



STAFF WELLBEING & STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Adopted by LGB of St Peter & St Paul CE Academy on: 18th Nov 2021

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INTRODUCTION

RISE 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. This policy sets out our approach to managing stress/wellbeing in the workplace.

Also contained within the policy is practical guidance for managers and employees on how to manage stressful situations set out in **Appendix A**.

Our policy has 5 key aims to:

- Minimise the harmful effects of stress.
- Provide effective support for all staff.
- Help each individual to achieve an appropriate work-life balance.
- Take a positive and understanding approach to the management of stress in line with current good practice.
- Respect confidentiality.

As a Trust, we aim to promote a healthy work life balance. We seek advice from outside support agencies such as occupational health. We have policies and procedures to deal with bullying, harassment and issues of personal safety. We seek opportunities to care for the staff through initiatives and through discussions within performance and development reviews.

Each section covers the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards and how the Trust will carry out its duty of care.

DEMANDS

The HSE Standard states that “Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns”.

Within RISE every member of staff is given appropriate and achievable tasks which suit the agreed hours of work. Individuals have a job description which details the job demands and this is part of the recruitment procedure before agreed contracts are signed. Appointments are made to match the skills of the person with the job and adjustments are made with the agreement of all. No member of staff will be expected to carry out duties which are beyond their capabilities unless these are agreed as a development strategy.

Concerns about the work environment and its impact upon an employee’s ability to satisfactorily complete duties are shared with either a line manager or senior member of staff. Every attempt will be made to rectify the issue.

CONTROL

The underlying principle behind RISE’s approach is to ensure that employees feel they are able to have a say about the way they do their work and that systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns, in accordance with the relevant HSE standard.

Within RISE every member of staff has a defined role which, due to the nature of a school, often

has a fixed timescale for completion. Initiative is actively encouraged and as a Trust we welcome staff to be free thinkers and extend practice beyond the expected. The Trust takes Continuing Professional Development seriously and all staff are encouraged to extend their skills and knowledge. Formal access to courses and training is through individual performance reviews and through audits of subject needs.

Other courses may be available but they are more closely related to budget availability.

As a Trust we are open to the changing face of employment structure and the relationship between home and work life. We make every effort to ensure that an employees' working patterns suit their needs.

RELATIONSHIPS

The HSE Standard states that "Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work, and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns".

RISE promotes positive relationships amongst staff and we adhere to the principles of growth mindset, which is applicable to adults and children alike. We encourage everyone to report any incidents of bullying or unacceptable behavior. These will then be fully investigated by an appropriate member of the SLT and a governor, if required.

ROLE

The HSE Standard states that "Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns".

RISE actively seeks to ensure that staff never have conflicting roles. This is achieved through our staff structure and careful planning of appointments. Upon appointment, staff have a job description which outlines the key roles and expectations of the job. New staff are provided with an appropriate mentor. The staff mentors may or may not be the line manager or performance review manager. Should there be any doubts about the role, or role expectations, the Head Teacher should be consulted.

As a Trust, we have many influences which impact upon our working structure. This may result in short notice changes. During periods of role change, staff will be kept up to date through staff briefings and individual meetings.

CHANGE

The HSE Standard states that "Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns".

Within RISE we seek to involve all appropriate staff in consultations regarding change. We provide information as soon as possible and will call staff meetings if they are relevant. Staff are always aware that consultations are a means by which we gather views and are not always a mechanism for changing policy or decision.

When changes do take place, timescales will be published and details will be available showing the impact upon the working lives of the staff.

WHAT IS STRESS

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.

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.

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.

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**).

SIGNS OF STRESS

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.

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. 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.

SUPPORT

RISE provides a counselling service for staff, this can be accessed through Schools Advisory Service. This service is confidential and contact is made by individuals when they need support. Each school should promote the contact details poster.

