Central Policy:	Trust-wide, applicable at trust and school levels. Schools may not make any changes or adaptations

Guidance on Staff Well-being and Stress Management

St Mary's Primary School

Approved by:	Pay & Personnel Committee
Date:	January 2019
Next review date:	As required

Adopted by school:	St Mary's Primary School
Date:	11-10-2023

Contents

> This document is intended to provide advice and guidance to staff members of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST), local governing body members in ODST schools and Trustees on managing the well-being of ODST staff members.

Introduction

ODST is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its staff members. We recognise our legal and moral duty of care to them and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing the impact of factors in the workplace that can cause stress.

This document provides guidance on how stressful situations arise and what steps can be taken to avoid or reduce them. It will also outline some of the areas of support available to staff members who may be affected by work-related stress.

The Health and Safety Executive 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.

If people feel under too much stress and for too long, mental and physical illness may develop. Indeed, absence analysis indicates that stress is a major cause of long-term sickness absence. In some cases, 'stress', 'anxiety' and 'depression' may also be sufficient to qualify a person as disabled.

There are a number of organisational factors that can contribute to work-place stress. These include:
- Demands on the individual such as workload;
- The influence an individual has in the way they do their work;
- Workplace relationships and related issues such as harassment;
- The way in which change situations are managed and communicated;
- The way in which an individual understands their role and how it fits into the organisation;
- The local culture and the manner in which it handles work-related stress matters;
- Factors unique to the individual such as support and training.

Potential means of managing these factors effectively are captured in paragraphs 7-11 below.

In a similar manner there are a number of potential symptoms of work-related stress and these can include:

- Work performance: e.g. inconsistent performance, uncharacteristic errors, loss of motivation, indecision, lack of planning;
- Withdrawal: e.g. increased absenteeism, poor time-keeping, reduced social contact;
- Aggressive behaviour: e.g. outbursts of temper, shouting, personality clashes;
- Other behavioural symptoms: e.g. increased tendency to cry, undue sensitivity.

Communication

Poor communication (or a complete absence of it) can cause stress at work. Line managers and staff members are encouraged to adopt and adhere to effective two-way communication for the prevention and control of stress. Staff members are encouraged to report to their line manager any issues of concern relating to excessive pressure or stress and line managers should listen to, and give appropriate consideration to, comments and representations from workplace colleagues, trade unions, Health and Safety representatives or Occupational Health Advisors. Line managers should be particularly mindful that the impact of change situations and the uncertainty they bring can vary from individual to individual and any such situations should be managed transparently and communicated as sensitively as practical.

Job Design/Workload Management

There are various steps that line managers can take to reduce the impact of job design and workload management on causing workplace stress and these include:

- analysing jobs to ensure there is a reasonable degree of variety and control for the post holder;
- avoiding placing unreasonable demands on staff members, by prioritising workload and delegating appropriately;
- respecting others' time and seeking to negotiate an efficient and effective solution to any workload problems;
- ensuring that staff members take annual leave and work breaks in line with the Working Time Directive in order to minimise fatigue.

Supervision

In addition to communication and workload matters, the nature of the line manager: staff member relationship can have an impact on workplace stress. Line Managers are encouraged to always:
agree clear objectives with a reasonable timescale, taking care to explain how duties and responsibilities fit into the wider work context;

- ensure regular supervision (through 1 to 1 meetings) of staff members and respond promptly to any issue in the workplace;
- provide positive feedback and recognition of good performance promptly and when appropriate;
- discuss poor performance promptly, honestly and constructively and to agree appropriate follow up actions;
- encourage a culture in which each individual is recognised as being equal and in which any form of victimisation or harassment is not tolerated;
- build strong working relationships within their teams and with the staff members they are responsible for;
- undertake regular staff development & performance review meetings in accordance with statutory frameworks and local level arrangements.

Learning and development

Line Managers can also ensure that staff members are:
- adequately trained to fulfil their duties and responsibilities;
- trained, as appropriate, in dealing with potential health & safety hazards that may be associated with the job that they do;
- encouraged to develop stress and time management techniques. Some examples of sources of support can be found at the end of this document.

Line managers should be mindful too that workplace stress can arise just as much through a staff member being under-challenged as being over-burdened and providing opportunities for learning and development can be an effective means of managing this.

Managing the signs of stress in the workplace

Acting in a proactive and supportive manner is important in the management of potentially stressful situations and there are a number of ways in which managers can deal with such a situation effectively. These include:
encouraging staff members to contact their line manager if they feel under stress;
- acting supportively towards staff who raise concerns about the pressures of work and take measures to address these concerns. Where it is not possible to resolve the matter locally, line managers should discuss these with a more senior colleague;
- seeking advice from the ODST HR team at the earliest possible stage;
where appropriate referred a staff member to an Occupational Health Advisor may be an option;
- staff members who feel unable to approach their line manager may also raise their concerns with the HR team or, where a member of a trade union, contact their local union representative.

After the event

ODST is committed to providing support to its staff members and following up on identified concerns. Risk assessment is a key aspect of this approach and it is only when the possible causes of stress have been identified that preventative or management strategies can be effectively put in place. Managers should carry out a risk assessment for any staff member who has identified symptoms due to work related stress or has been absent due to work related stress and should document this on a risk assessment form (appendix 2), agreeing with the member of staff any action plan required. Guidance must be sought from the ODST HR team prior to carrying out the risk assessment.

In carrying out risk assessments, line managers should be aware that:
stress at work can result from a single incident or an accumulation of incidents over time, and should seek to minimise both types of risks;
- stress related ill health might be caused by personal circumstances, which in turn may have a detrimental effect on an individual's ability to cope with work demands;
- staff members with sensitive or confidential personal issues that could cause stress should be referred to the Occupational Health Service.

