

**Dignity at Work**

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| **Signed** | **Policy review date** | | |
|  | **June 18** |  |  |
|  |  | **June 19** |  |
|  |  |  | **June 20** |
| Agreed at Governor meeting |  |  |  |



Ringway Primary School

Stress Management

1. **Operational Summary**

**1.1. Policy Aims**

This policy outlines the commitment to promote wellbeing and prevent the factors which are known to cause stress in our workforce. It describes the process for managing the risks associated with workplace stress and other psychological difficulties that employees may experience at work. It also gives guidance on how to prevent and manage stress as well as outlining the support services that are available for those experiencing mental health problems including the effects of stress at work.

A healthy workforce and the psychological well being of employees are crucial to the success of the school. The school recognises that by reducing stress in the workplace and promoting positive mental health in employees, this will improve not only the quality of employee’s working lives but also the quality of the service delivered.

**1.2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to increase awareness of stress and enable schools to implement effective strategies to prevent and reduce this amongst their workforce.

**1.3. Introduction**

The governing body is committed to promoting good health at work and recognises the effects stress may have on individual employees and the need to provide suitable support mechanisms for employees suffering from the negative effects of stress.

The governing body is committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its workforce. It acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. Whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressures can have a negative effect both the health and performance of all employees.

The school will fulfill this commitment through the implementation of the Management Standards developed by the Health and Safety Executive. The standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.

To demonstrate the school’s commitment to reducing the risk of stress, the governing body will ensure that:

* Stress risk assessments are undertaken in order to identify workplace stressors and introduce control measures designed to eliminate stress or mitigate risks. These risk assessments must be regularly reviewed.
* Guidance and training intended to identify and reduce workplace stressors is provided to all employees.
* Appropriate training and support interventions for managers and supervisory employees are provided in good management practices to reduce stress in the workplace.
* Staff and representatives of recognised trade unions will be consulted on proposed actions relating to prevention of workplace stress.

**2. Legal Considerations**

All employers have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees.

**3. Roles and Responsibilities**

**Governing body:** The governing body has overall responsibility for ensuring that there is an appropriate and effective policy and also procedures in place for preventing and reducing stress. It is recommended that these comply with best practice and advice and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

**Headteacher:** The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures adopted by the governing body are fully implemented and followed by all employees and is also responsible for allocating the necessary resources.

**Managers:** Managers (including the Chair of Governors in respect of the Headteacher) have a responsibility to:

* Undertake risk assessments and implement any control measures identified within their jurisdiction.
* Make reasonable adjustments for their employees in relation to limitations arising from medical conditions.
* Communicate effectively with their employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
* Ensure their employees are fully trained to discharge their duties and ensure they are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
* Monitor workloads to ensure that their employees are not overloaded.
* Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that their employees are not overworking.
* Monitor annual leave, lunch and other breaks to ensure their employees are taking their full entitlement and ensure adequate rest and relaxation time is allocated.
* Undertake appropriate training as identified in good management practice and health and safety awareness.
* Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
* Be vigilant and offer additional support to employees who are experiencing personal problems such as bereavement or separation.
* Review sickness absence statistics in order to monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress.
* Respond in a timely manner to employees experiencing stress by offering support and seeking advice from the Occupational Health department through medical referral.
* Carry out annual appraisals to help identify difficulties in their work which may be causing stress. Managers should ensure good communication links between particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
* Managers should implement the HSE stress management standards in their teams in order to reduce workplace stress.
* Encourage their employees to seek support and advice. Further information on support available can be found in section XX

**Employees:** Employees have a responsibility to:

* Raise any work related issues with managers.
* Understand the definition of stress.
* Take their annual leave, lunch and other breaks to which they are entitled.
* Manage their time and workload effectively and seek support and guidance from their line manager if required.
* Make use of the advice available on how stress can be prevented and controlled through maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
* Raise issues of concern, at the earliest opportunity with their line manager and, where appropriate, their GP and/or their union. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to discuss issues with an Occupational Health Adviser.

