



## Managing Staff Wellbeing Policy

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### Ratification

Role	Name	Date
Chair of Trust Board	Richard Penska	14/02/2022
Chief Executive Officer	Kaye Palmer-Greene	14/02/2022

### Details of Policy Updates

Date	Details

## **Statement of Intent**

This policy applies to employees of the Trust only. It does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. The Trust reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

This policy takes account the obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1999 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all those who work for us and endeavours to maintain a working environment in which everyone treats one another with dignity and respect and can co-operate with and trust their colleagues.

The Trust recognises that, whatever its source, excessive pressure, stress and mental ill health can be a health and safety issue in the workplace and acknowledges the importance of a supportive environment and working culture and of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. It is committed to promoting positive mental health for all its staff and working with its staff to help achieve this, including encouraging staff to talk openly about their mental health and ensuring those with mental health concerns have the opportunity to participate in the workplace.

The Trust is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to everyone's attention. However, this policy can only be effective if everyone co-operates to achieve its aims.

The policy applies to all relevant Trust activities and is written in compliance with all current UK health and safety legislation.

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## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2.1 The Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The Board of Trustees and the CEO has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that staff health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is allocated and organised.

### **2.2 Headteachers**

The Headteacher is responsible for informing all staff of this policy and their role in its implementation.

Recognise the value of good management practice with systems in place to effectively manage staff and encourage a partnership approach with staff, workplace unions and the School's health and safety committee.

Pay attention to any indication of changes in performance or behaviour in staff and promote sympathetic alertness to staff who show signs of being under stress.

Ensure that all staff have access to regular training sessions on health and wellbeing in schools, including practical sessions to deal with mental, physical and emotional wellbeing issues, and that they are given the appropriate time and resources to undertake this.

Demonstrate commitment, via systems and practices in place in North Star Academy Trust, to employees maintaining a good work/life balance, and ensure that such practices are communicated to all staff.

### **2.3 Line Managers**

Pay attention to any indication of changes in performance or behaviour in staff and promote sympathetic alertness to staff who show signs of being under stress.

Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner.

Carry out a risk assessment, where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised, as soon as possible.

Communicate work-life balance practices to all staff and manage pressures which may affect staff and anticipate likely problems, taking action to reduce the effects of these pressures where possible.

Support staff suffering from stress.

## **2.4 Director of Finance and Operations**

Assist with the referral of staff to Occupational Health, Counselling or mediation when appropriate.

Assist in the formulation of return-to-work programmes and provide advice on the implementation of statutory requirements.

## **2.5 All Staff**

Familiarise themselves with and comply with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives.

Plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and seek support from their line manager when necessary.

Raise any concerns with their line manager or medical advisor (likely to be a GP) as early as possible.

Speak to their Line Manager as early on as possible if they are experiencing an increase in stress or mental health difficulties or are aware of a situation that may lead to stress/a mental health concern.

Co-operate with support, advice and guidance they may be offered by leaders in the school.

Take an active role in risk assessments or School surveys asking for feedback.

Where possible, be watchful of any indication of changes of behaviour in colleagues and promote sympathetic alertness to colleagues who show signs of stress.

Accept opportunities for counselling or other forms of therapy when recommended.

## **3. Arrangements**

### **3.1 What is stress – A Definition?**

Stress is the adverse reaction experienced in response to excessive pressures or demands. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over some time; it can lead to mental and/or physical illness and can adversely affect an individuals' performance or behaviour.

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 the pressure becomes excessive, it produces stress.

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. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.

The Trust recognises that what triggers stress, and the capacity to deal with stress, varies from person to person. Individuals react to similar situations in different ways. By way of examples, causes of work-related stress may include:

- a) Demands –e.g. where the individual cannot cope with the demands of their job;
- b) Control – e.g. where an individual cannot control the way they do their work;
- c) Support –e.g. where the individual does not receive enough information or support;
- d) Relationships – e.g. where there are difficulties with relationships at work, or they feel they are being bullied or harassed;
- e) Role –e.g. where an individual doesn't fully understand their role or responsibilities;
- f) Change- e.g. where an individual is not engaged when the School is undergoing a period of change.

