



'Individual Growth, Individual People'

Head Teacher: Mrs M A Tyers

Managing Stress Risk in the Workplace Policy

Reviewed February 2020

WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE STRESS

The aim of this document is to describe Newark Orchard School's policy and procedures for managing stress risk in school. The HSE define stress as the **"adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them"**.

When the issue of stress is dealt with at an early stage (ignoring whether it's caused by work, or just made worse by work) this is generally the most successful way of managing problems associated with stress.

Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep us motivated, but excessive pressure can lead to stress, this undermines performance, is costly to the organisation and can make people ill.

Staff in schools have had to adapt to major changes over a number of years and there is no doubt that radical change in itself is a source of pressure. Clearly, the possible effects of such pressure need to be positively and sensitively managed.

THE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS APPROACH

Newark Orchard School is committed to reducing and managing stress as well as providing support for employees experiencing stress resulting from external non-work related issues. To assist with the management of occupational stress Newark Orchard School is implementing the HSE's Management Standards approach.

These identify the following six key areas that could cause work related stress:

- The demands of the job
- The amount of control the employee has over their work
- The relationship between people at work
- Management of change in the workplace
- *Your role in the organisation*
- *Level of support you receive from managers and colleagues*

HOW THE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS WORK

It is necessary to gain an understanding of what the six areas (listed previously) look like where they work, and identify which areas may be presenting problems.

This information can be gained from:

- One-to-one discussions
- Supervision
- Team meetings
- Reviewing absence data
- Sickness absence and return to work discussions
- Reviewing employee turnover
- Undertaking surveys in an attempt to identify, reduce and manage work related stress, eg 'stress risk management indication tool'.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TACKLE WORK RELATED STRESS?

There are three main reasons;

1. Reducing sickness absence is a benefit, both for the individual and the school.
2. Benefits to the school.

As well as reducing sickness absence costs, tackling stress can have a positive effect on:

- Staff turnover or intention to leave
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance
- Organisational image and reputation.

3. To comply with the law Employers have duties:

- Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities; and
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to take measures to control that risk.

PREVENTING, IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING STRESS RISK IN SCHOOL

Stress is an issue that **must** be addressed by schools. Much of what constitutes identification and prevention relates to good management practice. A framework now needs to be established by **all** schools to ensure that:

- Head teacher / managers / governors accept responsibility for the management of stress risk and the implementation of this policy.
- Development of an individual action plan in order to implement this policy.
- Head teacher / managers (and where appropriate school governors) attend stress management training provided by the LA.
- Specific stress audits are carried out in accordance with this policy.
- Findings of stress audits are acted upon promptly.
- Appropriate support mechanisms are in place for all staff.

HELP & SUPPORT WITH THIS POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Key contacts for school;

NCC (LA) Occupational Health Service (Nottingham) Tel: 0115 - 9772403

NCC (LA) Human Resources (Schools) County Hall Tel: 0115 - 9773473

NCC (LA) Health & Safety (Schools) County Hall Tel: 0115 - 9773603

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- 1.1 Effective management of stress is crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of our organisation by improving well-being, reducing absenteeism, greater retention of employees and reduced costs.
- 1.2 We can all feel stressed at times when we feel as though everything becomes too much, when things get on top of us, or when we feel as though we are unable to cope. It affects us in different ways at different times and is often the result of a combination of factors in our personal and working lives.
- 1.3 Newark Orchard School recognises that employees may be exposed to different degrees of stress resulting from their work activities. We are committed to promoting a holistic approach to the mental and physical well-being of employees. This includes reducing and managing occupational stress as well as providing support for employees experiencing stress resulting from external non work related issues. This document is based upon the Stress Management Standards produced by the HSE.
- 1.4 The workplace involves pressures and demands that often have a positive effect on employees' performance at work. However, where pressures are excessive stress can result in a negative impact on a person's health and work performance. This policy reflects Nottinghamshire County Councils (LA) commitment to managing workplace stressors where reasonably practicable.
- 1.5 At Newark Orchard School we will ensure that we:
- Conduct risks assessments.
 - Identify risks and implement control measures.
 - Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
 - Ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
 - Provide good supervision and development opportunities.
 - Ensure employees are fully trained to discharge their duties.
 - Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
 - Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
 - Monitor working hours and any additional working time to ensure that employees are not overworking.
 - Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
 - Be vigilant and offer additional support to an employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
 - Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

We will use the LAs management choices buy back arrangements for the following services

- 1.6 NCC Occupational Health Service can ;
- Support individuals who are or have been off sick with stress/mental health issues and advise them and their direct Line Managers to agree a return to work plan.
 - Provide specialist advice, support and awareness training on stress and mental health issues.
 - Provide personalised practical and emotional support via one to one counselling or refer on to specialist agencies as required.
 - Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

- Support head teachers / managers and support training to raise awareness of mental health issues and to enable head teachers / managers to implement stress risk assessments
- Inform the employer of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.
- Make available fact sheets and guides on a diverse range of issues including stress management, panic attacks, work life balance etc.

