



Woodrow First School

Stress Management Policy

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MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS

Introduction

The Governing Body is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of school employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

This policy will apply to everyone in school. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy and the Governing Body will provide the necessary resources to implement the policy.

What is stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”. Work-related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as more errors.

There is a difference between pressure and stress. Pressure can be positive and a motivating factor, and is often essential in a job. It can help us achieve our goals and perform better. Stress occurs when this pressure becomes excessive. Stress is a natural reaction to too much pressure.

What are the work stressors for people who work in schools?

Potential causes of work-related stress in schools may differ from those encountered in other organisations and so may need managing differently, e.g:

- Organisational change e.g. restructuring
- Workload
- Management style or change in management
- Mismatch between job and person’s abilities
- Class discipline and student attitudes and behaviour
- School inspections and lesson observations
- Parental expectations
- Child protection issues.
- Adverse working environment i.e. hot or cold

Why is it necessary to manage work-related stress?

1. To reduce sickness absence

The latest estimates from the Labour Force Survey for the ONS: 2022 show:

- Mental health conditions (stress, depression, anxiety & serious mental health problems) accounted for 7.9% of working days lost in the UK because of sickness or injury which amounts to an estimated 14.66 million up from 11.3 million in 2013/14.

2. To enhance the well-being of staff and benefit the school

Tackling stress can have a positive effect on:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and contribution
- Staff turnover or intention to leave
- Staff recruitment and retention.

3. To comply with the law

Employers have duties:

- Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities; and
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to take measures to control that risk.
- To achieve strategic intentions of improving the health and well-being of people in Worcestershire.

What are schools expected to do?

- Apply the HSE Management Standards as good practice and a framework for stress risk assessments
- Identify and support staff exhibiting signs of stress
- Consider the benefits of introducing a school stress management policy.
- Risk assess departments in relation to well-being stress and psychological
- Risk assess individuals that are showing signs of stress

What are the HSE Management Standards?

The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design (Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, Change) that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. The Standards help you to measure your school's performance in managing work-related stress. Each standard provides simple statements about good management practice in each of the six areas (see Appendix 1).

How do you carry out a stress risk assessment?

The HSE Management Standards provide a framework to enable you to identify, manage and control the risk factors which can cause work-related stress. If any employees are exhibiting signs of stress, consideration should be given to carrying out an individual risk assessment with the person(s) concerned using the forms shown in Appendix 2. It is critical to involve staff at all stages in the risk assessment process.

The Governing Body recognises that there are workplace stressors specific to staff who work in schools. These stressors can include: teacher/student ratios, violence, class discipline, student attitudes, workload, and parental expectations.

Policy

- The Governing Body and Headteacher will identify all workplace stressors and ensure that risk assessments are conducted to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- The Governing Body will consult with staff and their Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- The Governing Body will support training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- Staff affected by stress caused by work factors will be advised of the confidential counselling service provided through Occupational Health.
- The Governing Body will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the school's agreed stress management strategy.

Responsibilities

Headteacher / Line Managers

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours to ensure that staff are not overworking. Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to any member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Where appropriate, seek advice (e.g. from Human Resources) on supporting staff who are experiencing stress or who are off sick as a result of stress.

Employees

- Be aware of possible causes of stress at work and impact on well-being.
- Raise issues of concern with your line manager or Headteacher.

- Accept opportunities for counselling and support when recommended.
- Accept appropriate support from colleagues and line managers.
- Attend relevant training, as required.

Safety representatives

Where there are accredited Trade Union Safety Representatives in school, they:

- must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress
- must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys
- must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process
- should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any Trade Union training relating to workplace stress.

What other relevant sources of information and support are there?

HR Guidance on Managing Sickness Absence – provides specific advice on dealing with sickness absence which could be stress related.

Leave of Absence & Special Leave Guidance – covers time off provisions for a range of statutory and discretionary reasons in support of staff.

For schools who have a H&S SLA with WCC then they can access the Children's Services Handbook of Safety Information on the Childrens Services portal which provides guidance on health and safety at work issues.

Health and Safety Executive – the HSE website, [Stress at work - HSE](#), has useful advice and resources. In particular the Indicator Tool and Analysis Tool includes a staff questionnaire which can be used to gather information for risk assessment purposes and identifying areas where employees may feel stressed.

The Schools HR Consultancy team can provide advice on managing staff sickness absence and give information on counselling options.

Employee Assistance Programmes exist in some schools providing employees with access to support such as counselling.

Education Support (previously Teacher Support Network) offers practical and emotional support services to teachers and other staff in education. Its services can be accessed through its website [Emotional and practical support for teachers and education staff \(educationsupport.org.uk\)](http://educationsupport.org.uk) or by calling the **support line on 08000 562 561** (which provides confidential telephone counselling and coaching).

Trade Unions – contact the recognised trade unions and professional associations.

