MANAGEMENT OF STRESS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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Name of policy writer	Natalie McSheffrey
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Record of amendments:
V1.1 no amendments
V1.2 no amendments
v1.3 change of wording from school to academy

SHARE MAT Policy for the Management of Stress

CONTENTS

Section 1 Policy statement

The Board of Directors recognises that stress is potentially a major cause of ill health amongst its staff. Stress related illness can be caused by work or by issues outside work. The Board of Directors is committed to eliminating the foreseeable causes of stress at work, or if that is not possible, minimising or reducing the risk of work-related stress to employees to the lowest level.

SHARE MAT recognises that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty of care on employers to provide and maintain safe systems of work and a working environment which is, as far is reasonably practical, safe and without risks to health.

With regard to the work-life balance, Regulation 5(2) of the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 clarifies that the headteacher is responsible for the work-life balance of the staff, the CEO is responsible for the work-life balance of the headteachers and the Board of Directors is responsible for the work-life balance of the CEO.

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for agreeing and reviewing the health and safety policy, including issues relating to staff stress. On a day-to-day basis, the headteacher has responsibility for taking requisite measures to deal with and alleviate any work-related stress where possible.
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Board of Directors operates a fair, consistent and open approach to the issue of stress.

The Board of Directors, with the CEO and Central Team will therefore:
- Agree and review the health and safety policy
- Seek to eliminate or, if not possible, reduce the causes of work-related stress through risk assessment.
- Investigate all reports of work-related stress and ensure remedial action is taken - developing safe systems of work and introducing practical preventative measures.
- Provide information and training for managers to help them recognise the symptoms of stress and give practical guidance on the measures that may be taken to assist individuals suffering from potentially stress related symptoms.
- Provide information and training to all employees to enable them to recognise the symptoms of stress and the appropriate measures that may be adopted.

- Support employees (including the headteacher) to achieve healthy work-life balance
- Provide employees with details of support available through the MAT's employee wellbeing service
- Take a supportive attitude towards individuals experiencing stress whatever the cause.
- Respect confidentiality at all times - with individual cases only being discussed in the appropriate forum.
- Monitor and evaluate absence levels due to stress related illnesses.
- Monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of the Policy and procedures for the elimination and management of stress on a regular basis.

The Board of Directors believes that the elimination and management of stress is an important management task and that it requires a tactful and diplomatic approach and the co-operation and involvement of managers, staff and trade unions. The costs of not managing stress effectively are significant on both an individual and academy.

Section 2 Introduction

There is a need for academies to eliminate, or if not possible, reduce the causes of work-related stress and provide supportive strategies for staff. This will:
- Ensure good employment practice
- Ensure all legal obligations are met
- Reduce the direct and indirect costs of stress
- Help staff maintain a healthier work-life balance.

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the health and safety of employees whilst at work. The responsibility for managing stress within academy is delegated to the headteacher. Support is provided to academies by the MAT's Director of Operations and HR Manager.

A guide for employees is attached as Appendix 1 – Employees Guide to Managing Stress.

Section 3 Definitions of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them".

Stress is part of everyday life and an individual's stress level can vary depending on their tolerance and threshold. However, there is an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which is the reaction to the demands that a person feels when they cannot cope at a given time.

Section 4 Legal Responsibilities, Policies and Procedures

4.1 Health and Safety Legislation

Employers have a legal duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. There is a general duty therefore to seek to protect employees from undue stress at work, dealing with stress related issues and taking appropriate action.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to assess and manage significant risks to health and safety and, where these risks cannot be eliminated, implement control measures to minimise or reduce the risk.

Also, employees have a duty under Section (7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. This includes mental hazards such as work-place stress as well as physical hazards.

Liabilities in law arise where an employer does not demonstrate reasonable care towards an employee and it is reasonably foreseeable to the employer that injury will (and does) result as a consequence.

Injury can be interpreted as either mental or physical and while stress is not an injury in itself a mental illness such as a nervous breakdown is.

4.2 Working Time Directive

The Working Time Directive came into force on 1 October 1998 aiming to limit the numbers of hours in an employees' working week, ensure adequate rest times, etc. When looking at the hazards relating to stress and the prevention and reduction of stress managers should consider working patterns and hours.

