The Auriga Academy Trust
Stress Management Policy

Contents:

1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees employed by the Auriga Academy Trust.

2. Policy Statement

The Trust places a high value on the health of its employees and is committed to take all reasonable measures to prevent stress in the workplace by assessing the causes and introducing measures to reduce stress at work.

Pupil engagement, a supportive work environment and effective management practices make Trust schools' fulfilling and rewarding places to work. However, the Trust recognises that working in a Trust school can present unique challenges which can impact on staff wellbeing. Due to their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), pupils may exhibit communication and behaviours, including physical / verbal aggression which can be stressful and physically demanding for staff to manage. Working with children and young people who have severe disabilities or chronic conditions can be emotionally taxing. Staff may need to assist with physical care tasks which, without training, can lead to physical strain or injury. There are also high expectations for individualised attention and tailored educational plans, contributing to workload and time pressures. All these factors can impact staff wellbeing and are addressed through training, support, and creating a positive work environment.

These guidelines will help in ensuring that staff who work for the Trust are effective in carrying out their duties.

Although guidelines in this policy deal mainly with the symptoms of stress from work related pressures, it also acknowledges that some employees may experience stress from situations at home or outside work which could affect their work performance. It is important that issues of concern are shared with managers so that appropriate support can be given.

3. What is Stress?

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".*

While the effects of stress are *usually* short-lived and cause no lasting harm, where pressure is intense or prolonged the effects of stress can be more damaging and lead to mental and physical ill health.

4. HSE Management Standards

The HSE Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. These 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.

5. Signs and Symptoms of Stress

There are many different ways that stress will show in an individual. Signs and symptoms can be behavioural, emotional or physical or a combination of these. Some examples to look out for might be:

Behavioural	- Changes in eating habits - Increased smoking, drinking or drug taking 'to cope' - Mood swings affecting your behaviour - Changes in sleep patterns - Twitch, nervous behaviour - Changes in attendance such as arriving later or taking more time off.
Emotional/mental	- Negative or depressive feeling - Disappointment with yourself - Increased emotional reaction – more tearful or sensitive or aggressive - Loss of motivation, commitment and confidence - Mood swings - Confusion, indecision - Lack of concentration - Poor memory.
Physical	- Tiredness or lack of energy - High blood pressure - Pains or tightness in the chest.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Trust / school's responsibilities:

It is the Trust / school's responsibility to:
- ensure the Trust / school complies with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the associated Regulations
- ensure that a continuing commitment is given to the reduction of work-related stress
- consider the impact on staff of any major change or restructuring
- provide an effective means of communicating and supporting staff and managers when a major change or restructuring is to take place and to ensure an implementation plan is produced
- integrate good practice in reducing stress at work into other policies and procedures e.g. sickness absence policy (**Managing Health and Attendance Policy**)
- provide additional professional and emotional support in the form of an employee assistance programme (EAP).

6.2 Manager's responsibilities:

Managers have an important role in identifying and reducing stress in the workplace, whether the stress is work induced or not. Managers will
- monitor stress problems through appraisal meetings, staff surveys, sickness absence records, staff turnover statistics, exit interviews, number of complaints received, missed deadlines, work backlogs and a deterioration in work performance, increase in staff disputes, grievances and poor morale, changes in individual behaviour, attitudes and appearance
- seek advice from Trust HR, who may engage the support of the Trust's HR Advisor and occupational health, when a potential stress case arises.
- complete the **Individual Stress Questionnaire Risk Assessment (Appendix 1)** when an employee reports work-related stress issues or when they are returning from a work-related stress absence. This questionnaire does not replace existing return to work procedures but should be used alongside them.

6.3 Employee's responsibilities:

It is the employee's responsibility and legal duty to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work (Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974)
- Discuss their own stress related issues with their manager, the counselling service of the Trust / school's EAP provider or other appropriate person to enable early support or intervention e.g. their GP
- Recognise their own training and development needs and take responsibility for their own well-being and development in their job
- Co-operate with managers to avoid or reduce work related stress, including supporting their colleagues
- Ensure they do not put other employees under undue pressure as a result of their own actions or negligence
- Inform their manager when they feel under undue pressure, which might affect their work performance whether the cause is work related or outside work.

7. Identifying the Sources of Stress

Managers will consider the following:
- Consider stress as an occupational hazard and include it in their **Health, wellbeing and stress risk assessment.**
- Use a variety of methods to identify pressure/stress including sickness returns, complaints, performance, incidents/accident reports, etc.
- When aware that an employee is suffering from the effects of stress, take action to address the situation, including supporting the individual, agreeing individual work programmes and referring them, with the support of Trust HR, to occupational health, or EAP services
- Where the cause of the stress is outside the control of the Trust / school, make the employee aware of both the internal and external support available and monitor the situation sensitively
- Be aware of the potential for stress after a violent/abusive incident, threat or witnessing of traumatic events. In these situations consider what help should be offered and by liaising with Trust HR whether a referral to occupational health or EAP counselling service might be appropriate.

