

Stress at Work Policy

Reviewed by:	SBM	Date: 20/01/2022
Authorised by:	H&S	Date: 31/01/2022
Date for next review: (or early should legislation require it)	Spring 2023	<i>Anna Watkinson</i>

“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29, v11

Nurture ~ Believe ~ Discover ~ Achieve

OUR CHRISTIAN VISION

Our vision for Woodstock CE Primary School reflects a passionate commitment to learning and recognition of the uniqueness of individual learners. Guided by our Christian values, it is driven by our desire to offer the best possible education for our pupils in partnership with parents, the Church and the local community.

Woodstock CE Primary School will be a centre for learning where adults and children:

- ✓ **Nurture** and prioritise wellbeing and development.
- ✓ **Believe** in themselves and in each other.
- ✓ **Discover** their own strengths and become successful lifelong learners.
- ✓ **Achieve** more than they ever thought possible.

OUR CHRISTIAN ETHOS

Recognising our historic foundation, we will preserve and develop our religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Churches at parish and diocesan level.

Woodstock CE Primary School strives to be an inclusive community where children grow, learn and achieve together. Within a nurturing, supportive and safe environment, mental health and wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do and recognised as the responsibility of all. Children's natural curiosity is fostered through a creative curriculum that excites and challenges, and enables them to be successful learners. Supported by a culture of equality and aspiration we aim to remove disadvantage so that every child can thrive.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. We encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promote Christian values through the experience we offer to all our pupils.

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Introduction

Woodstock CE Primary School as employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff as far as reasonably practicable. It is also required to have in place measures to mitigate as far as practicable factors that could harm their physical and mental wellbeing, which includes work-related stress. This duty extends only to those factors which are work-related and within the School's control.

This policy accepts the Health and Safety Executive definition of work-related stress as 'the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them'. There is an important distinction between 'reasonable pressures' which stimulate and motivate and 'stress' where an individual feels they are unable to cope with excessive pressures or demands placed upon them.

It is recognised that everyone needs a certain amount of pressure to remain alert, motivated and productive. Therefore, appropriate pressure at work is desirable for efficiency. It is when demands and pressures are excessive or prolonged that some people find that their ability to cope is challenged. This creates a vulnerability, which can manifest itself in a range of ill health effects for the individual and can have negative consequences for the organisation in which they are employed.

A person experiences stress when they perceive that the demands of their work are greater than their ability to cope. Coping means balancing the demands and pressures placed on you (i.e. the job requirements) with your skills and knowledge (i.e. your capabilities).

Stress can also result from having too few demands, as people will become bored, feel undervalued and lack recognition. If they feel they have little or no say over the work they do or how they do it, this may cause them stress.

Staff may have aspects of their personal lives that make them more vulnerable to stress at work or have a temporary influence on their work performance. For example: illness, family issues or financial difficulties.

The relevant legislative context is defined by the following:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Working Time Regulations
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

This policy recognises that there are many sources of work related stress and that stress can result from the actions or behaviours of managers, employees or pupils. Please read this ***Stress at Work and Staff Wellbeing Policy*** in conjunction with the Oxfordshire County Council ***Stress at Work Policy***, which can be found here:

<http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/HR/Policies/stressatwork.pdf>

The Health and Safety Executive have produced a number of **Management Standards** which cover the primary sources of stress at work that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. These are:

- **Demands:** Workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control:** How much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support:** Encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the school, line management and colleagues.

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

The School's performance on wellbeing and stress management will be assessed in the context of the HSE Management Standards.

Statement of Intent

The Local Authority, Senior Leadership Team and Governors:

- Acknowledge the potential impact that work has on an individual's physical and mental health, and that there is a persuasive business case as well as a moral and legal duty for taking steps to promote staff wellbeing as far as reasonably practicable.
- Are committed to fostering a culture of co-operation, trust and mutual respect, where all individuals are treated with dignity, and can work at their optimum level.
- Recognise that work-related stress has a negative impact on staff wellbeing, and that it can take many forms and so needs to be carefully analysed and addressed at an organisational level.