4.3 Equality Act

The Equality Act defines a 'disabled person' as someone with *a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.* Employees who experience temporary and short-term cases of stress related illness would therefore not fall within the scope of the Act. However, longer-term cases and other forms of stress related conditions such as past history of long-term depression may be covered by the Act.

For those employees whose conditions do meet the provisions of the Act the academy is required to make reasonable adjustments. Further advice on making reasonable adjustments can be sought from the MAT's HR Manager.

4.4 Policies and Procedures

There are certain established policies and procedures within academy that may need to be considered when dealing with stress. These include:
- Attendance Management (see Managing Attendance at Work Policy)
- Competence of employees (see Disciplinary Policy)

Section 5 The Causes of Stress

Causes of an individual's stress may be work-related or non-work related and it may not be possible to predict how or when a person will be adversely affected by the pressures they experience. Within academy there are times that are particularly stressful for staff e.g. Ofsted inspections, HMI Inspection, academy re-organisations/closures, but there are many on-going, continual factors that may cause stress in particular the degree and speed of current educational change.

5.1 Causes of Non-Work-Related Stress

Causes of non-work-related stress may include:
- Bereavement
- Relationship breakdown
- Problems relating to children/parents
- Illness in the family
- Financial problems
- Personal issues such as gender, sexuality
- Experience of chronic illness
- Addiction
- Abuse
- Violence
- House move.

5.2 Causes of Work-Related Stress

Causes of work-related stress may include:

Academy Culture
e.g. management style, poor communication from leadership, organisational change, poor relations with co-workers, lack of participation in decision making

The Environmental Factors
e.g. noise, lighting, ergonomic design

Factors Intrinsic to the Job
e.g. long hours, dealing with challenging behaviours, confrontational situations and high workload

Since 2014, the DfE has been working on a Policy Paper aimed at reducing teacher workload, informed in part by the findings of a teacher workload advisory group. In November 2018, the Secretary of State for Education, Ofsted, ASCL, NAHT, NGA and CST wrote to all academy leaders confirming their support to help them reduce workload in academies. A workload reduction toolkit has been published to support academies to review and streamline workload through solution-focused and collaborative discussions. The MAT is committed to utilising the toolkit alongside its Stress Risk Assessment.

Employee Development
e.g. unsupportive feedback on performance, training needs, job security, lack of promotion - under/over promotion

Section 6 The Effects of Stress

The effects of stress can be short-lived provided timely and appropriate action is taken. Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to the employee and the academy.

6.1 Effects on the Individual

Work-related stress is not an illness but if it is prolonged or particularly intense, it can lead to increased problems with ill health e.g. heart disease, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure etc. It can also lead to other behaviours that are not helpful to health such as weight loss/gain, drinking too much caffeine, alcohol and smoking.

6.2 Effects on the Academy

Stress has implications for the academy and reducing stress is cost-effective. For example, stress can cause
an increase in sickness absence, which leads to increased workloads for others and can impact as follows:
- Reduced staff performance
- Reduced staff morale
- Increased staff turnover
- Increased parental complaints
- Possible expensive litigation.

Section 7 The Signs of Stress

Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to the employee and the academy. It is important to recognise that people demonstrate some of the symptoms of stress at various times in their life. This does not necessarily mean they are suffering from stress. The levels of stress that an individual feels will correspond to the symptoms they experience.

Physical Signs →	Nausea Headaches Fatigue Shoulders, neck, back pain Cramps Chest pain Palpitations Weight loss/gain
Behavioural Signs →	Smoking Alcohol - increased drinking Nail biting Changes to eating habits Erratic mood changes
Emotional Signs →	Intolerance and irritability Withdrawal of social contact Low self-esteem Guilt Panic Worrying inappropriately
Work Related Signs →	Reduction in productivity Increase in error rates Indecisive/ poor decision making Deterioration in planning/control of work Tension/conflict between colleagues Increase in disciplinary issues Loss of motivation/commitment Working longer hours with little achievement Erratic/poor timekeeping Increased absence Evading deadlines Lack of concentration

Section 8 Identifying Work-Place Stress

There are a number of ways of identifying workplace stress:

8.1 Sickness Absence Analysis

An analysis of sickness absence can identify stress. Consideration may be given to:
- individual problems - where there may be increased rates of either short-term or long-term absences, or possible stress related diagnosis
- whether there may be group problems - where there are numbers of employees with increased sickness absence rates or with possible stress related diagnosis
- by looking at medical certificates for stress as a specific reason for absence.