### **3.2 Signs of stress**

A reaction to excessive stress will vary from individual to individual but common signs of stress in a team at work may include:

- a) Arguments;
- b) High staff turnover;
- c) Increased reports of stress;
- d) Increased sickness absence;
- e) Decreased performance; and
- f) Increased complaints and grievances.

Signs of stress in an individual may include:

- a) Higher levels of absence;
- b) Arriving later for work;
- c) Being twitchy or more nervous;
- d) Being short-tempered towards colleagues
- e) Mood swings;
- f) Being withdrawn;
- g) Loss of motivation, commitment and confidence.

An individual who is stressed may notice changes in the way they think, feel or act, such as:

- a) Feeling negative;
- b) Being indecisive;

- c) Feeling isolated;
- d) Feeling nervous;
- e) Tearfulness;
- f) Reduced patience;
- g) Reduced tolerance of others;
- h) Being unable to concentrate;
- i) Eating more or less than usual;
- j) Smoking, drinking or taking drugs to “cope”;
- k) Having difficulty sleeping.

### **3.3 Mental ill health**

This can emerge suddenly, for example after a particular event or gradually, worsening over time. It covers a range of more common mental health issues such as anxiety and depression to more serious issue such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

Some conditions can be persistent and may be classed as a disability, while others come and go, giving the individual ‘good days’ and ‘bad days’. While someone may be diagnosed with a mental health condition, with the right support they can still enjoy positive mental health.

We consider it important to better understand mental health because mental ill-health is very common.

An individual with positive mental health is more likely to work productively, interact well with colleagues and find it easier to adapt to change.

An individual who feels unable to talk to their manager about their mental health may attend work when they are unwell, which can have an impact on individual and team productivity.

Individuals who feel supported by their employer are more likely to be able to stay in work or more easily return to work after a period of absence.

### **3.4 Who is covered by the policy?**

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including the Headteacher, members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees (collectively referred to as “Staff” in this policy).

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

### **3.5 Scope and purpose of the policy**

The Trust is committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work-related stress and to providing appropriate support and consideration to staff suffering from stress, on a confidential basis where appropriate including:

- a) Promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement;
- b) Through training, effective planning and allocation of workloads and ensuring feedback is provided on performance; we want staff to develop their skills and confidence and to feel able to raise any concerns they have about their work or working environment;
- c) Using staff development, staff support systems and policies reflecting current good practice to help staff understand and recognise the causes of stress and to address work-related stress and the impact of external stressors at work;
- d) Providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation;
- e) Addressing violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action;
- f) Ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address workplace stress;
- g) Maintaining an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure;
- h) Following comprehensive change management procedures;
- i) Providing support and services, such as occupational health and the Employee Assistance Programme, for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

Recognition of stress and mental ill health as a genuine problem requires management support and action. Those working at management and supervisory level have a specific responsibility to:

- a) Participate in the culture of open communication, encouragement and without judgment, encouraging good communication between management and staff;
- b) Ensure staff are given meaningful developmental opportunities;
- c) Effectively plan and allocate workloads and provide feedback on performance;
- d) Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary to prevent overload or underutilisation;
- e) Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure no member of staff is overworking;
- f) Monitor holidays to ensure staff are taking their entitlement;
- g) Ensure bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area;
- h) Be vigilant with members of staff suffering stress outside of work (e.g. bereavement or separation) and offer them additional support;
- i) Ensure that the staff they manage understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others and act on behaviour that falls below those standards;



- j) Carry out and implement (or organise the implementation of any) recommendations of risk assessments;
- k) Ensure personal data of staff members, including information about their mental health, is handled in accordance with data protection principles and the Trust's policies dealing with privacy.

To facilitate this process, our mental health and wellbeing leads, in the first instance, will be given training on best practice and are encouraged to seek advice on how to recognise stress in the staff that they manage in the first instance. As we develop our expertise in this area training will be given to all senior staff and other staff who are interested in supporting colleagues in this way will also be able to ask to be considered for training as part of their professional development.