**4. Symptoms of Stress**

Stress can present itself in a number of ways:

* Physical effects
* Emotional feelings
* Behavioural actions
* Cognitive thoughts

The list below shows common symptoms within these categories:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PHYSICAL | EMOTIONAL | BEHAVIOURAL | COGNITIVE |
| Headaches / migraines  Sweating  Dizziness / fainting  Wobbly legs  Panic attacks  Palpitations  Ulcers  Nausea  Irritable bowel syndrome  Tension  Sleep problems  Appetite loss / weight loss  Increased minor infections | Anxiety  Increased irritability  Low mood / tearful at the slightest thing  Depression / thoughts of self harm (particularly if stress is chronic)  Low self-esteem / lowered confidence  Volatile mood swings  Flat - no feelings | Agitated  Slowed down or hyperactive  Smoking and/or drinking more alcohol  Eating less/more  Withdrawal from hobbies / social activities  Bringing excess work home  Increased sickness absence | Negative thoughts about self, e.g. critical/ put downs  Personalising e.g. taking everything to heart  Black and white thinking - rigid e.g. all or nothing  Catastrophising - thinking the worst  Poor concentration and memory problems  Thought blocking - mind gone blank (usually with panic) |

**5. HSE Definition**

**5.1.**  HSE defines stress as the “adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand that people place upon them”. Mental health problems can range from mild distress arising from, for example, relatively short-lived life events through to severe illness of a longer-term duration. The more common problems include anxiety, depression and other stress related disorders.

Whilst it is recognised that a certain level of pressure and challenge at work can actually optimise performance for some individuals, excessive demands can impact on their ability to work effectively. The experience of undue pressure in the workplace can lead to stress, which has a significant impact on their psychological well being.

A person’s psychological health can be affected by factors in the workplace as well as outside of it and there is often some overlap between the two.

Individuals vary as to how stressful they perceive situations; what one person finds stressful, another will consider a challenge. A person’s coping ability may be affected by various factors including the occurrence of negative life events as well as their own personality factors and level of social support available.

**5.2. Management Standards**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have developed management standards based around the six main areas of stress at work.

**5.2.1. Demands: Includes issues like workload, work patterns and work environment**

* Employees have the necessary competencies and resources to carry out the job.
* Those with high demands have some say in how the job is undertaken and receive adequate support from colleagues.
* Repetitive jobs are limited as far as is reasonably practicable.
* Employees are not exposed to a poor physical working environment e.g. noisy, vibration, temperature, physical violence or verbal abuse.
* Employees are provided with mechanisms which enable them to raise concerns about health and safety issues.

**5.2.2. Control: How much say the person has in the way they do their work**

* The school provides opportunities for the employee to have a say in how the work is undertaken.
* Where possible employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative.
* They are given adequate support when asked to undertake new tasks.
* Employees are able to make suggestions to improve their working environment.

**5.2.3. Support: Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided, line management and colleagues**

* The school provides employees (including managers) with adequate support.
* There are systems in place to help employees (including managers) provide support to colleagues.
* Employees know how to call upon support from their managers and colleagues.
* Employees are encouraged to seek support at an early stage if they feel unable to cope.

**5.2.4. Relationships: Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour**

* The school has in place agreed policies and procedures to prevent or deal with conflict or unacceptable behaviour at work.
* Teams are organised to ensure they have a sound structure, clear leadership and objectives.
* Employees are encouraged to talk to their line manager about any behaviours that are causing concern at work.
* Employees are encouraged to be open and honest with each other.

**5.2.5. Roles: Whether people understand their role within the school and whether the school ensures that employees do not have conflicting roles**

* The school ensures that as far as possible the demands it places on employees, including managers, do not conflict.
* That they have clear roles and responsibilities and an understanding of how their job fits into the objectives of the school.
* Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties they have within their role and responsibilities.

**5.2.6 Change: How change within the school is managed and communicated**

* The school ensures that employees including managers, understand the proposed changes.
* Employees receive adequate communication during the change process .
* The school builds adequate employee consultation into its change process and they are made aware of the impact on their jobs and the timetable for action.
* Employees receive support during the change process.

**6. Interventions for preventing and managing stress**

**6.1.** There are three levels of intervention that can be applied to prevention and management of stress and psychological ill-health at work:

* Identifying and removing, where possible, potential sources of stress in the workplace **(Primary interventions)** Conducting stress risk assessments and formulating/reviewing an action plan is an example.
* Helping individuals to develop coping strategies for dealing with stress **(Secondary interventions).** Providing training in stress management is an example.
* Supporting those members of staff who are already experiencing symptoms of mental health problems **(Tertiary interventions).** Provision of staff counselling is an example.

The main emphasis should be on developing strategies to prevent stress, i.e. primary prevention by conducting stress risk assessments and implementing the HSE stress management standards.

**7. Assessing Stress**

**7.1.** In order to control work-related stress, managers have to first ascertain whether it exists, and to what extent within the workplace. The [HSE Indicator Tool](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/indicatortool.pdf), available on the HSE website, can be used as an employee survey t assess the extent to which stress exists amongst the workforce.