This policy expands upon the School's Health and Safety Policy, setting out how we promote the wellbeing of our staff by:

- Creating a working environment where potential work-related stressors as far as practicable are avoided, minimised or mitigated through good management practices, effective Human Resources policies and staff development.
- Increasing managers' and staff awareness of the causes and effects of stress.
- Developing a culture that is open and supportive of people experiencing stress or other forms of mental ill-health.
- Developing the competence of managers through the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework, so that they manage staff effectively and fairly.
- Engaging with staff to create constructive and effective working partnerships both within teams and across the School.
- Establishing working arrangements whereby staff feel they are able to maintain an appropriate work-life balance.
- Encouraging staff to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through effective health promotion programmes and initiatives.
- Encouraging staff to take responsibility for their own work and effectiveness as a means of reducing their own stress and that of their colleagues.

Responsibilities for Implementation

The Senior Leadership Team and Governors will:

- Support steps taken to develop a culture of co-operation, trust and mutual respect within the School.
- Champion good management practices as set out in the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework, and the establishment of a work ethos within the School which discourages assumptions about long term commitment to working hours of a kind likely to cause stress and which enables employees to maintain a reasonable "work life balance".

- Promote effective communication and ensure that there are procedures in place for consulting and supporting employees on changes in the organisation, to management structures and working arrangements at both a School-wide and departmental level.
- Encourage initiatives and events that promote health and well-being.
- Treat individuals reporting to them with consideration and dignity, and will promote a culture of mutual respect in the teams they manage. They will not permit unacceptable behaviour and will take decisive action when issues are brought to their attention.
- Ensure that there is good communication within their team and there are opportunities for individuals to raise concerns about their work, seeking advice from Human Resources (Employment Relations) and the Health and Safety Team at an early stage where concerns are raised.
- Adhere to the sound management principles set out in the School's Human Resources policies and procedures, and the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework.
- Attend training as appropriate in order to increase their awareness of the causes and effects of work-related stress.
- Co-operate with Human Resources (Employment Relations) and the Health and Safety team to ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for roles or working practices that may give rise to work-related stress.
- Encourage their staff to participate in events and initiatives undertaken by the School to promote well-being and more effective working.
- Take action in the interests of all their colleagues where performance by a member of staff may cause stress to their colleagues.

Staff will:

- Treat colleagues and all other persons with whom they interact during the course of their work with consideration, respect and dignity
- Co-operate with the School's efforts to implement the Well-being policy, attending briefings and raise their own awareness of the causes and effects of stress on health
- Raise concerns with their line manager if they feel there are work issues that are causing them stress and having a negative impact on their well-being
- Take responsibility for their own health and well-being by adopting healthy lifestyles
- Take responsibility for their own development skills as one of the means to enable them to work effectively in their team and so reduce of the risk of stress
- Take responsibility for working effectively in their assigned roles, thus helping to avoid causing stress to their colleagues
- Act as the main focus group for consulting on the effectiveness of the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy and the measures taken to implement it, developing staff questionnaires in relation to wellbeing and work-related stress and validating findings of institution level risk assessments
- Demonstrate the appropriate behaviours associated with the following competences:
 - Avoid behaviours which give rise to stress
 - Develop a balanced and responsible approach to work and their personal lives to ensure they are able to work
 - Be aware of the signs and causes of stress in the workplace (and in their personal lives)
 - Understand the Stress at Work and Staff Wellbeing Policy and co-operate with managers and colleagues in the prevention and control of stress
 - Recognise that dealing with stress is not a weakness, it is a natural reaction which can be both positive and negative
 - Report matters of concern relating to their or a colleague's health and safety at work to an appropriate manager
 - Support colleagues who are experiencing stress

- Inform their manager when personal stress is affecting their work and refer themselves to the Staff Care Service
- In an emergency, consulting their GP

The Local Authority and/or School Business Manager (as appropriate) will:

- Provide advice to managers of staff on best practice in relation to human resource management, developing policies and procedures as required.
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place for communicating the content of the School's human resource management policies, procedures and toolkits to managers and staff.
- Develop arrangements to enable managers and staff to achieve the necessary competencies in relation to the good management practices set out in the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework.
- Ensure there are arrangements in place to support individuals experiencing stress, referring them to the School's Occupational Health advisers where appropriate.
- Ensure there are arrangements in place to support managers experiencing problems with employee performance.
- Collate management information which will enable the School to measure its performance in relation to stress management and employee well-being, such as:
 - Sickness absence data
 - Staff turnover, exit interviews
 - Number of self-referrals to the counsellor service
 - Number of referrals to the Occupational Health contractor
 - Numbers of grievance and harassment cases
- Seek the views of employees on the effectiveness of the School's Wellbeing policy and stress management arrangements using staff surveys and other appropriate questionnaires.