Contact details are: schooladvice.co.uk

Counselling service: 01773 814402

24-hour GP helpline: 0845 4031037

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 Staff Attendance Policy to establish whether there is any underlying problem and, if so, what the employer could do to address it.

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
- If an employee is absent from work due to sickness, refer to the Staff Attendance Policy, as applicable.

If stress is having a negative impact on an employee's performance and their performance does not improve despite the manager having taken reasonable steps to alleviate pressure on the employee, it might be necessary to follow the Capability Policy.

Appendix A GUIDANCE ON DEALING WITH STRESS

There are many different times in the school year that can provide additional pressure to employees.

These may include:

- Dealing with bad behavior
- Ofsted Inspections
- Report writing
- Parent consultation/open evenings
- Meeting with/calling parents
- Accountability (targets)
- Finance (particular issue for the Head Teacher/Business Manager)
- Premises matters (particular issue for the Head Teacher/Business Manager and site team)
- Recruitment/staffing issues
- Conflict in the workplace

It is strongly advised that in order to combat these areas of pressure, employees should:

- Attend all relevant induction/training/ Inset sessions that are provided so that they are aware of all school processes
- Make themselves fully aware of the procedure to follow for each circumstance, for example the Grievance Policy
- Know who to call on for support if they need it
- Admit that they are struggling before it becomes too difficult to cope with, and seek help and advice

Other ways that can help you at work and therefore deal with stress include:

- Good diet (e.g. eat breakfast and lunch)
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day
- Learn to manage your time effectively
- Exercise (including yoga and relaxation)
- Take time out (e.g. don't work all weekend and evenings)
- Avoid procrastination

The Head Teacher/line manager could take the following steps to help to prevent stress:

- **Encourage communication within the team:** Where employees feel that they can discuss problems with their colleagues this can help to reduce the risk of stress. This could be achieved by holding regular team meetings and encouraging staff to approach their manager and colleagues informally with any issues that they have.
- **Foster good relations with employees:** Line managers should take the time to get to know their team members, so that changes to their normal behaviour are easier to spot.
- **Ensure that employees have an appropriate amount of work to do:** Where employees feel that they are unable to cope with their workload, this can cause stress. Managers should review regularly the amount of work employees have, for example at regular appraisals. They should consider the impact of absences and departures on remaining staff and how the work can be shared fairly within the team.
- **Ensure that individuals take proper breaks:** Managers should check that employees are not regularly working long hours and that they take regular breaks. If an employee is consistently working through lunch or beyond his or her contracted hours, the line manager should try to establish if this is because of a short-term increase in work or if it is

a longer-term issue. The manager should set a good example by taking breaks and working appropriate hours.

- **Have regular meetings with employees:** Having regular meetings with team members about their work will give line managers a good idea of what employees are doing and any problems that they have.
- **Conduct performance reviews:** Line managers should carry out formal performance reviews with the individuals in their team in line with the Trust policy and give employees the opportunity to raise concerns during these meetings. This process should include setting clear, achievable objectives for the individual.
- **Provide appropriate training:** Line managers should conduct regular reviews to identify training needs for the members of their team. Employees could be involved in identifying their own training needs. Where training needs are identified, the line manager should provide training. Training is particularly important for employees who have additional responsibilities following a promotion.
- **be alert during periods of change:** Line managers should keep employees well informed and encourage them to raise concerns during periods of change, for example when the organisation is going through a restructure.
- **recruit employees who have the skills to perform the role:** When recruiting, line managers should consider what the duties of the job will be and what skills and experience the successful candidate will need. This will help to ensure that the right person is recruited to the job, so the job-holder does not feel out of his or her depth.
- **do not delay:** Line managers should take immediate action when they suspect that an individual is stressed or when an employee informs them that he or she is experiencing stress. This should help to avoid the problem escalating and helps avoid liability if the employee ends up making a claim, and should help the employee to make a swift recovery.

