



... the sky's OUR limit!

Ridgeway Primary School Stress Management Policy

This policy sets out the responsibilities that the school has for carrying out suitable and sufficient risk assessments to monitor workplace stress, outlines personal responsibilities that everyone shares to look after themselves and provides guidance on implementation of stress management to mitigate stress.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The School will undertake to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation with regard to stress management for all pupils and staff and to ensure best practice by extending the arrangements as far as is reasonably practicable to others who may also be affected by our activities.

2. THE LAW

As legislation is often amended and Regulations introduced, the references made in this Policy may be to legislation that has been superseded. For an up to date list of legislation applying to schools, please refer to the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk/schools and the Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk.

- i. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- ii. Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

3. MANAGEMENT

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the management of stress within the school.

The Headteacher will ensure that:

- i. The relevant Risk Assessments are carried out.
- ii. All staff are aware of the confidential help that can be given by the Occupational Health Service and Think Well Counselling Service.
- iii. Appropriate information, instruction and training is provided, as required, for all people who need to take action to protect themselves from stress.
- iv. Any potential signs of stress are identified by monitoring sickness absence rates, workloads, interpersonal relationships in the workplace and staff feedback.
- v. The likelihood of harm occurring to an individual's mental wellbeing through activities at work is assessed.
- vi. Work life balance is addressed in the context of a teacher's performance management.

The Governing Body are responsible for managing the stress levels of the Headteacher and ensuring an appropriate work life balance.

4. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, stress has been as “a condition which occurs when a person's normal coping mechanisms are not working. This can be caused by internal and external factors.”

However, there are many other and various descriptions and definitions of stress and all related matters and they are chiefly based upon individual opinions rather than accepted fact. The following definitions are intended to be a simple guide in plain English to frequently used terminology:

- i. **STRESS:** Accumulation of the trivial leading to a growing feeling of being out of control. (Bruce Waelend).
- ii. **STRESS:** The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope. (HSE)
- iii. **STRESS:** is a feeling that you just cannot cope with all that you face. (Marks & Spencer).
- iv. **WORK-RELATED STRESS:** Results from a conflict between the role and needs of the individual employee and organisational, personal or ergonomic factors in their work place. There can also be an unacceptable tension between the demands of work and the individual's life outside work. Stress is also often typified by a lack of control over conditions at work. (The UK National Work-Stress Network)
- v. **WORK/LIFE BALANCE:** Is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work, leading them to be able to enjoy an optimal quality of life outside and inside the workplace.
- vi. **PRESSURE:** Is usually the impetus that gives us drive, motivation, challenge and enthusiasm but in excessive amounts it can cause a loss of control and lead to an inability to cope.
- vii. **RISK ASSESSMENT:** Is a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people (including ill health), so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm occurring.

5. INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that certain types of work can be very stressful for staff and the government has made it clear that they consider stress to be a health and safety issue. They expect employers to take action to manage it in the same way as any other health and safety risk.

It will never be possible to eliminate all stress from the workplace and in fact some pressure is needed to provide challenge and motivation. However, excessive workplace pressure, and the stress to which it can lead, can be harmful to the individuals involved and ultimately to the organisation. It is when those pressures are cumulative and events seem to be beyond a person's control that adverse effects are almost inevitable.

Stress is not caused exclusively by work or the workplace. Often the root

cause is an inability to balance home life with work life, in other words failure to achieve a work-life balance. The importance of healthy living to keeping a healthy mental state cannot be over emphasised. We need to promote healthy eating, exercise, sleep and relaxation in a way that is not patronising or intrusive but encourages employees to take care of themselves at all times while the organisation also takes care of them at work.

Our challenge is to create an atmosphere where individuals and teams can openly discuss situations of stress, or potential stress, with their managers. It is equally important that managers understand the issues around stress in the workplace so that they are recognised, clearly understood and that reasonable steps are taken to help the individuals concerned.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT OF STRESS

- a. In addition to their standard five step approach to risk assessment, HSE has further identified six categories of risk factors for work-related stress:
 - i. **Demands** - includes issues like workload, working patterns and the physical environment.
 - ii. **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
 - iii. **Support** – the level of support provided by line management and peers.
 - iv. **Relationships** – includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
 - v. **Role** - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.
 - vi. **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The risk assessment should identify those areas where not enough is being done to address problems and those areas where problems might arise.

An excellent opportunity for assessing the risk of stress occurring in an individual is during supervision or one to one sessions. Good supervision should contain three elements; normative, formative and restorative. It is during the restorative stage that issues such as the pressures a person is experiencing in their life can be discussed. That does not mean that people have to share their innermost feelings but it is a chance for difficulties experienced, and possible coping strategies, to be discussed and explored.

Where it becomes obvious that a person is experiencing difficulties at work, and seems not to be coping with the pressures of life, early intervention is the key to helping them. A referral in this instance will be made to the Occupational Health Team.

7. INFORMATION & TRAINING

New members of staff, and particularly young persons, should not commence any duties or workplace activities unless they are suitably supervised or mentored by a competent person.

Any information gained from staff surveys and other measures of workplace

stress should be properly communicated to staff so that they are kept informed and aware of developments.

8. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES & RIGHTS

All staff have a general duty to take care of their own health, safety and welfare and to ensure that they don't put themselves or others at risk.

In addition staff have a right to:

- i. Be treated with fairness, equality, dignity and without discrimination.
- ii. Know what is expected of them and to be supported in managing their workload.
- iii. Be consulted about changes which affect their job.
- iv. Receive regular, constructive feedback on their performance at work.
- v. Express their views and opinions in an appropriate manner without fear of reprisal.
- vi. Have access to help in dealing with worry or stress whether personal or work-related.
- vii. Have their life outside work recognised.

Joanne Jelves
Headteacher
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Document History

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| January 2018 | Reviewed with no changes. To be presented to Resources Committee 13 th February 2018 for re-adoption |

This policy is due for review 2021