### **3.6 Sources of support**

The Trust is able to assist staff who may be suffering from stress in the following ways:

- Sign posting staff to the Education Support website, which is a group of independent charities that provides practical and emotional support to staff in the education sector and their families.
- Provide access to the Trust Employee Assistance Programme [educationsupport.org.uk/onlinesupport](https://educationsupport.org.uk/onlinesupport) (username and password will be provided to all staff within the Trust).
- We can run training sessions and/or workshops from time to time to assist staff in recognising and coping with stress.
- Carry out an individual or team stress risk assessment as appropriate to identify any risks of stress in the workplace with a view to reducing or removing those stressors.
- Consulting with trade union safety representatives or staff union representatives in proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.

### **3.7 Resolving cases of stress/mental ill health at work**

If you believe you are suffering from stress or mental ill health, you should discuss this with your line manager. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. In addition, if as a manager, you know that a member of your staff has a mental health condition, you should meet with them informally to encourage them to talk. If they do not want to, encourage them to talk to someone else or their GP/Health advisor.

Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of one of the above, steps will be taken by the School to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

- a) A workload review to determine whether any temporary reasonable adjustments can be made that may assist the member of staff.
- b) Where appropriate, the School will complete an investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance policies and procedures;
- c) Referral for medical advice and/or a medical report to be provided by the Occupational Health provider and / or the GP (and any medical specialist) treating the member of staff concerned including guidance on any adjustments that may assist the member of staff;
- d) Reintegration into the workplace and keeping staff informed of any developments at work, in agreement with you, whilst they remain off work;
- e) Having an open door policy so that staff can approach an agreed manager whenever they feel the need to talk at all;
- f) Inform staff of any assistance or other support that may be available;
- g) If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme.

The Occupational Health service will continue to be used appropriately to help staff overcome problems associated with work-related stress as well as other stress and the impact that has on their ability to do their duties.

### **3.8 Absence due to stress**

If you are absent due to stress or mental ill health you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in our Managing Sickness and Supporting Attendance Policy.

### **3.9 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required, whether they are suffering from stress or mental ill health, supporting a colleague who is suffering from stress or mental ill health because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure dealing with stress or mental ill health.

Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action in accordance with the Trust Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

However, there are occasions when matters reported by a member of staff suffering from stress or mental ill health may have to be put to third parties. For example, where duties need to be reallocated within a team or where, as the result of reported bullying or misconduct, a disciplinary investigation and/or proceeding takes place. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned and an appropriate means of communication agreed before any action is taken.

The Trust will monitor the development and dissemination of good practice, the recognition of the symptoms of stress and mental ill health, awareness of and effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting Headteacher in the first instance.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This Wellbeing policy reflects the Trust serious intent to accept its responsibilities in all matters relating to the wellbeing of its employees. The clear lines of responsibility and organisation describe the arrangements which are in place to implement all aspects of this policy.

## Further Guidance

Further guidance can be obtained from organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or Judicium Education. The following are some examples. The Health and Safety lead in the Trust will keep under review to ensure links are current.

HSE

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/>

HSE – Preventing Work-Related Stress in Schools

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/gohomehealthy/assets/docs/EducationTalkingToolkit.pdf>

NASUWT – Information on a whole range of issues related to stress and wellbeing

[www.nasuwt.org.uk](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk)

National Education Union (NEU) – Tackling stress

<https://neu.org.uk/advice/tackling-stress>

Acas – Information on stress, and employer and employee rights, in the workplace

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

NHS 111 – National Health Service advice and guidance on health matters

<http://www.nhs.uk/111>

National Children’s Bureau - Schools Wellbeing Partnership

<https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/together-we-deliver-better-childhood/transforming-mental-health-wellbeing/schools>

Education Support

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

Employee Assistance Programme

[educationsupport.org.uk/onlinesupport](http://educationsupport.org.uk/onlinesupport)

Tel: [08000 856 148](tel:08000856148)

World Health Organisation

<http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org>

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