# Anne's C of E Primary School

***Growing healthy minds and hearts together***

"Life in all its fullness"

# Wellbeing & Stress Management

| Version/ Issue | Date | Author | Minute Number | Reason for Change |
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| 2 | 2023 | DCC | | Principles and values statement added |

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| 3 | 2026 | DCC | 05/PHSS/0926 | Update County Policy |



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**Principles and Values**

At Baslow St. Anne's Church of England Primary School we believe that it is vitally important that everybody is safe, confident and happy in our school community. We aim to provide an environment in which our children feel safe, secure and confident, are respectful citizens in and out of school and nurture the Christian values that underpin all that we do. We believe that our children and staff should lead 'a life in all its fullness', nurturing our vision of growing healthy minds and hearts together. We strive to ensure this is in place to enable every child to achieve their full potential and be prepared for their next step in life, nurturing and embedding our key values of: respect, kindness and diversity.

# 1. Foreword

This policy has been developed jointly by the Schools HR Advisory Service and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service, and reflects the Local Authority's commitment to supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of employees working within maintained schools (including voluntary aided (VA) and voluntary controlled (VC) schools).

It is informed by Derbyshire County Council's corporate guidance on the management of stress in the workplace and by established national standards, including the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards. The policy has been adapted to reflect the governance arrangements and operational context of maintained schools.

This policy has been developed following consultation with recognised trade unions and professional associations and was agreed by the Schools' Joint Consultative Committee at its meeting in July 2026.

It is recommended for adoption by the Governing Body of maintained schools where the Local Authority is the employer, and by those academies, aided and foundation schools which purchase the Schools' HR Advisory Service.

The policy is intended to support Headteachers, leaders and employees in creating a positive working environment in which wellbeing is prioritised and work-related stress is effectively managed, while balancing statutory responsibilities with a practical and supportive approach that reflects the realities of working in schools.

**July 2026**

# 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for promoting workplace wellbeing and managing stress within maintained schools.

The policy brings together two key elements. Firstly, it sets out how schools will meet their **legal duty** to identify, assess and manage risks associated with work-related stress. Secondly, it outlines a broader commitment to supporting employee wellbeing, recognising that factors both within and outside the workplace may affect an individual's ability to work and their overall wellbeing.

In doing so, the policy aims to support early identification of concerns, encourage open and constructive conversations, and ensure that appropriate action is taken where risks are identified. It is intended to support Headteachers and managers in

fulfilling their responsibilities, while also providing clarity for employees on the support available to them.

This policy should be applied in a proportionate and practical way, and places particular emphasis on early intervention, informal discussion, preventative action and ongoing review.

# 3. Context

Work-related stress is recognised as a health and safety risk. Employers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect employees from harm by identifying stress risks, assessing those risks and putting in place appropriate control measures. This includes monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of those arrangements over time.

Within maintained schools, the Governing Body and School Leadership Team act on behalf of the employer in discharging these responsibilities, supported by the Local Authority and its advisory services.

At the same time, wellbeing is influenced by a range of factors. These may include workplace demands, organisational change and professional responsibilities, as well as personal circumstances outside of work. While schools cannot control external factors, they can play an important role in creating a supportive working environment and responding appropriately where wellbeing concerns impact on work.

In applying this policy, schools should also have regard to the wider system pressures facing the education sector, including workforce capacity, funding constraints and

increasing levels of need. The approach taken should therefore be proportionate, practical and reflective of these challenges. It is also recognised that Headteachers and senior leaders may themselves be at increased risk of stress due to the nature of their roles and responsibilities.

This policy therefore distinguishes clearly between the management of work-related stress, which is a statutory duty, and the broader support of employee wellbeing. It brings these elements together into a single, coherent framework that enables schools to take a balanced and practical approach.

The policy should be read alongside the Derbyshire County Council corporate Management of Stress in the Workplace Guidance, which sets out minimum standards and expectations across the Authority. It also sits within a wider

framework of school policies and procedures, including those relating to sickness absence, capability, conduct and professional relationships.

This policy is intended to support early identification and management of stress and wellbeing concerns. It does not replace formal procedures relating to attendance or capability.

## 4. Aims

The aims of this policy are to support schools in developing and maintaining a positive working environment in which wellbeing is actively promoted and risks associated with stress are effectively managed.

In particular, the policy seeks to ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach to identifying and addressing work-related stress, based on a structured risk management process. It also aims to encourage early and constructive dialogue between employees and managers, recognising that timely intervention can prevent issues from escalating.

