KEYS
Academy Trust

Managing Stress and Wellbeing Policy (TKAT)

KEYS Academy Trust
Unlocking the future

Version control summary and overview details

TKAT Statutory Policy • All schools require a policy on this area. • There should be no changes to the core text. • LGBs will minute that they have noted Trust approval and will adopt the policy effective immediately. • This is a Trust policy to be implemented by all schools within The Keys Academy Trust to ensure a consistent approach for all.
Version control Version 1 – Sep 26. • Trust wide policy development. • New policy template.

Reviewed by Trust Officer	Hester Wooller, CEO
Approved by TKAT Trustee Committee:	FAPPP
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Trust date of next review:	Autumn 2027

TKAT vision
We are a family of distinctive schools at the heart of the diverse communities we serve. In line with our Christian ethos, we aspire to excellent learning and pastoral care for pupils and staff and are committed to being open and welcoming to all.

Key areas of note
Please note the following, which will be applicable throughout the policy:

- Any reference to 'headteacher' should read as whatever title is relevant to the school using the policy (i.e. Executive Headteacher/Head of School or Headteacher). Anything else will be explicitly referenced within the policy.
- Any reference to 'everyone' to staff, trustees, local governors and pupils.
- Any reference to 'we' should be read as The Keys Academy Trust.
- Any reference to 'parents' should be read as 'parents, carers and guardians'.

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1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is set out The Keys Academy Trust's (TKAT) commitment to the following:

a) Protecting and promoting the positive health, safety and wellbeing of its staff, including positive mental health.
b) Preventing and managing work-related stress.

1.2 TKAT recognises that staff wellbeing and effective working are closely connected. The Trust seeks to provide a working environment in which staff are supported to maintain their wellbeing, manage reasonable workplace pressures and achieve an appropriate balance between their working and personal lives.

1.3 TKAT recognises its responsibility to identify and address workplace factors that may cause or contribute to work-related stress. It also recognises that circumstances outside work can affect an employee's wellbeing and their experience at work.

2. Aims

2.1 Through this policy, TKAT aims to ensure the following:

a) Promote a positive organisational culture in which staff health, safety and wellbeing are valued.
b) Take reasonable steps to prevent, identify and manage work-related stress and risks to staff wellbeing.
c) Ensure that roles and responsibilities for supporting staff wellbeing and managing work-related stress are clearly understood.
d) Encourage open and appropriate communication about stress, mental health and wellbeing, without stigma or discrimination.
e) Provide staff and managers with appropriate information, guidance, training and access to support.
f) Support staff experiencing difficulties affecting their mental health or wellbeing, including considering appropriate workplace support and reasonable adjustments where applicable.
g) Encourage healthy and sustainable working practices and appropriate work-life balance.
h) Monitor and respond appropriately to organisational factors that may adversely affect staff wellbeing.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all employees of TKAT and to all schools and central functions within the Trust.

3.2 This policy applies to all employees, regardless of length of service. It also applies to any agency workers, casual staff, self-employed contractors/consultants, and volunteers.

3.3 The policy covers the prevention, identification and management of work-related stress; the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing; the responsibilities of staff and managers; and the support available where an employee's health or wellbeing is affecting, or may be affected by, their work.

3.4 This policy should be read alongside other relevant TKAT policies and procedures, including those relating to health and safety, sickness absence, equality, reasonable adjustments, flexible working, dignity at work and data protection, where applicable.

3.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended by TKAT from time to time.

3.6 Information relating to an individual's health and wellbeing will be handled sensitively and confidentially and processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and TKAT's data protection and records retention arrangements.

4. Legal obligations

4.1 TKAT has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that employees' health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

4.2 This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

5. Understanding stress and mental health

5.1 Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Sustained over a period of time, stress can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

5.2 Mental health is a term used to describe our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.

5.3 There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress and undermines mental health.

5.4 Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.

