

Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust

Stress Policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The academy is committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment for all members of staff. The academy fully recognises that excessive levels of work-related stress are a potential cause of ill-health and will do all it can to avoid this scenario.
- 1.2 The academy recognises that workplace stress is a serious occupational health concern and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors which can adversely affect the health and well-being of employees.
- 1.3 The academy is committed to implementing a stress management policy for staff which includes improving the working environment through effective, supportive and sensitive management, thus enabling individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work, particularly those employees whose health and well-being are (or may be) affected by stress.

2. Policy and scope

- 2.1 This policy provides guidance on how issues relating to work-related stress will be managed within the academy by the senior leadership team and line managers.
- 2.2 The policy has five principal aims. These are as follows:
 - 2.2.1 To increase awareness of stress and to actively promote methods to reduce stress by creating a mutually supportive workplace where such issues are discussed without stigma.
 - 2.2.2 To offer practical support to staff in managing stress identified in themselves and in others.
 - 2.2.3 To ensure that robust procedures are in place to manage stresses that may occur within the work environment, including appropriate consultation in advance of any significant alteration to working patterns or practices.
 - 2.2.4 To manage effectively and sensitively the return to work of those who have been absent due to stress.
 - 2.2.5 To monitor procedures and outcomes and to annually assess the effectiveness of this policy in the hope and expectation that such action will reduce the number of days lost to stress-related absence by appropriate review and adaptation of procedures.

3. Definition of stress

- 3.1 There is a vital difference between pressure and stress. Pressure can be positive and a motivating factor and is often essential in a job (it can help us achieve our goals and perform better) whereas stress occurs when this pressure becomes excessive: in other words, stress represents a natural reaction to too much pressure.
- 3.2 External factors, for example difficulties in an employee's personal life, can also make it difficult for an individual to cope with the demands of their job.
- 3.3 The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as "*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work.*"

- 3.4 The HSE makes an important distinction between '*pressure*' which can be stimulating and motivating, and '*excessive pressure*' which can reduce work performance and in addition be detrimental to an individual's health.

4. HSE management standards

- 4.1 The HSE has developed management standards to help assess and tackle the main causes of stress. The standards focus on six discrete aspects of work as follows:
- 4.1.1 Demands – including issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
 - 4.1.2 Control – how much say an individual has in the way they work.
 - 4.1.3 Support – including resources, training and encouragement provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
 - 4.1.4 Relationships – including promotion of positive action to lessen conflict or aggression within the workplace by appropriate management of unacceptable behaviour.
 - 4.1.5 Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation itself ensures that no person has conflicting roles.
 - 4.1.6 Change – how change is managed and communicated by the organisation.

5. Employer responsibilities

- 5.1 The academy recognises that in law there exists a duty of care to employees in relation to ensuring that their health is not adversely affected by their work. New initiatives should be assessed to ensure that all staff retain an acceptable work-life balance.
- 5.2 The academy commits to using the HSE Management Standards to help identify and reduce levels of stress at work, and to the provision of relevant training for all staff in whom a need is identified.
- 5.3 All line managers are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and with any related policies, and to participate in such training as may be deemed appropriate for their designated role.
- 5.4 Senior management/leadership team should monitor stress factors and identify staff at particular risk. Identifiable incidents related specifically to stress at work should, wherever relevant, be documented in the accident book. Referral to occupational health (OH) for specialist input should be undertaken as appropriate.
- 5.5 Senior management/leadership team will be vigilant in ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated at any level within the academy, and will, in addition, be responsible for facilitating the offer of appropriate support and understanding to any member of staff known to be experiencing stress in their personal life outside school.