Policy History

Issued	September 2021
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Appendices:

1. Stress Management Standards and Control Measures
2. Risk Assessment process

Appendix 1 - Stress Management Standards and Control Measures

Demands

1.1 Work overload

Work overload can occur when a person is allocated a great deal of work, but insufficient resources (in terms of ability, staff, time, or equipment) to cope with it.

1.2 Work underload

Here the problem is that the employee is not sufficiently challenged by the work. Usually work underload is associated with repetitive, routine, boring and under-stimulating work and can lead to the employee feeling dissatisfied and under-utilised.

1.3 Physical environment

The work environment can cause physical stress. Typically, distraction noise (open plan offices), vibration, temperature, humidity, lighting and hygiene can affect people.

1.4 Psychosocial environment

The main issue here is whether the employee feels safe and secure at work. Jobs where the employee may be abused, threatened or assaulted may be stressful.

Some of the ways that work demands can be mitigated are –

- Personal work planning - especially prioritising work
- Time management – setting achievable and realistic timescales
- Matching individual competencies to work or providing training
- Exploiting technology
- Flexible and mobile working arrangements
- Providing a comfortable working environment.

Control

Control is the amount of 'say' the individual has in how their work is carried out. In many cases there are straightforward ways to allow more employee control -

- Ensure employees have an input into the planning and organisation of work
- Determine achievable performance and outputs
- Involve employees in decision-making processes
- Regularly review work.

Role

Stress can be reduced if a person's role in the organisation is clearly defined and understood. There are two potential stressful areas that need to be addressed.

3.1 Role conflict

Conflicting job demands or doing jobs that may be outside the scope of a person's perceived work are typical causes of confusion. The employee may find themselves operating in two different environments and having to adopt different behaviours to compensate.

3.2 Role ambiguity

Often role ambiguity is because the scope and responsibilities of the job have not been sufficiently explained. This could occur where a job has changed or expanded due to additional service needs or retirement / redundancy.

Some ways that issues about role can be addressed are -

- Use the performance management / appraisal process to agree roles and any conflict between role and job description
- Communicate aims, objectives and targets
- Agree performance standards
- Review job descriptions following changes to working practices
- Ensure existing staff understand how new employees fit into the team and what their roles and responsibilities are
- Ensure all new employees undertake a thorough induction.

Relationships

Relationships is about how people interact with others in the workplace. The employee's relationship with their line manager, peers and subordinates has a major effect on performance and wellbeing. Issues such as bullying and harassment are a prime cause of stress. Mitigating measures may be –

- Ensure employees are aware of the schools values, code of conduct and standards of acceptable behaviour
- Ensure employees know how to report unacceptable behaviour
- Ensure staff are aware of work-life balance options
- Hold regular team meetings.

Support

Employees need to be competent and feel comfortable doing their jobs. Training in new skills or to refresh existing competencies is an important support measure. However, consideration must also be given to psychosocial support where employees have work or home problems. Some measures include -

- Promote an open environment where people can talk freely
- Ask employees what support they require on a regular basis
- Ensure that training needs or other support agreed during performance management/appraisals are delivered
- Inform employees about othersupport mechanisms
- Have an 'open door' policy.

Change

Change is very unsettling especially when employees are ill informed. Good communications are especially important when an organisation is restructuring, downsizing or introducing new technology. Ways of reducing the impact of change are to -

- Keep employees updated about changes and the need for change
- Ensure that employees, if they are affected, are consulted and involved in the change process
- Ensure communications are clear and precise about the change
- Ensure relevant training is delivered as required by the change process
- Keep employees informed of any impact the change may have on them personally.

Appendix 2 - STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

PART ONE: Employee Perception of Workplace Stressors

Employee Name:

Date:

Demands	Examples	Possible Solutions
Work planning Excessive working hours Unrealistic deadlines/ performance targets Working beyond competence Flexible working and leave		
Control		
Timing and pace of work Input into work scheduling and delivery Task priorities		
Role		
Understanding role in team Work matches job description Performance standards		
Relationships		
Bullying or harassment Unacceptable behaviour		
Support		
Management support Work-life balance Regular appraisals		
Change		
Communication of changes Involvement in change process Opportunity to voice opinions		

STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

PART TWO: Manager Perception of Workplace Stressors

Manager Name:

Date:

Demands	Examples	Possible Solutions
Work planning		
Excessive working hours		
Unrealistic deadlines/ performance targets		
Working beyond competence		
Flexible working and leave		
Control		
Timing and pace of work		
Input into work scheduling and delivery		
Task priorities		
Role		
Understanding role in team		
Work matches job description		
Performance standards		
Relationships		
Bullying or harassment		
Unacceptable behaviour		
Support		
Management support		
Work-life balance		
Regular appraisals		
Change		
Communication of changes		
Involvement in change process		
Opportunity to voice opinions		