5.5 We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person.

6. Our approach to mental wellbeing

6.1 We will ensure the following:

a) Promote a culture of open communication by providing both formal and informal channels through which staff can raise concerns.
b) Take account of stress and mental wellbeing when planning and allocating workloads. We will provide opportunities to discuss these through our appraisal and one-to-one supervision processes.
c) Seek to ensure that working practices are proportionate and that staff time is focused on activities that make the greatest contribution to pupils. Unnecessary or disproportionate workload will be identified and reduced wherever reasonably practicable.
d) Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are using their entitlement appropriately.

e) Assess the risk of work-related stress and take appropriate steps to eliminate or control identified risks. Where appropriate, organisational and/or individual stress risk assessments will be undertaken and reviewed.
f) Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable, in accordance with TKAT flexible working policy.
g) Consider reasonable adjustments on a temporary or permanent basis, and in conjunction with relevant medical advice, where employees have advised us of concerns regarding their mental health.
h) Ensure that in any workplace reorganisation our change management processes are designed to minimise uncertainty and stress.
i) Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause or worsen stress, in particular so that we can provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying, and victimisation and address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.
j) Provide training to help all staff understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps they can take to protect and enhance their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues.
k) Provide support services such as occupational health, confidential counselling a staff wellbeing package and school mental health leads for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

6.2 In identifying and managing work-related stress, TKAT will have regard to the HSE Management Standards and the six key areas of work design that can contribute to work-related stress: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. These will inform the Trust's approach to risk assessment, staff consultation and action planning. The six areas are Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change.

7. Responsibilities

Trustees

7.1 Trustees have overall accountability for oversight monitoring of staff wellbeing, workload and working conditions.

7.2 Trustees have overall responsibility for setting and reviewing this policy.

Local Governing Body (LGB)

7.3 LGBs are responsible for monitoring staff wellbeing, workload and working conditions.

Employees

7.4 All staff should ensure that they are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Staff should plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and co-operate with support, advice, and guidance that may be offered by line managers or the HR department.

7.5 Staff are encouraged to raise concerns about work-related stress or wellbeing at an early stage with their line manager. Where they do not feel able to do so, they may approach another appropriate manager or HR.

Line managers

7.6 All line managers have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage. They are supported by the school's mental health lead and/or should seek advice from the HR department in the event that they have concerns.

7.7 All managers should provide support to staff by working with the HR department and through making appropriate referrals to the occupational health provider.

7.8 In particular, line managers need to ensure the following:

a) Promote a culture of open communication.
b) Effectively plan and provide feedback on performance.
c) Ensure that staff receive necessary training and support.
d) Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.
e) Ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others, and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

Human resources support

7.9 TKAT will engage with their HR support to develop trust-wide policies and procedures, to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.

7.10 TKAT operates practices and policies that ensure staff are able to achieve a satisfactory balance between their work and other commitments and adhere to the working limits set out in the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Occupational health

7.11 TKAT has engaged occupational health professionals who will provide a comprehensive service designed to help staff stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from the trust, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment/engagement.

7.12 Occupational health professionals will play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for staff returning to work after absences related to mental ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing/amending jobs and working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful. Advice will also be taken from our occupational health professionals regarding design and implementation of any suitable health promotion and lifestyle behaviour management programmes, including initiatives on managing pressure and ongoing health conditions at work.

Mental Health Leads

7.13 We have appointed a number of mental health leads who can be contacted by any member of staff experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.

8. Health promotion initiatives

8.1 TKAT will signpost to health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting mental health and wellbeing. The Hub leaders/Headteachers and the HR department will have primary responsibility for promoting these programmes.

9. Training and communications

9.1 Line managers and staff should discuss individual training needs through appraisal to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to adapt to ever-changing job demands.

9.2 Staff will receive guidance on mental health awareness, so they are able to recognise the symptoms of mental ill health in themselves and others in addition to recognising causes.

9.3 Managers and staff are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises via staff surveys. TKAT will ensure that structures exist to give staff regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

10. Occupational health support

10.1 Line managers can contact the TKAT's occupational health service via the online portal. Staff can also speak to their line managers if they would like to be considered for support from occupational health.