1.7 NCC Human Resources can;

- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Provide continuing support to head teachers / managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage early referral to occupational health where appropriate.
- Contribute to return to work plans supporting head teachers / managers / individuals and facilitating OHS advice and support.

1.8 NCC Health & Safety Staff can;

- Provide guidance to head teachers / managers on the stress policy.
- Provide support and advice to head teachers / managers / individuals on training requirements.
- Provide support and guidance with the risk assessment process.

1.9 Employees need to be aware that pressure at work can be good for you, but if the experience of pressure gets too much, they may begin to feel stressed. Employees may also experience non work related pressure which results in stress, which also has an impact on their work life. It is often difficult for individuals to know what to do when this occurs. The following bullet points are intended to provide guidance on the responsibilities and actions that individuals should take to manage their stress;

- Employees should speak to their direct line manager or someone else they feel comfortable talking to in the school / organisation
- Employees should consider accessing the confidential counselling provided by the Occupational Health Service.
- Employees should consider whether they would benefit from a discussion with their GP.
- Employees should take action at a personal level to review their lifestyle/work life balance to see if it is possible to identify any contributing factors. A simple checklist might include:
 - eating on the run, or in a disorganised manner
 - smoking, or drinking excessively
 - rushing, hurrying, being available to everyone
 - doing several jobs at once
 - not taking breaks, taking excessive work home with you
 - having no time for exercise and relaxation

The HSE Stress Management Standards look at the six key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work-related stress:

- **Demands** - such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** - How much say the person has in the way they do their work?
- **Support** - Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

- **Relationships** - Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** - Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** - How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

2 MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE.

- 2.1 The most effective way to tackle workplace stress is through good management practices. This includes, having in place clearly stated business objectives, effective communication, well-defined roles and responsibilities and a focus on personal development through supervision and appraisal.
- 2.2 At Newark Orchard School the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of employees that report to them. We will respond appropriately where it becomes evident that a member of the team may be suffering from stress. It is important to discuss this with the individual concerned. This may take place as part of the normal supervision process or separately but should be recorded.
- 2.3 Someone suffering from stress is likely to feel anxious and distressed. The Head teacher / managers will be supportive and empathic so that problems can be solved in a positive way. Head teacher / SLT will ask about possible causes and explore, together with the employee, some options for addressing the issues.
- 2.4 If part of the job or the working environment is identified as a source of the stress, the head teacher / SLT will clarify the specific area(s) of concern and discuss with the employee ways of tackling the problem.
- 2.5 At particular times, employees may be more vulnerable to work-related stress. For example, those returning to work after a stress-related illness, or those who have experienced a personal or family problem, such as bereavement.
- 2.6 If the head teacher / SLT has concerns regarding an employee's performance, capability or attendance procedures and guidance contained in the 'manual of personnel guidance' will be referred to. In addition, advice and support may be obtained from the schools personnel service provider.
- 2.7 Where individuals feel unable to share how they are feeling, then the head teacher / SLT will suggest other people who may be able to help. These may include a sympathetic family member, friends, their doctor, trade unions, the LA's counselling service, Teacherline or other specialist counselling services external to the authority such as CRUSE (Bereavement Support).
- 2.8 When an employee is absent due to stress, head teachers / managers must ensure that supportive contact is maintained. The attendance management procedures can be found in the 'manual of personnel guidance'.

3 GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES WHO MAY BE SUFFERING FROM STRESS

- 3.1 Employees who are experiencing problems at work, including feeling under excessive pressure, should discuss their concerns with their direct line manager or other appropriate person. The purpose of raising concerns and meeting with the line manager is to look for ways to resolve issues. The head teacher / SLT may also approach employees, either as part of management supervision or attendance management procedures.

- 3.2 Even where employee's problems are not related to work it may be that help is still available, either from their line manager or from the counselling service.

4 EARLY INDICATIONS THAT STRESS COULD BE A PROBLEM

- High levels of sickness absence may indicate a potential problem area. Checking the reasons given for absence, in a sympathetic manner, may help identify the cause.
- Low productivity can be an indicator of problems. Talking to employees informally and formally through supervision can help the head teacher / Managers explore the reasons behind this.
- High employee turnover could be an indication of high stress levels. The head teacher / managers should investigate why people are leaving using exit interview data.
- Meetings with the employee's line manager may offer the opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion.
- Team meetings can help head teachers / managers assess current performance.