If the Head Teacher/line manager is made aware that an employee is experiencing stress they should arrange to meet with the employee. This meeting should be held in private and be kept informal in nature. The line manager should ask the employee whether or not he or she has been experiencing stress and what the employee considers to be the contributing factors.

After the meeting the Head Teacher/line manager may need to conduct a more detailed investigation to establish the causes of, and contributing factors to, the stress, particularly where the employee alleges that it is a result of poor management or bullying, for example. Once the line manager has established the reason behind the stress, he or she should explore what steps the Trust could take to alleviate the situation.

Appendix B

RISK ASSESSMENT (HSE) MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYEE WELLBEING (example)

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom and when?	Completed
<p><i>Excessive job Demands?</i> People regularly working longer than their contracted hours? People regularly working longer than 48 hours per week? Individuals working noticeably longer hours than others doing the same/similar jobs?</p>	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal work plans are developed to ensure employees know what their job involves; training is provided to help employees prioritise, or information on how to seek help if they have conflicting priorities; a system is in place to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours; job descriptions match the work being carried out; person specifications match the requirements of the job; regular team meetings or individual work reviews are held to discuss and anticipate workload; reasons for tight deadlines are identified and actions to resolve problems are sought. 			
<p><i>Lack of Control over work?</i> Do individuals have any control over the timing and/or pace of work? Do others often change deadlines? Is all work allocated by the line manager?</p>	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems are in place that enable employees to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken; regular discussions are held at the planning stages of projects to talk about outputs and methods of working; Employees are involved when decisions are made; Hold work reviews to monitor ongoing workload. 			
<p><i>Lack of Support?</i> Individuals raising concerns about a lack of management support?</p>	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular team meetings and/or one-to-ones to talk about emerging issues take place; appraisals to identify training needs are carried out regularly; 			

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<p>Appraisals and work reviews are not taking place as planned? Absence due to stress taken seriously and handled in line with sickness absence procedures?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information on other areas of support (Counselling Support Service, work-life balance, etc.) is disseminated; talk regularly about the ways the school/establishment could provide support for someone who is experiencing problems outside work; examples of how employees would like to, or have received good support from managers or colleagues are sought. 			
<p>Relationships within the team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have there been any complaints of bullying or harassment during the past year? Have there been any incidents of unacceptable behaviour? Does the team work cohesively and supportively in dealing with day-to-day work? 	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standards are agreed with employees for acceptable behaviour at work; employees are aware of confidential routes by which they can report unacceptable behaviour; Training is provided to help employees deal with difficult situations; employees are aware of where they can access Bullying and Harassment procedures and Grievance procedures; people are aware of grievance and disciplinary procedures; 			
<p>Role ambiguity or confusion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals mentioning conflicting goals? Individuals not prioritising correctly? <p>Induction for new employees not being completed?</p>	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appraisals and one-to-one meetings are used to help individuals clarify their roles and priorities, and to discuss any possible role conflicts; key team objectives and targets are communicated. standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks are agreed; job descriptions are written in such a way as to ensure core priorities of posts are clear; existing team members understand the role and responsibilities of any new team members; 			

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<p><i>Managing Change?</i></p> <p>- team/unit has been through a period of significant change. team/unit is about to go through a period of significant change.</p>	<p>Employees Depression / Anxiety /Physical Ailments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees are aware of why change is happening and the key steps of the change; • individuals directly affected are involved in the change process; • regular and clear communication with those indirectly affected; • Ensure employees are aware of the impact of change on their jobs, terms and conditions, etc.; • there is an 'open door' policy to help individuals that have concerns. • employees receive relevant training for new changed/roles; 			

Signature of Employee:

Date:

Signature of Line Manager:

Date:

High risk: Priority 1 (fix first)

Initiate simple actions immediately, and devise a plan to review longer term other actions within 3 months.

Medium risk: Priority 2 (fix after all priority 1 have been attended to)

Systematically review and initiate actions within 12 months.

Low risk: Priority 3 (fix last)

Document the risk assessment and revisit after 12 months