A further aim is to support Headteachers and managers to respond confidently and appropriately when concerns are raised, drawing on a range of available support mechanisms. This includes ensuring that employees understand how to raise concerns and what support is available to them.

Finally, the policy aims to provide assurance to the Governing Body and the Local Authority that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage stress risks, monitor trends and review practice over time.

# 5. Principles

The application of this policy is underpinned by the following principles:

**Supportive approach:** Employees will be treated with empathy, dignity and respect, with a focus on open and constructive dialogue.
**Prevention first:** Schools will seek to create a positive working environment where potential stressors are identified and addressed early.
**Risk-based approach:** Work-related stress will be managed through proportionate risk assessment, with appropriate control measures and regular review.
**Early intervention:** Concerns will be addressed at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation.

**Clarity of roles:** Managers are responsible for managing risk and supporting employees; employees are expected to raise concerns and engage with agreed actions.
**Confidentiality:** Information will be handled sensitively and shared only where necessary.
**Consistency and fairness:** The policy will be applied consistently, while allowing for flexibility to reflect individual circumstances.

# 6. Understanding Wellbeing and Stress

Wellbeing is influenced by a range of factors relating to an individual's work, their working environment and their personal circumstances. Schools play an important role in supporting wellbeing by creating a positive and inclusive culture, promoting open communication, and responding appropriately where concerns arise.

Pressure is a normal part of working life and, in many circumstances, can be positive and motivating. However, stress occurs when pressure becomes excessive and prolonged, and an individual feels unable to cope.

Work-related stress is therefore defined as the adverse reaction people may have to excessive pressures or demands placed upon them at work. It is not a medical condition in itself but can contribute to both physical and mental ill health if not appropriately managed.

Stress can affect individuals differently. Some people may demonstrate clear signs, while others may experience more subtle changes over time. These may include physical symptoms such as fatigue or sleep disturbance, emotional responses such as anxiety or low mood, or changes in behaviour, including reduced concentration or withdrawal from colleagues.

The causes of stress are often complex. In a school context, they may relate to factors such as workload, role clarity, relationships, organisational change or the working environment. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) describes these as key risk areas, commonly referred to as the Management Standards: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

It is also recognised that factors outside of work may contribute to how an individual experiences and responds to pressure. While the school is not responsible for non-work-related causes, it can support employees by taking a reasonable and compassionate approach where these factors impact on their wellbeing at work.

Understanding the difference between pressure and stress, and recognising the potential signs and contributing factors, is central to effective management. This policy therefore promotes awareness, early identification and appropriate action to support both individual wellbeing and the overall working environment.

# 7. Managing Workplace Stress

The school is committed to managing work-related stress as part of its wider duty to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.

This will be achieved through a structured and proactive approach, based on the principles of risk assessment and continuous improvement. The aim is to reduce the risk of harm arising from excessive or prolonged workplace pressures, while supporting employees to work effectively and sustainably.

In practice, this means that the school will take reasonable and practicable steps to:

- identify potential sources of work-related stress and assess the associated risks
- take appropriate action to reduce or control those risks
- monitor indicators of stress and respond to concerns at an early stage
- provide information, guidance and, where appropriate, training for managers and employees
- ensure that employees experiencing stress are offered appropriate support
- review arrangements regularly and make improvements where needed

**Practical tools to support this approach are set out in a separate document: Wellbeing & Stress Management – Toolkit (Appendices A–G).**

The school will adopt the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards as the framework for managing work-related stress. This provides a recognised and evidence-based approach, focusing on key areas including workload demands, levels of control, the support available to employees, working relationships, role clarity and the management of change.

Managing workplace stress is an ongoing process rather than a one-off activity. It requires regular dialogue, effective leadership and a willingness to respond to issues as they arise. Headteachers and managers will be expected to take an active role in identifying and addressing potential risks, supported by the broader arrangements set out in this policy.

The policy is intended to support existing management practice and should be applied proportionately. It should not be interpreted as creating additional procedural requirements where concerns can be effectively addressed through normal management discussions and support arrangements.

The Governing Body will have oversight of how stress risks are managed within the school, including consideration of relevant information such as sickness absence patterns, feedback from staff and emerging themes from day-to-day management practice. This will support assurance that appropriate steps are being taken and that arrangements remain effective over time.

## 8. Identifying, Assessing and Managing Risk

Work-related stress will be managed using the same principles as any other health and safety risk. This involves identifying potential sources of stress, assessing the level of risk and taking appropriate action to reduce or control those risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The school will adopt a structured approach based on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards. These provide a recognised framework for identifying common workplace stressors and understanding their impact on employees.