8. Possible Causes of Workplace Stress

If any staff member feels any of the causes below might apply to them, they should seek to address them with their line manager in the first instance. Further support can also be sought from Trust HR.

Physical environment	- Insufficient space - Lack of privacy - Noisy environment - Too hot/cold - Equipment not suitable/poorly maintained - Poor lighting/ventilation - Lone working.
The organisation	- Insufficient staff for size of workload/ vacant posts - Unclear expectations or objectives - Lack of prioritising - Inconsistency in style & approach - Crisis management - No time to adjust to changes - No control over the workload - Rigid working procedures.
Personal & social relationships	- Insufficient opportunities for social contact at work - Any form of harassment and/or bullying - Staff conflict - Divided loyalties (personal vs. work).
Role in the organisation	- Role ambiguity/conflict - Too much/too little responsibility - Under/over promotion

	• No participation in decision-making • Lack of managerial support/feedback • Lack of job security.
Individual concerns	• Difficulty in coping with change • Not confident in dealing with personal problems • Not assertive • Difficulty in delegating • Poor at managing time • Lack of knowledge about managing stress.

9. Strategies for Managers to Manage Stress in the Workplace

9.1 Develop a supportive culture
- Create a climate of openness so that employees can discuss feelings of stress and support each other. Take any complaint of stress seriously
- Refer to the DfE "Conversation Guide for Workload and Wellbeing in Schools and Academy Trusts" Guidance
- Encourage staff to use outside help (their own GP, EAP counselling, Trade Union, family, friends)
- Identify ways to improve the working environment
- Communicate regularly through staff and team meetings
- Clearly confirm with staff and team members their job roles, expectations and responsibilities in an open and timely manner.
- Consider how to give positive feedback to employees
- Use team-building activities to promote a co-operative and supportive team
- Take complaints of bullying and harassment seriously and investigate fully in line with the Trust's **Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy**.

9.2 Management style
- Analyse management style and its effects on a team
- Utilise SLTs stress management training – **please see the CPD Policy**
- Address staff performance issues openly and directly in a supportive and un-blaming way – do not avoid performance issues as that can, in itself, lead to stress and poor service to customers
- Encourage a team problem solving approach to work issues
- Equip yourself with appropriate skills and knowledge to prevent stress and deal with it appropriately when it occurs in yourself and your staff.

9.3 Organisation of work
- Ensure employees have realistic work programmes and deadlines. Set clear priorities in consultation with staff
- Regularly review workloads and work programmes
- Consult employees on proposals to change work practices. Appraise employees regularly and agree development plans for individuals and departments
- Ensure effective communication between management teams across the school and the Trust, especially during periods of organisational change.

9.4 Recruitment and Selection
- Ensure the full range of tasks and demands of the job are set out in the job description and person specification
- The person specification should indicate the requirement to be able to work under pressure if necessary and evidence should be sought through the application form and interview
- Employment references (including details of sickness and absence records) should be sought to ascertain the candidates' ability to handle pressurised situations
- Pre-employment health questionnaires, assessed by occupational health, may identify stress related health problems and any concerns would be discussed with potential staff on a confidential basis

- In jobs identified to have high pressure, care must be taken to demonstrate what support will be given to the employees.

9.5 Induction and promotion
- All new employees must receive a timely and robust induction into their new job. Existing employees can be at particular risk when they are promoted/acting into a temporary role or given significant new tasks. A review of that employee's work programme and developmental needs must take place.

9.6 Absence management
- If an absence is related to stress, the manager will follow the Trust's sickness absence policy (see **Managing Health and Attendance Policy**). If the cause of the absence is confirmed to be work related and the manager is satisfied that the cause is not due to poor performance of the individual, the job/role should be reviewed and action taken to reduce the level of pressure. Trust HR should be consulted for support.
- The manager will also consider what arrangements can be made to the employee's duties/workplace to minimise the risk of any such illness recurring
- The manager will monitor how the arrangements work in practice. Are they being implemented on a daily basis? Are they satisfactory? Do alternative approaches need to be considered?

9.7 Development and training
- Ensure that staff are coached, trained and developed to carry out new and existing job responsibilities
- Ensure all staff achieve the required core competencies
- Ensure equality of access to training, within the employees' working hours.
- Review how training and development needs are met within your department/area of responsibility.

10. Strategies for Employees to Manage Stress in the Workplace

10.1 Monitor yourself and express your feelings:
- Learn to identify and acknowledge your feelings, both to yourself and others
- Tell your manager if you feel you are stressed
- Learn to recognise warning signals, monitor patterns
- Set time aside to reflect upon current stresses and balance your life
- Talk to colleagues, family and friends about how you feel.

10.2 Identify and develop appropriate support:
- Identify a particular person for mutual support
- Ask for help and be ready to accept it when you need it
- Give others positive feedback and tell them you value them.

