

Royles Brook Primary school

Stress Policy (and Guidance - Appendix 1)

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1. Introduction

The Governors of Royles Brook Primary School recognise their Health and Safety responsibilities and will take all reasonably practicable steps to address stressrelated issues within the school.

In dealing with the issues of stress in school the Governors will, to the best of their ability, ensure that the following systems are in place, understood and acted upon in an attempt to deal with a problem which is giving increasing cause for concern. In summary order to achieve the policy aims the school will:

- (a) Ensure that the Stress Policy is brought to the attention of all staff who work in the school.
- (b) Implement control measures to minimise the risk of stress.

- (c) Monitor and audit the arrangements in an effort to continuously improve the quality of the working environment and the implemented stress-minimisation arrangements.
- (d) Encourage staff to report their views and to discuss stress-related issues with a member of the schools Senior Leadership Team.
- (e) Ensure equality of treatment of staff.
- (f) Ensure that individuals who have, or have had, symptoms of stress-related illness are treated responsibly and fairly at an early stage and that confidentiality is ensured.
- (g) Consider job security, sick leave provision, retention of status etc in accordance with the rights of the individual to employment protection and in accordance with the school's sickness absence policy.
- (h) Establish a culture in school where stress is viewed as a serious issue, rather than viewed as a personal weakness.
- (i) Nominate the Headteacher to be responsible for the co-ordination of stress management within the school.
- (j) Communicate effectively and 'manage change' in a sensitive and responsible manner.
- (k) Review arrangements for managing stress on a regular basis or following changes in the school's Senior Leadership Team, organisation or structure.

1.1 Policy

A copy of this Policy and accompanying guidance of Royles Brook Primary School will be provided to every permanent member of staff, and a further copy will be available in the staffroom.

1.2 Responsibility for Co-ordination of Stress Management in the School

The member of staff responsible for co-ordinating stress management within Royles Brook Primary School is the Headteacher.

1.3 Monitoring & Review

Procedures for monitoring stress in school should be an integral management function and be the subject of a regular review. Changes to the school's Senior Leadership Team, organisation or structure should initiate a review of procedures.

1.4 Statement of Individuals' Responsibilities

Individuals have a duty to co-operate with their employer in minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, work-related stress. Individuals have a part to play in making reasonable adjustments to working practices which have to change due to circumstances beyond the school's control.

Anyone who feels he/she is suffering from stress should, wherever possible, inform their line manager so that he/she will have an opportunity to resolve the problem. If anyone feels that they are unable to raise the matter with their line manager they should then contact the Schools Personnel Service or Health and Safety Team or

share their concern with a trusted colleague. The matter will be dealt with in confidence, unless the individual concerned gives express permission for information to be shared. Schools Personnel, with the consent of the individual concerned, will then take the matter forward.

If an individual believes there is a factor in the workplace causing work-related stress, then this should be brought to the attention of the line manager. An Action Plan will be agreed.

Individuals should also seek advice promptly from their union/professional association; particularly where they are considering resigning or taking any legal action.

1.5 Statement of the Headteacher's/Manager's Responsibilities

Headteachers and Managers at all levels have a key role to play in considering the work load and health implications of decisions involving staff. It is recognised that the style of management adopted has an impact on stress levels amongst staff.

It is the responsibility of Headteachers and managers to;

Ensure that adequate risk assessments are carried out to evaluate stress. Ensure that sickness absence and staff turnover are regularly reviewed and monitored to identify any problem areas.

Be able to identify and respond to issues of work-related stress.

Be aware that stress is minimised in an organisation where there exists mutual trust, promotion of self-esteem, shared objectives and common goals. Act on information/reports received from Schools Personnel.

1.6 Statement of the Governors'/Employer's Responsibilities

Governors/employers will:

- Give staff comprehensive and relevant information about work-related stress.
- Put measures in place to prevent, so far as is practicable, work-related stress.
- Ensure that adequate resources are in place to support the policy. ▪ Review and monitor sickness absence levels and staff turnover.