Carrying out a team stress risk-assessment based on these principal causative factors should indicate the extent to which any of these factors present a problem and how likely they are to be the cause of work-related stress.

Other tools and indicators available to support the risk assessment in determining the extent of any problem may include:

* Providing a means whereby employees can talk freely and confidentially about any problems
* Employee appraisals
* Sickness absences / patterns of absence
* Exit interviews
* Employee turnover rates
* Reduced productivity rates and/or reductions in work standards
* Workplace focus groups
* Grievances/disciplinary actions.

Each of these tools will provide some information about the perceived levels of work-related stress within the workplace. However, they all have limitations and should not be used in isolation or taken as a 100% accurate reflection of the actual situation. When stress is identified as an issue within a department, a team stress risk assessment should be completed by the relevant senior leader.

**8. Managing Stress**

**8.1.** Line managers should have a private discussion with an employee who is exhibiting possible signs of excessive stress. This could be apparent if it is affecting their work performance, conduct or relationships with others.

The manager has a responsibility for the health and safety of employees they manage and must ensure that their employees are not placed at risk as a result of the situation. This can be a very sensitive matter and it is quite likely the employee may become agitated and/or deny they have any issues. As part of the interview, the manager should inform the employee of all the support available under this policy and consider a referral to Occupational Health. If an employee seeks help, any discussions, records or other information must be kept confidential. Where the employee is given time off work to attend counselling or medical treatment, the reason for the absence should also be kept confidential.

**9. Actions employees can take to manage their own psychological well being**

* Reducing stress at work is everyone’s responsibility
* Try to achieve a balance between work and home life
* Get involved in activities and hobbies outside of the workplace
* Maintain a healthy diet
* Increase level of exercise if this is low
* Try to manage time at work more efficiently
* Develop assertiveness skills
* Learn relaxation skills and breathing techniques
* Take a proper lunch break, away from the department if possible
* Talk to colleagues to enlist support
* Discuss the situation with a manager, particularly if you feel that the problems stem from work.

**10. Support Available**

**10.1. Staff Wellbeing Guidance**

Through the HR SLA at Northumberland County Council, you receive access to our range of health and wellbeing support. (Appendix 1) This encompasses the following:

* Occupational Health Service
* Counselling Helpline
* Chaplaincy and Independent Listening Service

**10.2. RELATE**

A lot of GP practices and Health Centres have access to a RELATE counsellor. Their central base is in Newcastle: Tel 0191 232 9109

**10.3. Education Support Partnership**

The Education Support Partnership offers a free helpline - 08000 562 561

**10.4. Samaritans**

Samaritans offer a free 24 hour helpline - 0345 909 090

***Appendix 1 - Staff Wellbeing Guidance*** 

Through the HR SLA at Northumberland County Council, you receive access to our range of health and wellbeing support. This encompasses the following:

**Occupational Health Service**

Since April 2016, Northumberland County Council and Northumbria NHS Healthcare Foundation Trust have operated a shared Occupational Health Service. This is SEQOHS (Safe, Effective, Quality Occupational Health Service) accredited and through this service, appointments are available with trained Occupational Health Nurses and Physician. Referrals through this service are also possible to Counselling, Psychology and Physiotherapy practitioners within Northumberland.

**Counselling Helpline**

Northumberland Council Council subscribes to the DAS Personal Counselling Helpline (Telephone 0117 934 2121 *- Calls charged at national rates).* DAS will provide a confidential counselling service to any employee over the telephone. To access the service, please telephone the number shown above and quote the policy number: HL/3856205. All calls will be dealt with in strictest confidence.

**Chaplaincy and Independent Listening Service**

The faith and chaplaincy team are trained volunteers licenced by the Diocese of Newcastle, and

can offer support through a listening service. They have experience of providing pastoral and

spiritual support to people of all faiths and of no faith. They can support with personal issues of concern that might arise within or outside the workplace. The service supplements existing support for colleagues while being separate from the council’s formal procedures. The volunteers will also be able to signpost staff to other faiths and denominations and views via the Churches Together Group, the North East Regional Faith Network or the local Humanist Group and will be supported and guided by the work of the Industrial Mission Association. The team can be contacted by email in the first instance - ([chaplains@outlook.com](mailto:chaplains@outlook.com)) or Rev Simon White can be contacted via 07983411485.

**Education Support Partnership**

You can also access support and counselling from a free helpline 08000 562 561.

The helpline is available to all teachers, lecturers and staff in education (primary, secondary, further or higher education) in England, Wales and Scotland 24/7, 365 days a year.