8.2 Personal Accident Report Forms

If an employee feels that they have an illness or condition caused by their work it should be reported on the Personal Accident Form and investigated by the headteacher.

8.3 Performance Management /Supervision Process

The supervision/performance management process provides an opportunity for discussing and identifying if an employee has a problem. It is important for the headteacher/manager to listen to the employee and encourage them to discuss their feelings. Many teachers and employees are reluctant to admit to feeling stressed at work as they may perceive it as a sign of weakness or feel it goes against the management culture.

8.4 Informal Monitoring

The basis of this approach is that the headteacher/manager knows the members of the team, their individual skills, moods, personalities and how they respond to pressures and demands. They should then be aware of any difficulties and try and provide support and assistance.

8.5 Exit Interviews

Exit interviews occur when employees leave a job and can be a useful way of gaining insight and understanding into how employees view their job and the academy.

8.6 Stress Audit

Head teachers may wish to carry out an individual stress assessment. It is important that these are carried out on a confidential basis and that staff are aware of what the information will be used for. While these may give a good indication of stress levels they can be time consuming in carrying them out and analysing the results.

Further advice on the use of stress audits can be obtained from the HR Manager.

Section 9 Addressing and Reducing Work-Place Stress - The Role of the Headteacher and Manager

The Board of Directors and headteacher are responsible for the health and safety of the employees in an individual academy. 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.

9.1 The Academy's Approach

The academy'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 or Employee Wellbeing support. 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 the return to academy.

If the source of stress is work related the headteacher/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.

9.2 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 MAT's HR Manager.

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 academy 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 academy should provide training and strategies for them to use.

9.3 The 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 academy.

A check-list for head teachers and managers in preventing and dealing with work related stress is shown in Appendix 2 – Headteachers'/Managers' Checklist.

9.4 Developing a Supportive Culture

Means of reducing stress is intrinsic to good management and it is important for the headteacher and managers to show that stress is an issue that the academy 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.

9.5 Management Style and Organisation

How a academy or department is managed can contribute to workplace stress. Head teachers 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
- Regular review of workloads and allocate work accordingly.

9.6 Other Considerations
Headteachers and managers can also look at:

Factors in Reducing Work Stress

Management
e.g. effective, open management, good communication, employee involvement especially in periods of change, valuing staff

Academy Issues
e.g. ensure training for dealing with challenging behaviour, provide support & use academy procedures for cases of verbal/physical abuse, harassment and bullying.

Job Design
e.g. well-defined tasks and responsibilities, address work load issues including working time, sufficient training, utilisation of skills etc.

Employee Development

e.g. ensure clear objectives and understanding of responsibilities, ensure training needs are met and reviewed regularly, provide appropriate support etc.

A number of good practice suggestions for consideration when looking at strategies are shown in Appendix 3 – Good Practice Suggestions for Head Teachers/Manager.

Section 10 Sources of Help

10.1 Management Support

HR Manager	Advice on all aspects of Stress Management / Mediation and Referrals to Employee Wellbeing Service
Premises & Compliance Officer/Manager	For assistance with risk assessment and accident reporting procedures and advice on all aspects of H&S in academies

10.2 Employee Support

Employee Wellbeing Service	Counselling, advice and information on a range of issues and services
Teacher Support Line	Free information, support and counselling for teachers. 24 hours 08000 562 561 http://www.teachersupport.info/

Employees Guide to Managing Stress

1. WHAT IS STRESS?

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them".

Stress is part of everyday life and an individual's stress level can vary depending on their tolerance and threshold. However, there is an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which is the reaction to the demands that a person feels when they cannot cope at a given time.