10.3 Develop useful behavioural skills:
- Be assertive and take responsibility for your own behaviour and actions
- Learn to recognise negative thought patterns and replace them with constructive ones.

10.4 Manage your time:
- Be realistic; set yourself short and long term goals
- Prioritise, plan and monitor your use of time
- Learn to say no to unreasonable demands and deadlines
- Avoid an imbalance between work and private life
- Try not to make too many major changes in your life at once.

10.5 Take exercise and relax:
- Choose some enjoyable exercise
- Learn to relax and practice regular relaxation techniques

- Take regular breaks/do something varied throughout the day
- Ensure you get the amount of sleep you need.

10.6   Develop healthy eating patterns:
- Be aware of the overuse of stimulants e.g. alcohol, caffeine, tobacco
- Eat a healthy and well-balanced diet.

11. Relevant legislation / Useful resources
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - [Work related stress and how to manage it](#)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - [Managing risk and risk assessment at work](#).
- DfE "[Conversation Guide for Workload and Wellbeing in Schools and Academy Trusts](#)" Guidance
- [DfE Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff](#)

Appendix 1: Individual Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire

This questionnaire should be used by the line manager or other nominated representative appointed by them, e.g. senior leadership, when an employee reports work-related stress issues or when they are returning from a work-related stress absence. This questionnaire does not replace existing return to work procedures but should be used alongside them.

Notes for the employee regards factors outside of work:

The list of questions below follows the HSE-approved format mainly focuses on factors at work. However, there may be factors outside work, for example in your family life, which have contributed to or added to the pressures at work. These might have made it harder to deal with demands at work that you would normally be able to cope with. You may want to share these issues – people at work might be able to help and make adjustments such as being more flexible with work time/workloads, or just being sympathetic to the additional pressures you are under.

If you do not feel happy telling your manager about these things, you can also seek support from
- Trust HR who, with your consent, may make an Occupational Health referral, or sign post you to other support available.
- The Trust Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Health Assured Contact Information

Free 24 Hour Confidential Helpline
0800 028 0199

Online Information Portal - https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/
Username – wellbeing
Password – GripGoldSash

My Healthy Advantage Mobile App Registration Code
MHA261191

- your trade union representative.

You may also like to look at the links available from the Health and Safety Executive at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/links.htm

EMPLOYEE Name:	Date
EMPLOYEE Job Title:	School / Campus:
Person completing the Risk Assessment: (name / job title)	

Cause of Stress: DEMANDS		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Do different people at work demand things from you that are hard to combine?		

Question	Was it a problem for you? Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.	What can be done about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Do you have unachievable deadlines?		
Do you have to work very intensively?		
Do you have to neglect some tasks because you have too much to do?		
Are you unable to take sufficient breaks?		
Do you feel pressured to work long hours?		
Do you feel you have to work very fast?		
Do you have unrealistic time pressures?		

Cause of Stress: CONTROL

Question	Was it a problem for you? Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.	What can be done about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Can you decide when to take a break?		
Do you feel you have a say in your work speed?		
Do you feel you have a choice in deciding how you do your work?		
Do you feel you have a choice in deciding what you do at work?		
Do you feel you have some say over the way you do your work?		
Do you feel your time can be flexible?		

Cause of Stress: Support (Manager)

Question	Was it a problem for you? Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.	What can be done about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Did/does your manager give you enough supportive feedback on your work?		

Do you feel you can rely on your manager to help you with a work problem?		
Do you feel you can talk to your manager about something that upset or annoyed you at work?		
Do you feel your manager supported you through any emotionally demanding work?		
Did/do you feel your manager encouraged you enough at work?		

Cause of Stress: Support (Peers)		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Do you feel your colleagues would help you if work became difficult?		
Do you get the help and support you need from your colleagues?		
Do you get the respect at work you deserve from your colleagues?		
Are your colleagues willing to listen to your work-related problems?		

Cause of Stress: Relationship		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Were you personally harassed, in the form of unkind words or behaviour?		
Do you feel there is friction or anger between colleagues?		
Have you been bullied at work?		
Are relationships strained at work?		

Cause of Stress: Role		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Are you clear about what is expected of you at work?		
Do you know how to go about getting your job done?		
Are you clear about what your duties and responsibilities are?		
Are you clear about the goals and objectives for the class?		
Do you understand how your work fits into the overall aim of the school / Trust? As part of this do you have regular updates on changes to procedures that impact on your role		

Cause of Stress: Changes		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Do you have enough opportunities to question your manager about change at work?		
Do you feel consulted about change at work?		
When changes are made at work, are you clear about how they might work out in practice?		

Cause of Stress: Other Issues		
Question	**Was it a problem for you?** *Use this space to detail what the problem was. If it was not a problem, leave it blank.*	**What can be done about it?** *Can we make any adjustments?*
Is there anything else that was/is a source of stress for you, at work, e.g. Performance Management		

procedures, or external factors from home, that may have contributed to you feeling pressured or going off work with stress-related illness?		