STRESS AT WORK AND STAFF WELFARE POLICY

V1

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1.0 Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Beckfoot Trust to take all reasonable and practicable steps to safeguard the health and safety and wellbeing of employees whilst at work.

The Trust is committed to:

- Identifying workplace sources of stress through a process of proactive risk assessment
- Reducing the risk of work-related stress as far as reasonably practicable through the development of good working practices, based on the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards
- Supporting managers, supervisors, and individual employees to recognise work- related stress and the appropriate actions to take
- Providing central and local support to employees who are experiencing work- related stress to enable them to remain in work or support them in returning to work by undertaking a process of reactive Individual Stress Action Plans
- Defining responsibilities in relation to the management of work-related stress
- Understanding that stress cannot be easily 'compartmentalised' into work related / home life related stress – the boundaries are often blurred and one can affect the other
- Supporting individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures in their lives, whatever the cause of their stress
- Ensuring that all employees who experience health problems are treated fairly, sensitively, with respect and in accordance with the Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy
- Promoting a positive and preventative rather than punitive approach to workplace stress
- Encouraging and promoting open communication, whilst ensuring that employees' confidentiality is respected.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

The wellbeing section of the Trust's People First Charter put an emphasis on:

- Reviewing any work practices that stand in the way of staff being able to plan and deliver great learning
- Finding ways of reducing unnecessary workload
- Collecting staff voice and responding to it; formally, a minimum of annually and informally, as much as possible
- Making no excuses for staff suffering a loss of dignity
- Promoting wellbeing and a healthy and safe work environment
- Minimising meetings and emails and thinking carefully about the purpose of all communication

These are all issues that should be kept in mind when carrying out a stress risk assessment or an individual stress action plan.

An employee's mental and physical health can be affected by a number of factors which may or may not be work-related. Work-related stress is a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence and staff turnover. Work-related stress also has a negative impact on individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole.

This policy is also accompanied by two separate guidance documents:

- Carrying out a proactive school work-related stress assessment
- Dealing with individual cases through an individual stress action plan

The Trust's approach to managing work-related stress is based on the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) management standards for work-related stress. These standards identify six areas of risk and establish a framework for employers to use to tackle work-related stress.

The six areas of risk identified by the HSE's management standards

Demands: Issues such as work load, work patterns and work environment.

Change: How large or small organisational change is managed and communicated.

Relationships: Such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict.

Support: Including encouragement, sponsorship and resources.

Control: How much say teams and individuals Have over the way they work.

Role: How people understand what their role is in the organisation.

Stress is one aspect of overall mental health and is not a medically diagnosed condition itself. Where stress is prolonged, it can lead to both physical and psychological ill health including anxiety and depression. Stress can also aggravate an existing mental health problem, making it harder to control. Stress can however be tackled by adopting a preventative approach and effectively managing the factors that can cause work-related stress.

3.0   Overarching Principles

3.1   Definition of Work Related Stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related stress as:

'… the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.'

Reasonable pressure at work can be positive and help individuals to thrive. However, work-related stress can occur when pressure exceeds a person's capacity to cope. The stage at which excessive pressure leads to work-related stress will vary between individuals. Employees may also be affected by issues outside work that can increase the likelihood of them experiencing stress. Using an approach based on the HSE's management standards can be helpful in these circumstances to identify the workplace aspects of any stress and the appropriate actions.

4.0   Roles and Responsibilities

4.1   Headteachers

Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that arrangements for risk assessments are suitable and are communicated effectively, including a preventative school risk assessment for work-related stress. This should be reviewed on an annual basis. This risk assessment should use the Health and Safety Executive's management standard as a framework, for guidance see How to Complete a Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment.

4.2   Line managers/supervisors

Line managers/supervisors have a duty to ensure that risks associated with activities undertaken are assessed, effectively managed and controlled. They are therefore responsible for identifying, where possible, and responding appropriately to work-related stress issues within their teams.

This may include:

- Carrying out a preventative work-related stress risk assessment for the local area, for guidance see How to Complete a Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment;
- Addressing potential causes of work-related stress;
- Taking appropriate action when a member of staff indicates that they may be experiencing symptoms of work-related stress;
- Proactively managing employee absence and gaining appropriate advice from HR.

4.2   Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care for the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions
- Informing their line manager if they believe that they are experiencing work- related stress or have concerns regarding other team members
- Working with their line manager to identify causes of work-related stress and possible control measures that may be put in place to manage the associated risks.

Members of staff who do not feel able to speak to their line manager, or who feel that their manager is not adequately addressing their concerns may:

- Contact HR
- Speak to a Mental Health First Aider in the workplace (either directly or via HR)
- Speak to their Trade Union representative
- Self-refer to the Employee Assistance Programme.

5.0   Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed and amended annually by the Executive. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

Appendix 1: Useful Information

- [How to Complete a Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment](#): Guidance on completing a preventative school/team work-related stress risk assessment
- [Individual Stress Action Plan](#): Guidance for line managers and individual members of staff experiencing work-related stress
- [Alison Wilson & Associates (makinglifeworkforyou.co.uk).](#) Occupational health pre-employment checks/referrals are made via HR to Alison Wilson associates.
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [HSE's Management Standards](#)
- [HSE information on work-related stress](#)
- [NHS advice and resources on work-related stress](#)
- [Advice and resources from the charity Mind on work and stress](#)

Please contact your local HR team should you require further advice, support or information.