APPENDIX 1

The following guidance and information is taken from the LCC model Stress Policy and guidance document

Stress therefore continues to be a major issue in the workplace, including schools.

2.1 What is Work-related Stress?

The HSE definition of stress which is

“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them”.

It is important to note that every job brings its own pressures and demands; these are an unavoidable part of working life. It is also important to distinguish between reasonable pressure and challenge, which are stimulating and motivating, and work-related stress which is a distressing reaction to demands, situations or circumstances that the person perceive they cannot cope with.

2.2 Why is Work-related Stress a Headteacher / Manager's concern?

There are 3 reasons why Headteachers / Managers need to be concerned and to take action to deal with work-related stress - ethical, legal and economic.

- **Ethical** - the Headteacher wishes to do as much as it reasonably can to control the risk of work-related stress adversely affecting the health and/or quality of life of its employees.
- **Legal** - the law requires employers to consider work-related stress. Health and Safety Law and other legislation require employers to take action. (For details see section 3.8 The Legal Position below)
- **Economic** – taking action on work-related stress makes economic sense too. Costs are reduced due to reduced stress-related sickness levels, reduced labour turnover lower accident rates, less ill-health retirement, lower insurance premiums and occupational health costs less “stress” litigation and higher productivity.

2.3 Do Headteachers / Managers have to do something about stress caused by problems outside work too?

Headteachers / Managers are not under a legal duty to prevent ill health caused by stress due to problems outside work. However, health problems and home pressures such as money worries or marital difficulties can reduce a person's ability to cope with work leading to further stress problems and a poorer performance. Therefore it may be appropriate to offer assistance or provide information about where such assistance can be obtained.

2.4 What are the causes of Stress?

There are three principal areas of life that may cause people to experience stress:

- (a) Their personal life (Personal Stressors)
- (b) Their working environment, which includes culture and style of management used (Work Related Stressors)
- (c) The level of threat inherent in their job, given the difficult situations they often face and the people with whom they have to deal (Operational Stressors)

Situations/worries at work and/or at home can make people more vulnerable to the effects of stress. Either can exacerbate the other and affect a person's ability to cope.

All work has its pressures but we all vary in our capacity to cope with different types of pressure. Some pressure, even when high, can be motivating and a challenge. Pressures that people can respond to effectively are more likely to lead to job satisfaction. However, pressures at a level we cannot cope with are likely to result in stress. In some cases, too little challenge or pressure will have the same effect.

There is no simple way of predicting what will cause a harmful level of stress to an individual. People respond to different types of pressure in different ways. An exciting challenge to one person may be a daunting task to another, a repetitive job may be viewed by some as boring and monotonous, but others like and feel comfortable with routine. Much depends on the individual's own personalities, experience, motivation and coping style paired with the support available from managers, colleagues, family and friends.

Much may also depend on the pressures which people are experiencing outside work in their home and personal lives. People may come to work against a background of bereavement, family illness or worry, marital or other interpersonal problems. Although these factors are beyond the employer's responsibilities, managers should be aware of them since they could make employees more vulnerable to stress at work as well as affecting their performance and judgment.

In general harmful levels of stress are most likely to occur where:

- Pressures **pile on top** of each other
- People feel **trapped** or unable to exert any control over the demands placed upon them
- People are **confused** by conflicting demands made on them. □ People feel **vulnerable** and ill equipped to deal with change.

Problems can be triggered or made worse where:

- People feel a high degree of **uncertainty** about their work, their objectives, or their job and career prospects
- Work schedules are **inflexible** and over-demanding
- There is prolonged **conflict** between individuals, including possibly sexual or racial harassment, or bullying, or where staff are treated with contempt or indifference
- There is a **lack of understanding and leadership** from managers or supervisors. This does not mean that they have to be easy-going and undemanding. People usually welcome clear direction and will often feel less stress if they can see that the manager at least understands the problems they are under and will do what he or she can.