Responsibilities

In summary the responsibilities of the various staff groups in ODST in respect of managing staff well-being are as follows:

Managers

ensure good communication with their staff members, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;

ensure staff members are fully trained to carry out their roles;

ensure staff members are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities;

monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded;

monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff members are not overworking and are taking their full leave entitlement;

attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;

ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their workplace;

conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction;

be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Staff members

reporting matters of concern relating to their or a colleague's health and safety at work to an appropriate manager;

supporting colleagues who are experiencing stress;

informing their manager when personal stress is affecting their work;

raising any other issues of concern with your Safety Representative, line manager or Occupational Health adviser (if appropriate);

accepting opportunities for OH support when requested.

Human resources

give guidance to managers on the stress policy.

help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.

advise managers and individuals on training requirements.

provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

Useful links with advice about managing stress and staff well-being:

http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/q/c/Stress-at-work-advisory-booklet.pdf
http://www.fitforwork.org/employee/
http://www.stress.org.uk/
http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org/
http://www.healthyworkingwales.wales.nhs.uk

Appendix 1

Managing well-being checklist

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) have documented some guidelines for schools in respect of managing well-being at work. These could be used as a check-list to ensure that staff well-being is managed as effectively as possible.

Our managers	Yes/No
are healthy role models, setting a good example in the way they manage their own personal levels of health and stress	
understand the main health issues facing their team	
know the key facts about important health concerns such as depression, stress, substance misuse and back pain/muscular-skeletal disorders	
are able to cope with difficult conversations and are confident in supporting employees	
are fully aware of Health and Safety requirements/legislation	
conduct comprehensive return to work interviews following health-related absences	
acknowledge the importance of rehabilitation following long-term absence	
use occupational health professionals (where appropriate/available) to help employees return to work after periods of health-related absence	
focus on employees' capacity rather than incapacity to carry out their work	
recognise the importance of tackling incidents of bullying and harassment, and are aware of the law on issues such as discrimination and victimisation	
regularly monitor employee workload	
set realistic timescales for completion of tasks	
discourage excessive overtime	
Review "working processes" regularly to determine if they are helpful/harmful to employees' health and wellbeing	
monitor levels of paid and unpaid overtime	

Our employees	Yes/No
have clearly defined job roles and responsibilities	
have some degree of control over when and how they work	
are encouraged to work regular hours to manage their work-life balance	
are encouraged to take full break entitlements, including lunch breaks and annual leave allowance	
have the tools and time they need to do their work reasonably	
have regular meetings with their managers and feel that managers support their wellbeing concerns e.g. feeling under-pressure	
are well-informed about organisational performance and progress	
are familiar with the channels available for addressing problems/grievances	
feel valued and regularly receive recognition for work well done	
have the chance to get involved in community development initiatives such as charity fundraisers	

Training and development	Yes/No
employees receive suitable training for their jobs and are given the opportunity to attend refresher courses (where appropriate)	
employees are actively helped to develop skills and abilities, and are encouraged to apply for higher level positions within the organisation (where appropriate), as this will help boost their morale and motivation	
employees are provided with education and training on the main health-related issues facing them e.g. stress, back pain to help develop their own self-care plans	

Provision of health-related support	Yes/No
employees have access to adequate support or advice on health, safety and wellbeing	
employees have access to an employee assistance programme (EAP)	
peer-to-peer activities such as mentoring and support groups are available	
employees feel able to discuss organisational or job-related concerns with any senior member of staff without negative consequences	
policies are in place to address the main causes of work-related ill health (e.g. stress, muscular-skeletal disorders, substance misuse)	

Environment	Yes/No
the working environment is well lit	
the working environment is physically well maintained, safe, clean and secure	
information about health and wellbeing is posted in easily visible places	
noise levels are kept to an acceptable level	
the temperature is maintained at a comfortable level	
there is adequate airflow	
workstations are ergonomically designed	
where employees' roles involve lifting and handling, equipment is provided to mitigate risks	
healthy refreshments are available, including watercoolers	
bike racks or secure storage areas are available for employees cycling to work	
employees are encouraged to take breaks away from their desks/workstations by walking for a few minutes	

Appendix 2

Stress Assessment Tool

This form should be used as a template for discussion in supporting a staff member and should be completed by their Line Manager or an HR Adviser in their presence so that support plan can be agreed.

Note: There are no "yes/no" questions. This is to allow the conversation to be free rather than guided.

Name	
Job title	
Duration in current role	
Total duration of employment	
School	
Date	

1.	Job Content (*overload or under load, too much/too little/too difficult or too easy*)
2.	Pattern of Work (*duration, effect on social/home life, unpredictable*)
3.	Communication and Support (*inter-colleague communication, managerial support*)

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4.	Work Role (a*mbiguity or conflicting demands*)
5.	Relationships (*unresolved conflict*)
6.	Career Structure (*under promotion, advancement opportunities, comments on appraisal*)
7.	Physical Environment (*noise, temperature, light and space, work station assessment, any other comments on working conditions/environment*)
8.	Home-work Interface (*conflicting demands associated with child-care and other responsibilities; access to safe and convenient transport; problems associated with geographical relocation; the impact of home-based problems on work*)

Conclusions

1.	Employee's Concerns (*include headline causes of 'stress' plus possible underlying and complicating factors*)
2.	Action Points

Assessment Conducted By:		Date	
Action(s) to be Completed By:		Date	
Date Due for Review:			