2. THE DUTIES OF YOUR EMPLOYER

The MAT has a duty to ensure that the health of employees is not harmed by work related stress. In particular they must:

- Assess the risk to your health from work related stress
- Put in place measures to eliminate, or where that is not possible, to reduce that risk
- Consult you, either directly or through your trade union about workplace and organisational changes that are likely to significantly affect your health and safety.

3. YOUR ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES

You and your colleagues may suffer at some time in your working life from stress at work. It is important that you are able to recognise factors in the workplace which may cause stress. It is also helpful if you recognise the signs and symptoms of stress in yourselves or others in order to take positive action.

Legally you have a duty under Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 14 of the Management if Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your acts or omission whilst at work.

4. THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

Different people perceive different events as stressful. Therefore, stress may be experienced as a result of exposure to a wide range of work demands and this therefore may contribute to an equally wide range of health issues.

We respond to short-term stress in a number of ways. These responses allow the body to get rid of built up energies on a regular basis and the let the body recover and return to normal. These responses include the heart beating faster, tense muscles, extra cholesterol and sugar in the blood and slower immune and digestive responses.

Prolonged stress, or if it is particularly intense can lead to increased problems with ill health e.g. heart disease, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure etc. It can also lead to other behaviours that are not helpful to health such as weight loss/gain, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol and smoking.

5. THE SIGNS OF STRESS

Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to all. It is important to recognise that we demonstrate some of the symptoms of stress at various times in their life. This does not necessarily mean we are suffering from stress. The levels of stress we feel will correspond to the symptoms we experience.
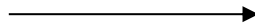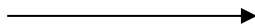
Physical Signs   ⟶
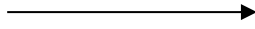
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Shoulders, neck, back pain
- Cramps
- Chest pain
- Palpitations
- Weight loss/gain

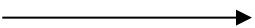Behavioural Signs   ⟶

- Smoking
- Alcohol – increased drinking
- Nail biting
- Changes to eating habits

Emotional Signs   ⟶

- Erratic mood changes
- Intolerance and irritability
- Withdrawal of social contact
- Low self-esteem
- Guilt
- Panic
- Worrying inappropriately

Work Related Signs   ⟶

- Reduction in productivity
- Increase in error rates
- Indecisive/ poor decision making
- Deterioration in planning/control of work
- Tension/conflict between colleagues
- Increase in disciplinary issues
- Loss of motivation/commitment
- Working longer hours with little achievement
- Erratic/poor timekeeping
- Increased absence
- Evading deadlines
- Lack of concentration

Generally, the best way to identify your own or a colleague's stress is to be aware of normal performance levels, general demeanour and behaviour at work. Where there are changes in any of these behaviour

11

patterns it could be the effects of stress. These signs are often picked up by other people before we acknowledge them ourselves.

6. WHAT DO I DO IF I FEEL STRESSED

There are support mechanisms and procedures in academy to help you resolve workplace stress:

6.1 Communication

If you feel that there are aspects of your work which are causing you to feel excessively stressed you should discuss them with your head teacher/manager who will try and help you resolve the situation.

They may also ask you if you have any problems related to stress, either as part of performance management/management supervision sessions or absence control procedures.

If your problems are related to home or are of a personal nature you may also wish to discuss them with your headteacher/manager. They may be able to assist with emotional support or practical help such as compassionate leave. Your headteacher/manager will treat all your conversations in strictest confidence.

6.2 Seeking Other Support

You may feel that talking to your headteacher/manager is difficult and, in these circumstances, you may wish to contact your trade union representative for support and advice. They have contacts with their own support systems and other outside agencies who they can approach with you or on your behalf.

The MAT also provides an Employee Wellbeing Package which can provide a confidential counselling service and advice on a wide range of issues including stress but also financial issues, legal issues, bereavement, marital relations, health concerns, alcohol/drug abuse etc. Details can be obtained from the HR Manager. The service is independent of management and the only way anyone else will know if you contact them is if you chose to tell them.

If you are a teacher you may wish to call the Teacher Support Line which provides free information, support and counselling 24 hours a day.

Support can also be gained from your GP or agencies who provide information and advice in respect of specific issues e.g. Relate.