Managing stress risk is a continuous process which involves:

- identifying potential risk factors and gathering relevant information
- evaluating the level of risk and agreeing appropriate actions
- recording decisions and implementing control measures
- monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes over time (see Appendix C)

This process may be applied at an individual, team or whole-school level, depending on the nature and scope of the concerns identified.

### Identifying risk

Potential stress risks may be identified through a range of routine management activities. These may include day-to-day conversations, supervision or appraisal discussions, patterns of sickness absence, feedback from employees or emerging issues linked to organisational change.

Managers should remain alert to both individual concerns and wider themes, recognising that stress may not always be explicitly reported. Early identification is an important part of preventing issues from becoming more serious.

### Assessing and managing risk

Where a concern is identified, a proportionate assessment should be undertaken to understand the underlying causes and agree appropriate actions. This will normally

involve a structured conversation with the employee, focusing on the key areas set out in the HSE Management Standards.

In practice, most concerns will be addressed through discussion and practical action planning, supported where appropriate by the tools provided within this policy. In some circumstances, depending on the nature and level of concern, a more formal stress risk assessment may be required. Tools and templates are provided within the appendices to support both individual and team-based assessments, and these should be used where appropriate to record discussions, actions and review arrangements (see Appendices A–F).

Control measures should be reasonable and practical. Depending on the circumstances, they may include reviewing workload and priorities, clarifying roles and expectations, strengthening support arrangements or addressing issues relating to working relationships or communication.

### Monitoring and review

Agreed actions should be reviewed within an appropriate timeframe to ensure that they remain effective and proportionate. This will usually be through follow-up discussions or supervision meetings.

Where wider or recurring issues are identified, these should be considered at a broader level, for example through team reviews or leadership discussions, to ensure that underlying causes are addressed. Where appropriate, a more structured team-based assessment may be undertaken (see Appendix F).

Managers should seek additional advice where concerns cannot be resolved locally, or where there is uncertainty about the appropriate course of action. This may include seeking support from HR, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Occupational Health or other relevant services.

# 9. Support and Responding to Concerns

The school is committed to responding to concerns about stress and wellbeing in a timely, supportive and proportionate way. Early, open dialogue between employees and managers is encouraged, as this is often the most effective way of identifying issues and agreeing practical solutions.

### Raising concerns

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage where they feel that aspects of their work are having an impact on their wellbeing or contributing to stress. In most cases, this will involve speaking to their line manager.

Where the concern relates to the line manager, or where an employee does not feel comfortable raising the issue with them, concerns may be raised with the Headteacher or, where appropriate, the Chair of Governors.

Concerns do not need to be formally structured. Informal conversations are often the most effective way of identifying issues and agreeing a way forward.

### Manager response

Managers play a key role in responding to concerns and should approach all situations with sensitivity, openness and a willingness to listen. Their role is not to diagnose or provide specialist support, but to understand the issues being raised and to take reasonable steps to reduce or manage any identified risks.

In responding to concerns, managers should:

- provide an opportunity for the employee to explain their concerns in a safe and supportive environment
- consider whether the issues are work-related, non-work-related, or a combination of both
- focus on identifying practical and proportionate actions to address any workplace factors
- agree clear actions, responsibilities and timescales
- ensure that appropriate follow-up and review arrangements are in place

Where appropriate, managers should make use of the tools provided within the appendices to support discussions and capture agreed actions (see Appendix A and Appendix E).

### Practical support

Support should be tailored to the individual circumstances and focused on addressing any identified risks or concerns. This will often involve relatively simple, practical adjustments.

Depending on the situation, this may include reviewing workload and priorities, clarifying expectations, strengthening support arrangements or addressing issues relating to communication or working relationships.

Where concerns relate in part to factors outside of work, managers should take a reasonable and compassionate approach, focusing on the impact within the workplace and what support can be offered in that context.

### Accessing additional support

Where concerns cannot be resolved through local management action, or where additional expertise is required, managers should seek advice and support through established routes. This may include:

- Occupational Health
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service
- HR Advisory Service
- Trade union or professional association representation

Employees may access support independently, including through their GP, counselling services or other relevant support services. Further information is provided in section 13 and Appendix G.

### Review and ongoing support

Support arrangements should be reviewed within an appropriate timeframe to ensure that they remain effective. This may be through follow-up meetings or as part of ongoing supervision.

Where issues are resolved, normal working arrangements should be resumed where appropriate. Where concerns continue, further assessment or additional support may be required.