10.2 If staff believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or HR manager.

10.3 A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an individual's initial discussion with their manager or the HR department. Discussions between staff and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team will provide a report on the individual's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to TKAT.

11. Other services

11.1 Other measures available to support staff in maintaining health and wellbeing include:

a) An employee assistance programme – SAS Wellbeing services School Wellbeing Staff Portal
b) Procedures for reporting and handling inappropriate behaviour (for example bullying and harassment).
c) Special leave arrangements.
d) Opportunities for flexible working.
e) Support for workers with registered disabilities.

Help and information can also be obtained from Mind, the mental health charity: www.mind.org.uk or the Samaritans: www.samaritans.org.

11.2 Other workplace wellbeing services are provided, if relevant, for the following:

a) Workstation assessments.
b) Pre-employment screening.
c) Fitness-for-work assessments.
d) Eye tests for users of visual display screen equipment.

12. Addressing work-related stress

12.1 If a staff member believes they are suffering from work-related stress, they should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. If they feel unable to do so, they should contact their operations manager or the HR manager. They should also access the support services as referred to in this policy.

12.2 Once an issue affecting an employee's health comes to the attention of their line manager, Headteacher or HR department, they will discuss with the employee what steps can be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

a) A review of current job role, responsibilities, workload and working hours. Adjustments may be agreed to these, on a temporary basis and subject to further review, where appropriate.
b) Where it appears that stress has been caused by bullying or harassment, investigation will take place under the relevant policy.

c) Referral for medical advice, treatment, and/or a medical report to be provided by the occupational health department, our medical advisers or any specialist/GP who has been treating the employee.
d) If an employee is on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. TKAT's sickness absence policy may be applied.

12.3 If any member of staff is considered by their line manager or colleagues to be at serious risk of self-harm, or of harming others, action must be taken straight away. The matter should be referred to the headteacher or the HR Manager who will seek medical advice from the occupational health department if that is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to contact any person nominated by the member of staff as an emergency contact. Where necessary, the emergency services will be called. The wellbeing of the member of staff and those around them will always be our first concern.

13. Absence due to stress or mental ill health

13.1 If an employee is absent due to work-related stress or mental ill health, they should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in their contract and TKAT Managing Sickness Absence Policy.

13.2 In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in TKAT Managing Sickness Absence Policy.

14. Reasonable adjustments

14.1 There may be reasonable adjustments that can be made to an employee's role if they are experiencing a mental health issue. These adjustments could be on a temporary basis, or they could be permanent changes. Examples of the types of adjustments that can be considered are as follows:

a) Changes to a physical working environment.
b) Changes to a working pattern.
c) Adapting the way our policies are applied.
d) Reviewing tasks or deadlines to help someone have a reasonable workload while managing their mental health.
e) Providing rest areas away from the main staff room to allow an employee to take breaks/lunch away from social demands.
f) Provide additional check-ins, and support with prioritising work and creating structure in the working day.
g) Providing training or coaching to build confidence in skills relevant to the job.
h) Agreeing a preferred communication method to help reduce anxiety.

15. Confidentiality

15.1 Information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing is highly sensitive. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required when dealing with information about stress or mental health, whether they are supporting a colleague, or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure.

15.2 A breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

15.3 However, there are occasions when information about stress or mental wellbeing needs to be shared with third parties. For example:

a) Where steps need to be taken to address work-related stress such as reallocating work within a team.

b) Where medical advice is required on how to support a member of staff, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill health.
c) Where allegations of harassment, bullying, or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or proceedings to take place.
d) Where a member of staff presents an immediate danger to themselves or others.

15.4 In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

16. Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

16.1 Staff who report that they are suffering from work-related stress or mental ill health, who support a colleague in making such a report, or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

16.2 If an employee feels they have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, they should seek support from their line manager or the HR Manager. They may also raise a complaint in accordance with TKAT Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy.

16.3 If, after investigation, an employee is found to have provided false information in bad faith, they may be subject to action under TKAT Disciplinary policy.

17. Relationship with other policies

17.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures covering attendance, health, and code of conduct.