The Occupational Health Service is responsible for the assessment of employee's health and giving advice to managers where employees have stress related problems or sickness absences. The Occupational Health Service is responsible for providing advice on:

- Health related issues
- Phased return to work if appropriate
- Flexible working hours / revised duties if feasible
- Medical redeployment
- Monitoring the incidence of stress-related referrals and provide quarterly report to the Council's Health & Safety Committee, and County Council Management Team

Managers will:

- Ensure that employees who are referred to the Occupational Health Service are fully aware of the reasons for their referral and of the purpose of the service
- Ensure that the Occupational Health Service is properly briefed on any special physical and psychological demands of jobs, health problems and how these affect the employee's ability to perform their work.

The School Business Manager (H&S Lead) will:

- Ensure that this policy is kept under review and updated as appropriate, under the remit of the Health and Safety Committee
- Develop an institution level risk assessment based on the Health and Safety Executive's "Management Standards for Work-related Stress"

- In conjunction with the Staff Development Unit and the Teaching and Learning Centre co-ordinate appropriate training and briefings to increase awareness of the causes and effects of work-related stress among managers and other employees
- Assist and support managers to undertake local stress risk assessment where required
- Organise in conjunction with the Staff Development Unit and Employment Relations appropriate events and initiatives to promote health and well-being
- Liaise with the Staff on the development and implementation of the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy

The Health and Safety Committee will:

- Determine the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy, and recommend its adoption
- Monitor the implementation of the Wellbeing policy and the operation of associated arrangements such as the staff counselling service.
- Review the policy every three years following feedback from staff surveys, management information provided by Human Resources and the findings of stress risk assessments, and in consultation with DMT, Staff Consultative Council and other appropriate bodies.

Arrangements for Implementation

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a vital component of this policy. It is only when the possible causes of stress have been identified that preventative or management strategies can be effectively put in place. Managers must 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. Managers must complete the risk assessment form with their member of staff and then agree the action plan.

In carrying out risk assessments, 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 with sensitive or confidential personal issues that could cause stress should be referred to the Occupational Health Service and/or the Staff Care Service

Whole-School Level

At a whole-school level, a risk assessment will be developed to establish whether the School's policies and procedures are sufficient to enable compliance with the HSE's 'Management Standards' in relation to the management of work related stress.

Where gaps in arrangements are identified, the Business Manager will consult with staff, senior leaders and Governors so that the necessary action can be taken to address any shortcoming in policies and procedures.

Phase/Class Level

Where problems arise, a risk assessment will be undertaken by the relevant person/Senior Leader. The Business Manager will produce a checklist template for staff to use.

When risk assessments are undertaken at phase/class level, the staff working in the area which is subject to the risk assessment will be consulted. Any safety representative appointed by recognised Trade Unions under the

provisions of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 representing employees working in the area covered by the risk assessment will be consulted if it is deemed appropriate.

Arrangements for Wellbeing and Stress Prevention through Good Management Practices

These include the following:

- Recruitment and selection procedures
- Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure that the 'right' person is recruited for the job
- Formal accreditation such as Mental Health & Wellbeing Accreditation (Autumn 2018)
- Agreed knowledge, skills and behaviours for managers, to be cascaded through to all levels of management and supervision
- Training and Development procedures to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake the tasks/duties required of them.
- Promotion and reward procedures
- Managing performance procedures
- Capability and absence management & return to work procedures to ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness
- Suitable adaptations for disability
- Harassment and anti-bullying procedures
- Procedures for communicating with employees on the work of the School and issues affecting their work
- Flexible working arrangements, and contact days with staff on maternity leave
- The arrangements will be updated and augmented as required and when deemed necessary by the findings of stress risk assessments

Consultation

- The School will consult with its employees on the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy and measures taken to implement the policy through the operation of the School Health and Safety Committee and via Staff consultations
- Staff surveys will be used to gather feedback on the Stress at Work and Wellbeing
- The views of individuals will be sought in areas or teams subject to local stress risk assessments

Communicating the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy and Measures Taken by the School to Manage Work-related Stress

- The Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy will be emailed to staff and be part of the annual policy sharing/induction procedures
- Leaflets will be produced for employees who do not have easy access to a computer
- The Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy will be promoted in staff meetings and INSET days
- The contents of the policy will be covered during general induction training sessions for employees and specific training on stress awareness.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy

- The Stress at Work & Staff Wellbeing Policy will be monitored and reviewed every year by the School Business Manager and Health and Safety Committee