The overall approach should remain flexible and responsive, with a continued focus on supporting the employee and ensuring that workplace risks are effectively managed.

Where concerns relate to ongoing or persistent health issues affecting attendance, the school's sickness absence and/or capability procedures should be followed as the formal mechanism for managing attendance.

# 10. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for the effective management of wellbeing and work-related stress is shared between the employer, Governing Body and school leadership, with support provided through Local Authority services. All parties have a role to play in creating a positive working environment and ensuring that concerns are identified and addressed appropriately.

### Governing Body:

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage health and safety, including risks associated

with work-related stress. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and receiving assurance that concerns are being managed appropriately.

### Headteacher and Senior Leaders:

The Headteacher, supported by the Leadership Team, is responsible for implementing this policy within the school. The Headteacher retains overall responsibility for managing stress risks within the school but may delegate aspects of this to appropriate members of staff in practice. This includes promoting a positive working culture, ensuring that managers are supported in their role, and that appropriate systems are in place to identify, assess and manage stress risks.

### Managers:

Managers are responsible for taking reasonable steps to manage work-related stress within their areas of responsibility. This includes maintaining awareness of potential stressors, responding to concerns in a timely and supportive way, and agreeing practical actions to reduce risk. Managers should seek advice where necessary and ensure that issues are reviewed appropriately.

### Employees:

Employees are expected to take reasonable care of their own health and wellbeing, and that of others who may be affected by their actions. They are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage and to engage constructively with any support or actions that are agreed.

**HR Advisory Service:**
The HR Advisory Service provides advice and guidance to schools on the application of this policy, particularly where concerns relate to attendance, conduct, capability or other employment matters.

**Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service:**
The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service provides specialist advice on risk assessment, health and safety requirements and the application of the HSE Management Standards.

**Occupational Health and other support services:**
Occupational Health and related services can provide advice on health-related matters, including appropriate support, adjustments and return to work arrangements where required.

# 11. Monitoring, Review and Governance

The school will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and the management of work-related stress.

Monitoring will be based on a range of information and indicators, recognising that stress may not always be recorded explicitly. This may include consideration of sickness absence patterns, feedback from employees, supervision discussions and any emerging themes identified through day-to-day management practice. Templates and tools used to support monitoring activities are set out in the appendices (see Appendices A, B and F).

The Headteacher and Leadership Team will maintain oversight of how stress risks are being managed across the school, ensuring that appropriate action is taken where concerns are identified and that agreed measures are reviewed.

The Governing Body will receive assurance that the school is meeting its responsibilities in relation to health and safety, including the effective management of work-related stress. This will include oversight of relevant information and confidence that appropriate systems and processes are in place.

This policy will be reviewed at regular intervals, or earlier where there is a significant change in legislation, guidance or organisational practice. Updates will be made as required to ensure that the policy remains current, effective and aligned with Local Authority and national guidance.

# 12. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information relating to employee wellbeing and stress will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection requirements.

In most circumstances, information will be treated confidentially and shared only with those who need to know in order to provide appropriate support or to manage risk. Wherever possible, this will be discussed with the employee in advance.

There may, however, be situations where information needs to be shared without consent. This may include where there is a serious concern about the health, safety or wellbeing of the individual or others, or where there are safeguarding or legal obligations to do so. In such cases, information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in line with relevant procedures.

Records relating to the management of stress and wellbeing will be maintained appropriately and in line with the school's record management arrangements.

# 13. External Support and Signposting

Employees may choose to access support from a range of internal and external services to help manage stress and support their wellbeing.

Managers should be aware of the support available and, where appropriate, provide sensitive and timely signposting. This should be done in a supportive and non-intrusive way, recognising that employees may choose whether or not to access external support.

Support may include internal services such as HR, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and Occupational Health, as well as external sources such as GP services, counselling or specialist organisations.

Access to external support does not require detailed disclosure of personal circumstances. The role of the school is to ensure that employees are aware of available support and can access it where they feel it is helpful.

Further information on external resources and support organisations is provided within the appendices (see Appendix G).

# 14. Links to Other Policies & Procedures

This policy should be read alongside other relevant school and Local Authority policies and procedures, which together provide a comprehensive framework for managing employee wellbeing, health and safety, and employment-related matters.

In particular, this includes policies relating to management of sickness absence, performance or capability, conduct, acceptable behaviour and professional relationships, as well as other wellbeing and support-related policies.

These policies should be applied in a complementary and proportionate way. Where concerns relating to wellbeing or stress intersect with other employment matters, advice should be sought to ensure that the most appropriate approach is taken and that actions are consistent and fair.