Physical conditions in the working environment can also be stressful. These include:

- Lighting, badly maintained buildings, inadequate or poorly sited equipment;
- Excessive noise, heat, humidity and vibration;
- The presence of toxic or dangerous materials or other workplace hazards which might not be adequately controlled.

Certain kinds of job can, by their nature, place heavy emotional demands on employees, which, if not properly addressed, can result in harmful levels of stress. These jobs include those which involve continuous contact with or responsibility for people.

2.5 Causes of Stress in the Education Sector

Causes of stress for any individual or groups of staff in particular schools may vary, but there are a number of common factors, any combination of which may result in feelings of stress. These include the effects of rapid and far-reaching changes, time pressures, low perceived status, poor working conditions and poor pupil motivation. Other examples are:

Relationships with pupils

- Inappropriate pupil / teacher ratios
- Actual or potential violence from pupils
- Uncertainty about limits of discipline
- Teaching low ability children in mixed ability classes
- Challenging pupil behaviour – dealing with pupils, exclusions etc
- SEN inclusion where this is proving to be problematic
- Malicious allegations

Relationships with parents

- Lack of parental support
- Unrealistic Parental expectations
- Violence & aggression from parents sometimes under the influence of substances
- Malicious complaints

Relationships with colleagues

- Lack of communication
- Conflicts between members of staff
- Inequitable distribution of work
- Lack of contact with Peers
- Pressure arising from supporting colleagues who aren't coping

- Work place/work related bullying and harassment

Management and Organisational issues

- Total volume of work
- Volume of paperwork / administration
- Ofsted inspection process
- New policies / initiatives from the DfES
- Continuous deadlines
- Lack of support from external agencies
- Low level of input in decision making process
- Change in management style
- Quality of supervisory support
- Work overload
- Covering for absent colleagues
- Vacancies
- Teaching unfamiliar subjects
- Lack of support and understanding from Governors
- Pressure to deliver on examinations
- Lack of funding
- Being set unrealistic targets
- Breaks/lunch time too short/not taken
- Inappropriate timetable and room allocation
- Job security

Societal Issues

- Poor perceived status and school ethos
- Changing societal expectations and concern about roles of school
- Dealing with anxious, aggrieved, or aggressive parents
- Scrutiny of teachers and Heads, criticism of profession
- Allegations against staff – increasing trend
- Dealing with the media

Personal Perspective

- Conflict between work and family demands
- Unrealistic expectations
- Sense of injustice / bitterness
- Role ambiguity, no clear work objective, no clarity regarding scope of responsibilities
- Career development difficulties, over / under promotion
- Long hours of working at home are seldom acknowledged and rewarded.

Alongside the stressors which can be experienced in any organisation (poor communication, conflicts with colleagues, unnecessary form filling, ineffective

meetings etc) staff in education are having to adapt to major changes, both organisational and societal, which for some may conflict with their own ideas of the job they are employed to do.

Changes in management arrangements in schools are seen by some staff as a chance to learn and practice new skills. However, others may feel that their job description has been radically changed. They may feel that adequate consultation has not taken place and that they are being asked to perform tasks for which they have not been trained.

Increased parental involvement in the running of schools is welcomed by some staff as a valuable new resource, but is viewed by others as a threat to their professional position and a potential vehicle for criticism.

Whatever the merits of such changes and their final outcomes, there is no doubt that radical change in itself is a source of stress and its possible effects and consequences for schools need to be positively managed.

2.6 How do I recognise Stress in my Staff?

For a Head Teachers / Manager, the most observable distress signal is CHANGE.

