddy' to informally check in on the employee on a regular basis.

5.4 If stress is having a negative impact on an employee's performance, the Line Manager will seek to establish if the stress is personal or work related and offer a reasonable period of support which may include areas of support as outlined in 5.3. If his or her performance does not improve within a 4 – 6-week period, despite the Line Manager having taken reasonable steps to alleviate pressure on the employee, DDAT may consider implementing an informal capability support plan in line with the Appraisal Policy and then the Capability Procedure after seeking advice from the DDAT HR Department.

6.0 Responsibilities

6.1 Line Managers will:

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational and cultural or procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties in accordance with their job description.
- Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities and that these are discussed at appraisal meetings.
- Monitor and manage workloads where applicable to ensure that employees are not overloaded.
- Monitor and manage working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking.
- Monitor and ensure holidays are authorised in advance for all year round / 52-week support staff employees/Central Team to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement but not exceeding this.
- Attend relevant training as requested.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to an employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation, signposting to the relevant support mechanisms.

6.2 Employees will:

- Raise issues of concern with their Line Manager / Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Chair of Committee / Chair of Trustees / Mental Health First Aiders.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended or when required.
- Engage with the help and support provided.
- Seek medical advice and guidance where required.
- Ensure their workload is monitored and managed.
- Ensure that their working hours are managed accordingly, and any additional hours / toil is approved by their Line Manager.
- Monitor and ensure holidays are authorised in advance for all year round / 52-week support staff employees/Central Team to ensure that they are taking their full entitlement but not exceeding this.
- Ensure good communication with their Line Manager and colleagues.

7.0 Record Keeping and Confidentiality

7.1 Information in relation to the management of stress at the Trust will be kept ensuring an accurate record is available of what was discussed, support provided, 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.

8.0 Helpful contacts

8.1 Employees should contact their Line Manager to enquire if counselling/support is available through the schools sickness absence insurance scheme.

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

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

8.4 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 helpful information section 8 within the DDAT Stress Management Policy.
- 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
- spend time with family / friends or doing something you enjoy
- open communication

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

The Line Manager / Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO 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. Line 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:** Line 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 review 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. Provide time and opportunities for employees to raise concerns.
- **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 jobholder 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 / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Chair of Committee / Chair of Trustees / 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 include:

- “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 or school that I can help with or 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 8 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?”
- “It may be beneficial to you, if I submit a referral to Occupational Health, would you like me to do this?”

After the meeting the Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Chair of Committee / Chair of Trustees / 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

Risk assessment template

School name or Central Team:

Assessment carried out by:

Date of next review:

Date assessment was carried out:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done

More information on managing risk: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/

An example of a complete risk assessment for an office based employee can be found here: [Example risk assessment for an office-based business \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk/officebasedbusiness/)

An example of for a college can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/learning-with-care-risk-assessment.pdf>

DO NOT JUST COPY THESE EXAMPLES AS THIS WILL NOT SATISFY THE LAW AND WILL NOT PROTECT THE EMPLOYEES.

Signature of Employee:.....

Date:.....

Signature of Line

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

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
- SSIO
- Finance
- HR
- Operations

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

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