

## Staff Stress Management Policy 2020

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Directors are also Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all staff employed by the Link Academy Trust.

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### Statement of intent

The Link Academy Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. Stress and its prevention are a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of the Trust's staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, the Trust understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed.

The purpose of this policy is to define stress, outline the responsibilities of the Trust's staff and to advise employees on how to deal with and prevent stress.

### 1. Definition

- 1.1. The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as: "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them." The Health and Safety Executive also points out that; "this makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health."

### 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. To be able to handle and avoid stress, members of staff, the Executive/Academy Heads, Trustees and Governors will all be expected to take extra care and precautions.
- 2.2. Individual members of staff are responsible for:
  - Being able to recognise the early signs of stress in themselves and their colleagues.
  - Supporting co-workers if they become stressed. This may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
  - Undertaking additional training and personal development opportunities.
  - Reporting any incidents of stress, e.g. over-working.
  - Be willing to openly discuss stress.
- 2.3. The Executive/Academy Head is responsible for:
  - Organising proper inductions for new starters, explaining the Trust's policies and code of

conduct.

- Ensuring all staff have up-to-date, regular training and that they are confident in their ability.
- Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk assessments, taking into account the causes of stress.
- Having regular communication with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress.
- Monitoring the employee's workloads and ensuring staff aren't over-worked.
- Attending all necessary training, keeping skills current and setting a good example for staff.
- Ensuring that all staff read and understand the policy.

2.4. The Trust HR Officer is responsible for:

- Encouraging stress awareness throughout the academies, promoting stress as a serious issue, rather than a weakness.
- Consulting the Executive/Academy Head on measures to manage stress, including them in any decisions that need to be made.
- Ensuring Executive/Academy Head puts measures in place to support staff with stress.
- Actively trying to eliminate stressors in school.

### **3. Causes of stress**

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

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

- Over-working or work that doesn't match the employee's skills and ability
- 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
- No long-term plan in place

3.3. The Trust recognises staff can also experience stress outside of school, home and personal lives can also prove stressful; 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 stressed.

### **4. Identifying a stressed colleague**

4.1. In order to help stressed colleagues, identifying the symptoms of stress is very important. Someone may be suffering from one or more of the negative effects; however, they may not be stressed. When a stressor persists over a longer period of time the indicators become more obvious and acute.

- 4.2. The Trust will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace.
- 4.3. The Trust has a legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.
- 4.4. All members of staff will look out for the following symptoms when identifying a colleague with stress:
- Mood swings and consistently bad moods, such as feeling angry or depressed
  - Low self-esteem, loss of confidence, feeling lonely, worthless or overwhelmed
  - Attitude and behaviour, including low morale, feeling unmotivated, poor concentration, lower quality of work, bad timekeeping, difficulty concentrating
  - Noticeable change in behaviours; using drugs, smoking, drinking more alcohol, eating disorders
- 4.5. All members of staff will also look out for physical indicators of stress, which include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Low energy, including fatigue and tiredness.
  - Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation and nausea.
  - High blood pressure, heart disease and ulcers.
  - Frequent colds and infections, due to a weakened immune system.
  - Aches, pains and tension in joints and muscles.

## **5. Trust & Academy management**

- 5.1. In order to positively impact levels of stress in the academies, Executive/Academy Heads and the Trust HR Officer will ensure any changes to the whole Trust will be implemented to positively affect all staff.
- 5.2. To help manage stress the Executive/Academy Head will:
- Lead by example and encourage staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a life outside of work.
  - Encourage team building; using INSET days to build relationships as feeling comfortable amongst colleagues will make discussing stress easier.
  - Ensure that staff wellbeing is regarded as high priority and highlighted through wellbeing sessions and with regular supportive and informative communication through a termly Staff Matters bulletin from the Trust HR Officer which addresses the five strands of wellbeing.
  - Assist with work and help to manage employees' workloads; one of the main contributors to stress is over-working; helping staff manage their workload will make them more relaxed.
  - Provide an employee assistance scheme and work with staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g. a bereavement.

## **6. Self-management**

- 6.1. Staff can also make changes to avoid and prevent stress, stress is a problem that should be

tackled and not ignored

- 6.2. Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they're feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work. Alternatively, they should contact Sue Howard, HR Officer, based at Landscope School House, [hr@thelink.academy](mailto:hr@thelink.academy)
- 6.3. Staff will take action in order 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, establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life is vital.
  - 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, these may provide temporary relief; however, in the long-term unhealthy habits will only create more problems.

## **7. Consultation and Communication**

- 7.1. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff.
- 7.2. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.
- 7.3. The Trust Staff Well-being Policy should be read in conjunction with this policy

This Policy is reviewed by the Remuneration Committee on a 2-yearly cycle.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees: 13 July 2020**

**Next Review: Summer 2022**