In individual employees

Changes which may indicate stress may be noticed in one or more of 4 major areas:

Physical	Cognitive
excessive tiredness	
tense facial muscles	lowered attention
increased sickness absence	
shaking	memory problems
excessive sweating	poor concentration
more frequent trips to the toilet	
ill health	confusion
	difficulty making decisions
	losing interest in paperwork
	Behavioural

Emotional	
becoming moody and sullen	change in work performance
becoming angry or aggressive	withdrawing from others
over-reacting	
becoming impatient	becoming less co-operative
depression	
tearfulness	accident proneness
getting upset and flying off the handle	increased alcohol intake
	increased smoking
	increased/reduced food intake

Within the School/Team

There may also be indicators which reveal stress within the Team. These include:-

Work Performance	Relationships at Work
reduction in output	conflict and tension between colleagues
increase in error rates	poorer relationships with clients/customers
poorer decision making	increase in industrial relations or disciplinary problems
poorer planning and control of work	increased use of grievance procedure

Sickness and Absence	Staff Attitudes & Behaviour
increase in overall sickness	loss of commitment/motivation

Work Performance	Relationships at Work
absence	
increase in other forms of absence	longer hours worked with less return
change in pattern of absence e.g. more short term absences	erratic or poor timekeeping
	staff refusing to work overtime/stay to complete task

2.7 What actions should Head Teachers / Managers take to manage Stress in their Team?

Head Teachers / Managers need to take action on 3 levels:-

□ **Stress Risk Assessment**

- identification of potential causes of stress within the workplace and the taking of action necessary to reduce stress “as far as is reasonably practicable”. i.e. Risk assessments – for teams & individuals.
- **Information & Training** ○ raising awareness of stress and helping individuals recognise it in themselves and others.
 - helping individuals deal with their own stress.
- **Support and Rehabilitation** ○ providing support and rehabilitation for individuals and access to professional help for workplace, family or mental health problems.

2.8 The Legal Position

2.8.1 Health & Safety Law

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act, 1974, employers have a general duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health of their employees. This includes taking steps to make sure they do not suffer stress-related ill health as a result of their work. Ill health from stress caused at work has to be treated in the same way as health due to physical causes in the workplace. This means that employers do have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that employees' health is not put at risk through excessive or sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, or from the day to day demands placed upon them in their work.

Also, employers must take account of the risk of stress-related ill health when undertaking their legal duties under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations, 1999. These include the duty to assess risk; duty to apply the principles of prevention; the duty to ensure employees' capability and to provide training and specific duties towards young people.

2.7.2 Employment Law

Health & Safety Law is not the only legal reason why action needs to be taken to tackle work-related stress. Examples include:

- Section 4A Public Order Act 1986 makes it a criminal offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour likely to cause harassment, harm or distress. This can be relevant to cases of bullying.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct which amounts to the harassment of another person. This harassment does not have to be motivated by a specific factor such as race or sex. This Act again may be relevant in some bullying cases.
- Employers have common law duties to take reasonable steps to ensure their employees physical and mental health at work. An employer will be liable in negligence for an employee's stress related illness provided:
 - It was reasonably foreseeable that the employee would suffer mental or physical illness
 - It failed to take reasonable steps to prevent the illness
 - The failure caused the ill-health

There have been several high profile cases recently where employees have taken legal action against their employer on the basis that they have suffered physical or mental harm at work arising from stress-related issues.

- Within Contract of Employment (written or otherwise) there is an understanding that employers and employees will behave reasonably towards each other in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence. If an employer breaks this bond of trust by acting unreasonably towards an employee (this may include failing to act to reduce work-related stress) the employee can:
 - sue in the courts for compensation for breach of contract
 - resign and make an application for constructive dismissal to an employment tribunal.

There are also considerations under the Working Time Regulations governing

- number of hours worked
- periods of rest
- paid holidays and time off for dependants

The Health & Safety Executive are also clear that employers must take steps to ensure the mental wellbeing of staff and consideration should be given to mental illness / disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and unrecognised mental impairment caused or made worse by work activity.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees on account of any disability as defined under the Act. This involves making reasonable adjustment to the workplace or to the way the work is done, if the existing working arrangements or physical features place the disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. Ill health arising from, or exacerbated by, stress at work may constitute a disability under the Act.

Under sex and race discrimination legislation, victims of workplace discrimination or harassment have the right of access to employment tribunals. Stress related illness may result from such discrimination or harassment.

Revised by: Mrs H Murray Date: January 2018 Next Review: January 2019 or sooner if regulations/circumstances change