



# **Stress Management Policy**

**November 2025**

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## 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 its 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 Procedure.
- 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 Senior School Improvement Officers (SSIOs). For the CEO, support is available from the DDAT Central 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 its 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 the best of their ability. This, in turn, will help us provide high-quality teaching and learning for our pupils.
- 2.3 This policy sets out our approach to managing stress and 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 process, 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, 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, increased emotional reactions (being more tearful, sensitive or aggressive).
  - Physical effects, for example 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), loss of confidence (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 If an individual shows signs of stress, this should be acted upon promptly and discussed with them. This will include offering support, such as signposting them to the Trust's Mental Health First Aiders, referral to Occupational Health, and encouraging the individual to seek advice from their 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. Schools Advisory Service (SAS), or Westfield Health for Derby Cathedral School.

## **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 they feel unable to do so, they should contact the Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Trust Board / Mental Health First Aider / absence insurance company / Chair of Committee or DDAT Central HR Team. The Line Manager should explore whether the stress is work-related, due to external factors, or both. Please also refer to the helpful information under section 8 of this policy for further signposting to support. Trade Union members may also seek the support of their Trade Union representative for signposting and support.

5.3 If an issue affecting an employee's health is brought to our attention, the Headteacher / Executive Headteacher / CEO / Chair of Committee / Chair of Trustees / DDAT Central HR Team 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 stress risk assessment with the individual to:
  - Identify whether stress is an issue with a view to addressing the situation.
  - 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.
  - A stress risk assessment template is available at **Appendix B**, along with guidance notes for completion of the risk assessment at **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 work, external factors, or a combination of both.
- Providing adequate resources to enable managers to implement the Trust's agreed stress management strategy.
- Applying the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure, as applicable, if the employee is absent due to sickness, and continue to monitor accordingly. Please seek advice from the DDAT Central HR Team as required.
- Signposting to further support under section 8 of this policy.
- 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, their Line Manager will seek to establish whether the stress is personal or work-related and offer a reasonable level of support, which may include areas of support as outlined in clause 5.3. If an employee does not demonstrate an improvement in their performance 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 Central HR Team.

## **6.0 Responsibilities**

6.1 Line Managers will:

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational, 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 / DDAT 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 of work e.g. bereavement or separation, ensuring to signpost 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 / DDAT 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 personnel 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 whether counselling/support is available through the schools sickness absence insurance scheme.
- 8.2 Support is available through Education Support via 0800 562561 or at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk>
- 8.3 The Trust's Mental Health First Aiders, either at your school or via the DDAT Central Team.
- 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 various times in the school year that can add additional pressure to employees. These may include:

- dealing with bad behaviour
- Ofsted Inspections
- report writing
- parent consultation/open evenings
- meeting with/calling parents and/or carers
- accountability (targets)
- finance (particular issue for the Headteacher/School Business Manager)
- premises matters (particular issue for the Headteacher/School Business Manager/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 Procedure, Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure etc.
- raise any concerns they have relating to Ofsted inspections during the school's Ofsted inspection window, to allow for these to be addressed in good time.
- know that there is someone to speak to and that support is available – refer to section 8 of this policy.
- admit that they are struggling before it becomes too difficult to cope with and seek help and advice.

Other ways that can help employees to prevent stress at work include:

- good diet (e.g. eat breakfast and lunch)
- drink plenty of water throughout the day
- learn to manage your time effectively
- exercise and relaxation (such as walking and yoga)
- take time out (e.g. don't work all weekend and evenings)
- avoid procrastination
- spend time with family/friends or do something you enjoy
- open communication

All employees who are members of a Trade 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 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 line manager and colleagues informally with any issues that they have, including raising any concerns with their line manager/ linked Senior



School Improvement Officer around Ofsted inspections during the school's Ofsted inspection window.

- **foster good working relationships 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 manage their workload, this can cause stress. Line Managers should regularly review 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 their contracted hours, their 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 line 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 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 their 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 escalating and help 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 at 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 arranged to speak with 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 section 8 of this 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 Trade Union representative as they may also be able to provide support and advice?”
- “It may be beneficial to you if I submit a referral to Occupational Health, is this something you would like me to pursue?”

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, they should explore what steps the Trust could take to alleviate the situation.

## Appendix B Stress Risk Assessment

Employee Name:

School Name or DDAT Central Team:

Assessment carried out by:

Date assessment was carried out:

Date of next review:

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

Further information on managing risks can be found [here](#).

An example of a completed risk assessment for an office-based employee can be found [here](#).

An example risk assessment on work-related stress in a medium-sized business on several sites can be found [here](#).

**DO NOT JUST COPY THIS EXAMPLE AS THIS WILL NOT SATISFY THE LAW AND WILL NOT PROTECT EMPLOYEES.**

Employee Signature:.....

Date:.....

Line Manager Signature:.....

Date:.....

## **Appendix C**

### **Guidance notes on completing the Stress Risk Assessment**

Things to consider when assessing the role:

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

Examples:

- Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Manager – teaching or non-teaching
- Teacher
- Teaching Assistant
- Admin staff
- Site team
- Cleaner
- Catering Assistant
- Invigilator
- Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO)
- Finance
- Human Resources (HR)
- Operations

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

Examples:

##### **Demands**

- Long hours
- Unreasonable deadlines
- Excessively busy periods
- Inadequate rest and holidays
- Inadequate staffing levels
- 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
- Conflicting priorities
- Inability to cope with 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 and/or carers/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

### **Support**

- Lack of effective return to work system
- Non-compliance with the DDAT Sickness Absence Procedure
- Lack of managerial support through emotionally demanding work
- Inadequate inductions
- Reaction to post disciplinary, grievance, capability or suspension
- Insufficient training

### **Relationships**

- Poor working relationships with others
- Staff complaints or rising absence trends
- Parental complaints
- Perception of bullying or confrontational communication 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)

### **Change**

- Poor communication when undergoing organisational change - uncertainty about what is happening

- Fears about job security/grading
- Lack of timely information to enable employees to understand the reason(s) for any proposed change(s)
- Lack of systems in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- Inadequate employee consultation on changes
- Employees lacking information on the impact of any proposed change(s) on their jobs
- Employees unaware of timetables for the change(s)
- Insufficient time allowed to implement the change(s)
- Insufficient resource allocated for the change process
- Lack of support during changes
- Insufficient training given to support employees with any changes to their jobs
- Lack of skills for new tasks
- Other personal fears, relocation

### **3. 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)
- Stress Management Policy and Stress Risk Assessment

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