6. Employee responsibilities

- 6.1 All employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and with any related policies, and to participate in such training as may be deemed appropriate for their designated role.
- 6.2 All employees have an obligation to the academy to report (where they feel able to do so) any illness or injury which they feel may be caused or exacerbated by work. Such instances should (as above) be documented in the accident book. It must be recognised that such action is just as appropriate in the case of psychological injury as it is in the case of physical injury.
- 6.3 The academy is conscious that it cannot take specific action to alleviate a stressful situation unless it is aware that such a situation exists. By the time that a member of staff is medically diagnosed by their doctor as suffering from stress, psychological injury may already have been sustained. Any employee who believes that they may be suffering from stress in the workplace should therefore bring this to the attention of the academy without delay.
- 6.4 All employees are thus expected to:
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others likely to be affected by their actions
 - be aware at all times of their health and safety responsibilities in school and engage in such training as may be felt appropriate for their designated role
 - co-operate with the academy in ensuring that the aims and objectives of the stress policy are achieved
 - bring issues of relevant concern to the attention of their line manager, or alternatively to the headteacher or to the chair of governors should an individual feel that their line manager or the headteacher, respectively, may be responsible (whether directly or indirectly) for the stress they are experiencing
 - work constructively with management to identify and act upon causes (whether actual or potential) of stress in the workplace
 - treat all colleagues with due consideration and respect at all times.

7. Practical advice for management

- 7.1 All workplace risk assessments will include consideration of stress-related factors and, in the event of such factors being identified, must outline appropriate action to be taken to minimise the effects of risk upon the individual and the organisation.
- 7.2 Managers will be proactive in identifying (and reducing) actual and potential causes of stress within the workplace. This may be accomplished by periodic use of surveys and other personnel management tools, either on an individual or generic basis (such as a stress audit across the entire workforce) as may be felt appropriate.
- 7.3 Wherever possible, individuals will be offered appropriate assistance to overcome their problems before their performance is adversely affected. (Clearly this is, by definition, dependent upon the individual concerned alerting management to the difficulties they are experiencing before this becomes evident from their performance.)
- 7.4 All absences which may have been caused by stress (irrespective of whether this relates to work) will be acted upon with sympathy and understanding.
- 7.5 It is essential that consideration should be given (in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy) to making a referral to occupational health (OH) at the earliest

opportunity in all instances where staff submit, for a period of two weeks or longer, a fit note which specifies stress (particularly when this is specified as 'work-related stress') as the relevant diagnosis.

- 7.6 This is in order that appropriate advice and guidance may be obtained in relation to considering (in those cases where it is confirmed that their medical condition may be affected by, or related in some way to, the duties of their employment) the possibility of making reasonable adjustments to the employee's role in school as a means of alleviating the cause of their difficulties.
- 7.7 Such referral to OH may be arranged through the employee's trade union representative rather than directly with the employee if this is the latter's preference **and** the relevant union is in possession of a casework assistance form (CAF) or equivalent documentation clarifying their right to act on behalf of their member.

8. Practical advice for employees

- 8.1 In the event of an employee being concerned that they may be suffering from stress at work, support and advice should be sought from, in the first instance, their line manager by requesting an opportunity to discuss the relevant issue(s) in confidence.
- 8.2 As soon as a concern has been brought to the attention of a line manager, they should arrange an early meeting with the employee to discuss the issues raised in further detail as a means of identifying ways in which the cause(s) of the stress might best be addressed.
- 8.3 This may be assisted by the completion of an individual workplace stress risk assessment form (see Appendix 1) for discussion during this meeting. Ideally, this form will be completed in the presence of the line manager, either during, or in advance of, this meeting.
- 8.4 The employee may be accompanied in such a meeting by either a work colleague or a trade union representative.
- 8.5 Following such a meeting the responsibility for addressing the situation constructively now lies with the line manager, who may wish to further clarify the issues by completion of an individual stress action plan (Appendix 2).
- 8.6 Initial actions to be considered for inclusion in such a plan might, for instance, include investigating the individual's workload or taking appropriate action in relation to specific difficulties which may have been identified within the workplace (such as bullying or harassment).
- 8.7 It may well be appropriate (if this has not already been undertaken) to seek additional advice and guidance from occupational health (OH).
- 8.8 Even if the source of an employee's stress lies outside work, the academy recognises that this may still have an impact upon an individual's ability to undertake their job effectively. Once again, in such circumstances, it may be appropriate to seek advice and guidance from OH as to how the individual's health might best be protected in such circumstances.
- 8.9 The academy appreciates that it may be difficult for an employee to talk to their line manager about problems of a personal nature, but nonetheless would strongly encourage the employee to make their manager (or alternatively a member of the senior leadership team) aware of the situation in order that they might ensure that all necessary support is provided in the workplace.

