

Tring School
Stress Management Policy

Policy Date: June 2014

Approved on: 3 July 2014

Minute no: 6

Review due: June 2016

Statutory Requirements applying: Various Acts, Regulations and documents, including:

Recommended Good Practice: Herts CC Model *Stress Management & Well Being*

Issue No: 1

Approved by: The Governing Body

Date: 3 July 2014

Signed By: S Collings, J Donald

What the policy is about? *Guidance on managing stress in the workplace*

Why the policy is required? *To ensure that employees are able to enjoy a reasonable work/life balance.*

Who is responsible for implementing the policy? *School Governors and Headteacher (in consultation with staff where appropriate)*

Where is the policy implemented? *In the work place*

When is the policy implemented? *At all times*

How is the policy implemented? *Strategically by the Resources Committee*

Monitoring & Evaluation: *Resources Committee*

Stress Management Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is based on the HCC model policy and has been created in order to provide guidance to Headteachers and Governing Bodies on managing stress in the workplace. Headteachers and Governing Bodies have a duty of care to ensure that their employees are able to enjoy a reasonable work/life balance. As a Church of England school we aim to instil a culture of care and mutual support where the needs of the staff are best met.

²⁸ 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Matthew 11.28-29

2. WHAT IS STRESS?

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as:

“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”

This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health. Pressure will be present in all jobs in one form or another. Pressure and challenge, even when high, can be motivating and stimulating. However, when an individual feels pressure at a time when they cannot cope, or in some cases too little pressure or challenge, this can lead to stress. It is important to remember that the ability to cope with stress differs from person to person and it will depend on the individual how they react to stress.

3. THE DUTY OF CARE

All employers have a common law duty of care to their employees. That duty is not defined by legislation but by decades of precedents determined by the courts. However, there are specific requirements within the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992 which establish a statutory duty on the employer to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy workplace and to assess the nature and scale of risks to employees within the workplace. There are no legal requirements that are specific to the management of stress, but the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced helpful guidance on standards for employers in the management of stress. These can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.html>

In the context of caring for employees, governing bodies are accountable in law for fulfilling the duties of the employer. Governing bodies are, therefore, recommended to use the HSE standards as a simple tool for the assessment of risk caused by stress.

4. 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. Where managers have concerns they must discuss these with the individual.

- Persistent or recurrent moods e.g. anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness.
- Physical effects e.g. aches and pains (headaches, back ache, neck ache), raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.
- Changed behaviours e.g. increased absence levels, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, eating disorders, covering up mistakes by lying, increased use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs.

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.

Headteachers/ Line managers should also be aware of the following possible signs:

- Increase in sickness absence
- Poor work performance
- Poor relationships at work
- Poor attitude and behaviour

Any concerns should be discussed with the individual at the earliest opportunity before the situation escalates to potentially trigger Disciplinary/Capability procedures.

5. WELLBEING OF THE HEADTEACHER

The Headteacher is responsible for the leadership, internal organisation, management and control of the school which puts upon them an enormous amount of pressure. Specific provisions have been put in place through regulations made under section 21 of the Education Act 2002 which put a responsibility on the relevant body to have regard to the desirability of the Headteacher being able to achieve a satisfactory balance between the time required to discharge his/her professional duties and the time required to pursue his/her personal interests outside work. For maintained schools with a delegated budget, this responsibility lies with the Governing Body of the school and for maintained schools without a delegated budget that responsibility lies with the LEA.

6. GOVERNING BODY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body must ensure that clear processes and procedures are put in place. This will minimise, as far as possible, the levels of stress and anxiety caused to staff when following a formal procedure such as Disciplinary or Capability. Unambiguous procedures for Health & Attendance, Grievance and Harassment & Bullying can offer clear guidance to staff when they most need it.

7. HEADTEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

As highlighted in section 5, the Headteacher is responsible for the leadership, internal organisation, management and control of the school, all of which lay a huge amount of pressure on them. It is important that the Headteacher, with support of the Governing Body ensures that strategies are developed to guarantee that as far as possible, employees do not become over stressed. The list below shows how this could be achieved. It may be necessary for the Headteacher to delegate some of these responsibilities to other senior members of staff.

- Create reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss areas of concern in an environment where stress is not considered as a weakness or failure.
- Monitor sickness absence (in line with the Health & Attendance Policy for Schools)
- Ensure that staff are fully trained and provided with opportunities for development in line with the school's priorities.
- Monitor workloads, working hours etc. to ensure that people are not overworked.
- Ensure there is clear communication between management and staff.
- Offer support to staff experiencing stress out of the workplace, e.g. health related issues and bereavement.
- Discuss with applicants to posts of responsibility, the extra pressure that the post may carry with it. It is crucial that when appointing or accepting an appointment to a position of responsibility, it is made clear the extra responsibility may carry with it additional pressure. It is advised that this is discussed at interview.

8. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

There is no 'cure' for stress, but by being realistic and open about their problems employees can learn to reduce the harmful effects of being over stressed. The following list gives examples of how employees can help themselves:

- Ask line manager or another colleague for help/support if you need it.
- If you need something to change, find a way to make it change. Avoid sticking your head in the sand.
- Own up to your problems and be honest about them.

- Express your feelings and don't internalise your concerns.
- Don't soldier on through pretending that nothing is wrong.
- Make yourself aware of the school's policies and procedures on Health & Attendance, Bullying & Harassment, Capability, etc.
- Take a break from work during the middle of the day: it is your entitlement.
- Identify opportunities for development relevant to your position and take advantage of those offered by the school.
- Use the performance management process to identify your achievements and establish support required to meet your goals.
- Be honest about reasons for sickness absence and any requests for leave of absence.

9. **HOW TO MANAGE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS IN SCHOOLS**

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

- Dealing with bad behaviour.
- Ofsted Inspections.
- Report writing.
- Parent consultation/ open evenings.
- Meeting with/ calling parents (particular issue for Headteachers).
- Accountability (targets).
- Finance (particular issue for Headteachers).
- Premises matters (particular issue for Headteachers).
- Recruitment/ staffing issues (particular issue for Headteachers).
- 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, e.g. the School's Behaviour Policy, Grievance Procedure;
- 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.

10. OTHER WAYS TO HELP REDUCE STRESS

The following is a non-exhaustive list of ways in which you can help to combat stress. Some of these examples may seem obvious but many people are guilty of not doing the 'obvious' things, e.g. drinking plenty of water.

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