

# **Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School**

## **STRESS POLICY**

Date: February 2023

Review date: February 2024

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# **Stress Management Policy and Guidance**

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## 1.0 Context/Policy Statement

- 1.1. Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the employees as far as reasonably practicable and to take reasonable care of the wellbeing of our employees. This includes taking steps to minimise the risk of stress or stress-related illnesses. We are committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work related stress and aim to promote a culture of care and mutual support to minimise stress and to ensure all employees are able to do their job to their best ability. This in turn will help us provide high quality teaching and learning for our students.
- 1.2. This policy sets out our approach to managing stress/wellbeing in the workplace.
- 1.3. Also contained within the policy is practical guidance for managers and employees on how to manage stressful situations set out in **Appendix A**.
- 1.4. This policy applies to all employees who work for the Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School, referred to as employer within this document.

## 2. What is stress?

- 2.1. 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 at work”***. They state that stress is not an illness but a ***“state”*** and that illness, whether mental and/or physical, develops as a result of stress which is prolonged and excessive.
- 2.2. A certain amount of pressure is a normal part of most jobs and it can be beneficial in helping to keep an individual motivated. However, there is an important distinction between working under pressure and when pressure becomes excessive and produces stress, which can be detrimental to health. We recognise that what triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person.
- 2.3. Stress may be experienced as a result of the workplace, external factors or a combination of both. Workplace factors could include the nature of the employee’s work, the volume of the work, working hours, environmental factors, changes such as a restructure or redundancy programme or bullying or harassment by colleagues or third parties.
- 2.4. The HSE Management Standards for work related stress define the way an

organisation manages the risks from work related stress. There are six key areas that cover the primary sources of stress at work that if not managed effectively could lead to poor health, and reduced productivity and increased absence. These are Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change. An examination of these areas forms part of the stress risk assessment process that demonstrates good practice in managing stress (**see Appendix B**).

### **3. Signs of stress**

3.1 Some common signs of stress are listed below. However, experiencing one or more of these does not necessarily give an indication of stress.

- Persistent or recurrent moods, for example anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness, mood swings (being tearful or over sensitive).
- Physical effects e.g. aches and pains (headaches, back ache, neck ache), raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.
- Poor and/or changed behaviours for example, increased absence levels (including arriving late at work), difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, loss of motivation, making more errors (poor performance), double checking everything, covering up mistakes by lying, working long hours/not taking a break, changes to sleeping or eating habits, increased use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs, poor attitude, behaviour and relationships with colleagues.
- Prolonged or extreme exposure to the possible symptoms of stress is associated with serious chronic diseases such as heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety or depression.

3.2 Signs that an individual is experiencing stress will vary according to how the individual reacts to stress. Key for the line manager to be aware of, are changes in an individual's behaviour that are more than just a "one-off" incident.

3.3 These should be acted upon promptly and discussed with the employee. This will include offering support, such as encouraging the employee to seek advice from his or her GP, who will be able to make a diagnosis.

### **4. Support**

4.1 We will monitor sickness absence and workloads, and ensure that there is clear communication within the Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School to promote a culture of open communication and encouragement. We will create reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss areas of concern in an

environment where stress is not considered as a weakness or a failure. We will also hold return to work interviews with any employee who has been absent in line with our DDA Sickness Absence Procedure to establish whether there is any underlying problem and, if so, what the employer could do to address it.

- 4.2 We will be alert to the possibility of stress as set out in paragraph 3. However, employees who believe they are suffering from stress should also ask their line manager for help and support in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact the Head of School or Executive Head.
- 4.3 Once an issue affecting an employee's health is brought to our attention, steps will be taken to support the employee to minimise the risk of harm and to identify additional arrangements to reduce the risk of work-related stress to as low a level as reasonably practicable. This may include:
- carry out further investigations
  - review job descriptions to identify tasks that may involve stressors
  - carry out a risk assessment to evaluate the risk of work-related stress, considering the existing arrangements that are in place and ensure that significant findings of the risk assessment are recorded
  - carry out a stress risk assessment with the employee to identify whether stress is an issue with a view to addressing the situation. A stress risk assessment pro-forma is available at **Appendix B**.
  - provide information and training, such as identifying opportunities for development relevant to the employee's position
  - refer the employee to occupational health in line with our DDA Sickness Absence Procedure .
  - if an employee is absent from work due to sickness, apply the Managing Employees Absence Policy, as applicable.
- 4.4 If stress is having a negative impact on an employee's performance, and his or her performance does not improve despite the manager having taken reasonable steps to alleviate pressure on the employee, it might be necessary for the Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School to follow the Capability Policy.

## **5. Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

- 5.1 Information in relation to the management of stress at the Trust will be kept to ensure an accurate record is available of what was discussed, actions taken and for monitoring purposes.

- 5.2 Records will be kept on the employee's personal file or with the school's Health & Safety records. All records will be treated as confidential and kept no longer than necessary.

## **6. Review of Policy**

This policy is reviewed every 3 years by the Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

Signed

Signed

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Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Date: .....

Date: .....