



Kings Academy Trust

Staff Wellbeing Policy

Date of Issue: January 2024

Date of Last Review: January 2024

Date of Next Review: January 2025

1.0 Policy statement

At Kings Academy Trust we are committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff. We recognise the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress.

We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of staff at work. We want to support the mental wellbeing of all our staff and will provide appropriate support for staff who are suffering from stress or mental ill health, on a confidential basis where appropriate, regardless of its source.

Preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of our staff. We understand the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed. Through the use of effective policies and procedures we will ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

“Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

(World Health Organisation 2014)

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including governors, trustees and directors – outlining our approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

3.0 Policy Aims

- To promote positive physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff.
- To promote a healthy, safe, supportive and friendly working environment.
- To provide effective support to all employees in managing stress and other mental health problems, and to encourage better recognition of mental health issues.
- To increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- To enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- To enable staff to understand how and when to access support.

- To ensure risk assessments include or specifically address work-related stress.

4.0 Understanding stress and mental health

- 4.1 Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness. There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a 'buzz' and be motivating, and stress, which occurs when this pressure becomes excessive.
- 4.2 Mental health is a term to describe our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.
- 4.3 There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress and undermines mental health.
- 4.4 Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
- 4.5 We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person.

5.0 Health and Safety Executive – Management Standards

HSE's Management Standards represent a set of conditions that, if present:

- demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach.
- allow assessment of the current situation using pre-existing data, surveys and other techniques.
- promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees and their representatives, to help decide on practical improvements that can be made.
- help simplify risk assessment for work-related stress by:
 - identifying the main risk factors.
 - helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention.
 - providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

They cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates.

The Management Standards are:

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

6.0 Identifying warning signs

6.1 The Trust recognises that individuals will react differently to stressful situations and become stressed by different situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. Because of this, it is important that staff understand the different factors that may cause themselves or their colleagues stress.

6.2 The following sources of stress can often be attributed to work:

- Overworking or undertaking work that does not match the employee's skills and abilities.
- Fear of change and trying to cope with change, e.g. advancements in technology.
- Insufficient workload or not being able to use skills.
- Lack of job security.
- Poor relationships with colleagues and a lack of involvement.
- Harassment or bullying.
- Crisis management.
- Not having a long-term plan in place.

6.3 The Trust recognises that home and personal lives can also prove stressful for staff; bereavement, separation, financial and family problems make people more vulnerable to stress at work. It is common that a combination of stress at home and work can make people particularly stressed.

6.4 The Trust will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace.

- 6.5 The Trust has a legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.
- 6.6 All members of staff will be aware of the warning signs that can indicate that a person may be having trouble managing stress.
- 6.7 All members of staff will look out for the following indicators when identifying stress in themselves or others:

Behavioural indicators

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Isolation from friends and family

Physical indicators

- Tiredness
- Indigestion and nausea
- Headaches
- Aching muscles
- Heart palpitations

Mental indicators

- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Low self-esteem

Emotional indicators

- Anger or irritability
- Anxiety
- Hypersensitivity
- Feeling drained and lethargic health.

7.0 The approach to addressing and reducing Work-Place Stress

The Trust is responsible for the health and safety of the employees. When identifying the hazards employees face consideration should be given to the causes of stress, making reductions as far as possible and taking appropriate action to monitor.

The Trust's approach to stress should be supportive. If the cause of stress is not work related the employee should be supported via existing mechanisms such as their GP, Employee Wellbeing, the Employee Assistance Programme, etc. Where an employee has been absent from work for a long period measures such as a phased return or a temporary reduction in hours or a temporary reduction in responsibility could be considered to aid in the return to work.

If the source of stress is work related the head teacher/manager should undertake a risk assessment/risk reduction approach to the problem). All reasonable, practical steps should be taken to ensure the health and safety of employees.

Evaluation should be undertaken annually to ensure that the responses that have been made are working and being observed. All staff have a responsibility to look after their own health and safety and ensure that they raise concerns at an early stage.

8.0 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the process of identifying areas of work/work organisation that are likely to result in ill health (stress) and to attach an assessment of the likelihood and severity of that risk. Advice on carrying out a risk assessment can be obtained from the Trust's Health and Safety advisor.

Once the risk assessment has identified likely sources of stress suitable measures should be developed and put in place to minimise the likelihood of 'ill health'. For example in cases where staff take excessive amounts of work home and/or work longer hours, the Trust should ensure that a system is in place to monitor and address workloads. Also, where staff have to deal with high levels of challenging behaviour the Trust should provide training and strategies for them to use.

8.1 Line Manager's Responsibility

Managers have an important part to play as they are best placed to observe stress developing. They should ensure that they are aware of employee workloads and of employees' concerns both generally and specifically as they relate to work. This responsibility will apply to all appropriate line managers throughout the structure of the Trust.

8.2 Developing A Supportive Culture

Means of reducing stress is intrinsic to good management and it is important for managers to show that stress is an issue that the Trust takes seriously and to be understanding to staff who admit that they are under too much pressure.

Staff can often feel isolated and unable to share their problems with others, creating a supportive culture, an open door policy can help eliminate feelings of having to cope alone and reduce stress.

Managers should:

- Ensure they are accessible to staff to discuss problems.
- Raise awareness of stress and demonstrate that it is not an indication of weakness.
- Help new staff by having a good induction programme.
- Encourage staff to talk about feelings of stress.
- Encourage supportive behaviour in other team members.
- Develop a team spirit to reduce feelings of isolation.

- Provide support to staff returning to work after long term absence e.g. phased return, shorter hours.
- Provide training on stress - on an individual or group basis.
- Provide training on time management, management skills, assertiveness etc.

8.3 Management Style and Organisation

How a school or department is managed can contribute to workplace stress.

The Senior Leadership Team and managers should consider:

- Ensuring effective communication takes place involving all staff.
- Fostering co-operation not competition - encouraging teamwork and participation.
- Setting clear aims and having clear policies.
- Ensuring sufficient and appropriate training.
- Giving constructive feedback on performance.
- Having effective mechanisms for identifying problems such as sickness absence and work performance at an early stage.
- Helping staff recognise their own limitations and skills.
- Regularly reviewing workloads and allocate work accordingly.

9.0 Self-management

- 9.1 Staff can also make changes to avoid and prevent stress, as it is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored.
- 9.2 Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work.
- 9.3 Staff are encouraged to take action to manage their own stress, these actions will include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Keeping active as a way of releasing emotional intensity and any negative feelings, exercise will also help to clear thoughts and deal with problems more calmly.
 - Managing their workload and establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life,
 - Prioritising work, leaving the least important tasks until the end of the day and concentrating on the work that will make the biggest difference.
 - Avoiding unhealthy habits, such as drinking and smoking.
 - Taking advantage of the wellbeing initiatives and support offered by the Trust.

10.0 Response actions

- 10.1 Where problems with wellbeing arise, the necessary support and appropriate actions will be considered. This may include support from HR advisers and/or external services, e.g. occupational health and health and safety.
- 10.2 The Trust will continue to support staff when external services are involved.

- 10.3 Support will be provided to staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances outside of the workplace. The Trust will direct staff to support, both internal and external, and consider a plan of work and duties that can be managed differently during challenging periods.
- 10.4 Support for staff who are experiencing challenging circumstances within the Trust will be provided following the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.