5 STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

Finding out how the factors are affecting employees requires a partnership approach, based on openness, honesty and trust. The head teacher / managers will need to ensure that employees;

- are consulted at all stages;
- fully involved in the process from the start;
- understand why the assessment is taking place;
- know how the information will be used;
- are informed of the outcome; and
- are involved in identifying the action required to address any problems.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT STEP 1 - IDENTIFYING THE HAZARDS INVOLVED

This step involves requiring the identified group of employees to complete the anonymous Indicator tool online using the Wellworker ICT Solution.

7 RISK ASSESSMENT STEP 2 - IDENTIFYING WHO MAY BE HARMED

Step 1 will require identifying a team or groups of employees within a team. The breakdown will depend on the structure of the school or team. The employees should share common interests and encounter similar kinds of sources of work related pressure. The assessment works best where it is limited to a group with similar objectives.

The head teacher / managers will need to ensure arrangements are in place to secure commitment to the process from the employees involved. This may include a staff meeting, a range of smaller meetings or a memorandum that explains what is happening and why and then explains what will happen with the information provided. Emphasis needs to be placed on the anonymity of the individual completing the questionnaire and that future action to avoid or manage stress will be based upon this process.

8 RISK ASSESSMENT STEP 3 - EVALUATE THE RISK AND TAKE ACTION

Guidance on how to use the 'wellworker' stress tool can be accessed via the 'health & safety community' on 'wired' (stress management folder), or contacting your Health and Safety service provider.

Where the ICT solution is being used the data can be analysed online.

The head teacher / managers should now be at a point where:

- They have identified what the biggest problems appear to be; and
- They have identified where they appear to be having the most impact.

The head teacher / managers will take action using the information obtained. This will involve talking to employees and their representatives to confirm the nature of the problems and develop ideas for solutions.

It should be noted that NCC already collects information that can be used to supplement information obtained by the risk assessment process, which can help indicate potential problem areas. For example:

- High levels of sickness absence may indicate a potential problem area. Checking the reasons given for absence may help identify the cause.
- Low productivity can be an indicator of problems. Talking to employees should help explore the reasons behind this.
- High employee turnover could be an indication of high stress levels. Investigate why people are leaving - conducting exit interviews is one way of doing this.
- Supervision and performance appraisal could offer an opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion about work and to explore whether people in your team are experiencing excessive pressure.
- Team meetings can help assess current performance. They allow exploration of issues in considerable depth and are particularly useful if you want to find out what specific groups of people think about their work.

Further guidance relating to effective management of each of the HSE's identified key areas of work may be found as an action plan pro-forma, available from the 'Health & Safety Community' on 'Wired' (stress management folder).

9 RISK ASSESSMENT STEP 4 - RECORDING YOUR FINDINGS

The head teacher / managers will record both the results of the risk assessment and the action they intend to take in the action plan section of the 'wellworker' tool.

Where the risk assessment has identified areas of concern and the head teacher / managers will take steps to develop some solutions, it is important that the action plan;

- identifies realistic timescales agreed with employees and their representatives;
- is communicated to all employees;
- shared with senior management;
- includes a review process.

The head teacher / managers will ensure that records relating to stress risk assessments are kept and are easily accessible for a minimum period of 25 years.

10 RISK ASSESSMENT STEP 5 - MONITOR AND REVIEW

The head teacher / managers will;

- periodically check that agreed actions are being undertaken, that meetings are being held, or that there is evidence that agreed activities have been carried out.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of solutions by asking those involved whether they feel the solutions are having the desired effect.
- Consider data on employee turnover, sickness absence and productivity, and measure progress against emerging trends or changes in this data.
- Use the risk assessment indicator tool approach again after a period of time. Depending on the outcome of the initial risk assessment and any significant changes to work activities/structures/procedures the **head teacher / manager will consider whether a further risk assessment is required**. The Local Authority (based on HSE guidance) advises that this should be reviewed annually and a record made to confirm what action should be taken, if any.

11 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

a. Employers already have duties:

- i. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities; and
- ii. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to take measures to control that risk.
- iii. The Management Standards are intended to help and encourage employers to meet these existing legal obligations.
- iv. The Stress Management Standards and supporting processes are designed to:

Help simplify risk assessment for stress;

Encourage employers, employees and their representatives to work in partnership to address work-related stress throughout the organisation

Provide the yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

12 REFERENCES

HSE, HS (G) 218 : Tackling work related stress for managers



Appendix 1 Overview of Management Standards

