

## **POLICY FOR MANAGING STRESS AT WORK**

*This version: April 2020*

Employees in any organisation are likely to experience stress at work from time to time. In addition to stress which originates from the workplace, members of staff will experience various stresses outside school which can impact their capacity to manage the pressures which accompany their work.

This school is committed to supporting all members of staff by establishing systems and a culture which minimises stress at work and provides support to staff when stress related issues arise.

### **What is stress?**

The Health and Safety Executive defines work related stress as the adverse reaction that staff have due to excessive pressures or demands being placed on them. As the capacity for individual members of staff to cope with pressures or demands varies, it is not possible to predict the point at which stress will be experienced. A further complication is that many jobs in a school require a degree of self-organisation and management such that stress may be experienced when the demands are not excessive but the way in which the member of staff is managing the tasks or their time creates stress. Nonetheless, stress can lead to a range of emotional and medical complications which reduce efficiency or result in absence such that it is in the interests of all members of staff and the organisation as a whole to minimise stress and for support to be provided when stress occurs.

### **Avoiding Stress at Work**

The Health and Safety Executive identify six main areas of work which can result in stress. The school policy is to take account of these aspects of its employees' working conditions in order to minimise or avoid stress:

- Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
- Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the school, line management and colleagues
- Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Role – whether people understand their role within the school and whether the school ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the school

### **Supporting Staff who Experience Stress**

For stress related concerns, the school's counselling services are offered to employees free of charge.

#### Absence

If staff are absent, they fill in a return to work form which is countersigned by an appropriate senior manager.

The reason for absence is recorded on the school's administration system.

For all absences of more than 2 days, a return to work interview will be carried out by the line manager.

Where a member of staff has repeated absence or an absence which raises concern, a return to work interview will also take place.

For long term absence, discussion will take place, either on the 'phone or by asking the member of staff to visit the school, to establish the reasons for the absence, likely period of absence and to offer support if necessary.

#### Staff turnover

If concerns are expressed by the member of staff leaving, or later, this is followed up by the Headteacher or an appropriate manager.

### Line management of staff

Line managers have a pastoral role. This includes professional development, offering support to establish efficient working practices and offering support when difficulties are identified, including those which are stress related.

Key issues can be:

- matching high expectations with self-perception of performance;
- managing the work life balance, particularly for staff who have young families;

Support offered:

- On-going mentoring;
- Counselling as described above;
- Reduced timetable or hours of work.

### Organisational Change

The key factors in considering significant change to the operation of the school are:

- The benefits to students' learning and achievement;
- The effect on working practices and conditions of service;
- The sustainability of the proposed change;
- The financial and other resource implications of the change;

The second bullet point above is a major consideration and fully takes into account the effect on the pressure and stress that staff are likely to experience.

### Responsibilities

For Governors:

- Governors review anonymised reports to monitor, consider and provide guidance and support to school management;
- Governors receive data showing staff turnover for the last three years;
- The Health and Safety Policy makes explicit reference to stress related matters.

For the management of the school:

- To provide data to governors on absences
- To take account of the six management areas concerning stress identified on page 1;
- Establish risk assessment dealing with work related stress;
- Ensure all employees are aware of the need to report stress related illness and stress related risks which arise in the school;
- Ensure that line managers' report concerns surrounding stress in the school to senior management;
- Consider the involvement of Occupational Health to support the management of the situation.

For employees:

- Ensure a culture which is such that employees will report to an appropriate manager aspects of the job which they feel is putting them, or other employees, under stress or unreasonable pressure;
- Suggest ways in which the school could change aspects of its operation to alleviate stress;
- Encourage staff to report medical conditions or domestic circumstances which may place them under additional stress.
- Consider making support and training available to help staff manage or avoid stress.

*Discussed by Health and Safety Committee: 16 March 2020*