6.3 Individual Strategies

On a personal level it is useful to be able to analyse and examine your reactions to stress and to be able to reduce the effects as much as possible. Your chosen methods of reducing stress are as individual as the causes of it.

There are many things which can help you improve the situation to gain short-term relief and provide strategies for dealing with on-going stress:

- Be assertive – stand up for yourself
- Develop good points both in yourself and others
- Be positive, see the positive side of yourself and others
- Relaxation – this opposes the stress response and helps the re-balancing process
- Physical activity – use up the energy created by the stress response, this helps restore balance and build fitness
- Sleeping well – adopt regular sleep patterns
- Avoid trying things which cause more side effects than the stress such as alcohol, smoking, caffeine, overeating, aggression
- Eat well – the basis for good health which helps you to handle the pressure of stress
- Friendships – give the opportunity to talk and share
- Emotional release – laughing, crying and talking helps release some of the tensions of stress rather than keeping them bottled up
- Appreciate the present rather than dwelling on the past.

APPENDIX 2
Headteachers' / Managers' Check List

Headteachers/managers may find the following checklist useful in **preventing the root causes** of work-related stress and as a basis for written records: -

Am I familiar with the content of the Stress Policy and the policies also referred to?	YES/NO
Am I complying with the policy?	YES/NO
Do I know where to get further assistance?	YES/NO
Do I need further training in any aspects mentioned in the policy?	YES/NO
Have I carried out a risk assessment for work-related stress in my area of responsibility?	YES/NO
Have I worked through the DfE toolkit 'reducing teacher workload'?	YES/NO
Have I consulted with employees and TU safety representatives?	YES/NO
Have I carried out a risk assessment for other workplace/activity risks?	YES/NO
Do I regularly review my risk assessments?	YES/NO

Managers may find this checklist useful in **dealing with stress cases** and for written records:

- Do I know anything about this employee's ability to cope that causes me concern?

- Have I noticed (or had reported to me) anything about this employee's behaviour that causes me to think they are not coping?

- Have I talked to the employee about their ability to cope?

- Am I being supportive to the employee?

- Have I considered the issues they have raised with me?

- Have I reviewed the work-related stress risk assessment in view of this case?

- Have I been able to prevent the risk of stress for this employee?

- Have I agreed with the employee what control measures I will put in place to assist them?

- Have I put the control measures in place and set up a system to review their effectiveness?

- Am I monitoring the employee and their ability to cope on a regular basis?

- Do I need further assistance from other sections e.g. Human Resources?

- Have I kept written records of the above?

APPENDIX 3
Good Practice Suggestions for Headteachers / Managers

JOB CONTENT

- Ensure responsibilities and expectations are clear
- Provide a degree of challenge
- Enable people to contribute to decisions affecting their jobs
- Ensure job descriptions provide a clear role
- Provide feedback on performance
- Provide a variety in pace and method of task completion

MANAGEMENT STYLE AND STRUCTURE

- Acknowledge and value people's contribution to the academy
- Have clear, well-communicated goals and objectives
- Consistent approach to all employees
- Ensures a balance between responsibility and authority needed to carry out those responsibilities
- Poor performance is tackled at an early stage with support and appropriate training
- Regular contact with employees
- Clear reporting responsibilities are communicated and adhered to

TRAINING

- Provide opportunities for professional development
- Committed to training and develop staff
- Assess training and development needs regularly
- Feedback and monitor training and development opportunities and take-up
- Ensure all staff receive a full induction

MANAGING CHANGE

- Keep those affected by change informed

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Encourage staff to maintain a work-life balance
- Ensure staff take appropriate leave
- Ensure confidentiality of those seeking help
- Use existing procedures such as compassionate leave, urgent domestic leave as appropriate
- Promote the provision of the Employee Wellbeing Package and Teacher Line
- Respond promptly to complaints of bullying, harassment etc.
- Grievance, complaints and disciplinary policies should be seen as fair
- Undertake frank exit interviews with staff leaving the job

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Physical layout
- Work areas comply with good practice and H&S guidelines
- Noise levels controlled

EQUIPMENT

- Suitable and sufficient equipment available
- Planned and regular maintenance of equipment
- Equipment places comply with established standards/good practice
- Information, instruction and training are given