9. Assessment of risk

- 9.1 Statistical data derived from records of (and trends in) sickness absence may assist in the risk assessment process. Such data may only be presented by the headteacher to the governing body in an anonymised format. Any information gathered in these ways will be utilised to identify areas for improvement whilst maintaining strict individual confidentiality throughout.

10. Other policies and procedures

- 10.1 This policy will be supported by the following policies and procedures:
- Attendance Management Policy

Appendix 1: Individual workplace stress risk assessment form

(for completion by the individual in discussion with the line manager)

This form is designed to enable you to make your line manager aware of current work-related stress concerns and to enable you to request further support and guidance in addressing the causes of your work-related stress.

The school actively promotes well-being in the workplace and is committed to taking steps to reduce workplace stress as far as is possible.

Name of employee:		Job title:		Signature:		Date of completion:	
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Please explain your current concerns:	
Have you made any attempts to address these concerns yourself? If so, please describe what actions you have taken:	
Have you any suggestions as to what management could do to reduce your work place stress?	

Appendix 2: Individual workplace stress action plan

(for completion by the line manager in discussion with the individual)

Name of employee:	Job title:	Line manager:
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Stress categories	Yes	No	Partly	Action required/taken
<p>Demands</p> <p>1) Is the individual able to cope with the demands of their job? 2) Do they have adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work? 3) Do their skills and abilities match to the job demands? 4) Is their job aligned to their capabilities? 5) Has the employee any concerns about their work environment?</p>				
<p>Control</p> <p>1) Are they able to have a say about the way they do their work? 2) Do they have control over the pace of their work? 3) Do they use their skills and initiative to do their work? 4) Are they encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work? 5) Do they have opportunity to develop their skills? 6) Are they consulted over work patterns?</p>				
<p>Support</p> <p>1) Do they feel supported by their line manager? 2) Do they feel supported by their colleagues? 3) Do they know what support is available and how to access it? 4) Do they receive regular constructive feedback?</p>				

<p>Relationships</p> <p>1) Are they subjected to unacceptable behaviour at work? e.g. bullying and harassment 2) Are they the subject of any conflict at work? 3) Can they share information relevant to their work with anyone? 4) Are they aware of the employer's policies? (on harassment, discrimination, attendance management etc) 5) Do they know how to report unacceptable behaviour? 6) Do they feel able to report unacceptable behaviour?</p>				
<p>Role</p> <p>1) Do they understand their role and responsibilities? 2) Are the different requirements placed upon them compatible? 3) Do they have an up-to-date job description? 4) Are the requirements contained within the job description clear? 5) Do they feel able to raise any concerns about uncertainties or conflicts they may perceive in their role and responsibilities?</p>				
<p>Change</p> <p>1) Does the organisation engage them when undertaking changes? 2) Do they feel they are provided with information to enable them to understand the proposed changes? 3) Do they feel they are consulted with appropriately and provided with the opportunity to influence proposals? 4) Do they feel they are given training to support any changes in their role? 5) Are they aware of any timetables for changes? 6) Do they have access to relevant support during such changes? 7) Do they feel able to freely express any concerns?</p>				
<p>Additional comments:</p>				
<p>Signed (employee):</p>	<p>Signed (line manager):</p>		<p>Date completed:</p>	

NB: Appendices 1 and/or 2 may (with the informed consent of the employee) accompany a completed referral form to occupational health (OH) if such a course of action is deemed appropriate

Appendix 3: Possible external sources of help

Teachers' Helpline (24 hours) (Education Support Partnership) www.teachersupport.info	08000 562561
The Samaritans (24 hours) www.samaritans.org	08457 909090
MIND (The Mental Health Charity) www.mind.org.uk	03001 233393
Citizens Advice Bureaux - Halifax	01422 828848
Huddersfield	01484 545683
Dewsbury	08448 487970
Leeds	01132 234400
Bradford	08442 451282
Relate www.relate.org.uk	01422 363845 01484 425843
Stepchange (formerly Consumer Credit Counselling Service) Free debt advice 8am to 8pm weekdays www.stepchange.org	08001 381111
National Domestic Violence Helpline www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk	08082 000247