



Oakfield School

70. Staff Wellbeing/Work Related Stress Policy

To be Reviewed:	September 2020
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Staff Wellbeing and Work Related Stress

Oakfield School recognises that the staff team are the most valuable resource available to the school and that their welfare should be prioritised. As such there are multiple procedures in place that underpin a high standard of staff welfare.

Work related stress is defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other demands placed on them'. Work related stress is not an illness in itself but if it is prolonged or particularly intense it can lead to physical and/or mental ill health.

Stress is not the same as pressure. Being under pressure often improves performance. The tasks and challenges we face at work often help to keep us motivated and are the key to a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, whilst pressure can be a good thing, when demands and pressure become excessive they can lead to stress. Stress arises when people worry that they cannot cope with the excessive demands made upon them.

Stress may also occur where skills and capabilities are underutilised and undervalued.

Whilst everyone is vulnerable to stress, people have different tolerances to it, depending on the pressures faced at any given time. Stress can arise in both work and personal situations. An employee who normally copes well under pressure may have more difficulty if they are also having to deal with stressful situations in their personal lives e.g. bereavement, divorce etc. In these circumstances the employee is likely to need more support than normal to deal with the day to day pressures of work.

Oakfield School recognises that the work undertaken with pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties may be particularly emotionally challenging. This guidance reflects the school's acknowledgement of this, and the efforts undertaken to ensure that staff wellbeing is carefully considered and promoted.

Stress: Signs and Symptoms

The effects of stress for individuals may include:

- Reduced morale/commitment to work
- Physical and/or mental ill health; fatigue
- Poor judgement; lack of concentration; poor memory
- Poor relationships with pupils
- Tension and conflict between colleagues
- Job dissatisfaction/intention to leave
- Reduction in performance/missed deadlines
- Increased errors/reduced quality
- Uncharacteristic errors, memory lapses, indecisiveness
- Increased smoking and drinking

- Irritability
- Aggressive behaviour, such as bullying or criticising others

Sources of stress may include:

- Demands – such as excessive workload, tight deadlines, poor environment, risk of violence, lone working etc.
- Control – such as lack of say employees have over the way they do their work, including timing, pace and skills used.
- Support – such as poor level of encouragement, training opportunities, team environment, and reduced resources.
- Relationships – such as conflict, inappropriate management styles, discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- Role – such as conflicting job demands, ambiguity, unclear expectations.
- Change – such as uncertainty, frequent restructure, relocation of jobs, technological changes, cuts, changes in management, failure to communicate.

Responsibilities for Staff Well-Being

All Employee's Responsibilities:

- To familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures of the school, and to adhere to these as best practice.
- To complete the relevant induction process, including attending briefings by senior staff, and to inform their line manager if any of these are outstanding.
- To participate in training and development opportunities that will support their abilities and skills in performing their role.
- To be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress in themselves, and to take appropriate action to seek support when necessary.
- To be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress in others, and to report this to a manager where appropriate.
- To engage in the supervision process, using this as an opportunity to discuss wellbeing issues and to be proactive about utilising strategies to maintain wellbeing.
- To be open and honest in their views about issues surrounding the running of the school.
- To offer support, guidance and mentoring to other staff within their field of capability, and refer on to a manager when these demands are exceeded

Managers' Responsibilities

- To provide a safe working environment, with risks managed as effectively as possible.
- To respond with sensitivity, fairness, professionalism and consistency. To respect confidentiality where appropriate.
- To place a high priority on staff welfare.
- To encourage seeking of help and support as a professional strength.

- To refer cases on to Human Resources and Occupational Health when necessary.
- To operate within the Sickness Absence Policy (Policy No. 60).
- To provide regular and effective supervision and performance management.
- To recruit and complete inductions effectively.
- To recognise that staff may experience emotionally demanding situations, to offer support in the form of debrief and breaks when required.
- To avoid placing additional demands outside of working hours, by ensuring staff have reasonable time during their working day to complete their allocated tasks.
- To give reasonable notice of deadlines.
- To give staff a say about how they complete their workload.
- To consider welfare and work/life balance when organising over-time, changes to hours and sleep-in duties.

Procedures That Underpin Oakfield Staff Well-Being

- A Whole School Approach to staff wellbeing, emphasising the responsibility of all members of the staff team.
- Open door policy of all managers – encouragement of honest discourse.
- Effective and consistent communication with staff through emails, staff briefings and team meetings.
- Continuing Professional Development – provision of appropriate training to enable staff to cope with the demands of their job. In particular, Team Teach qualifications should be kept up-to-date and adequately refreshed.
- Staff supervision and performance management procedures.
- Access to FOCUS Counselling for all staff.
- Access to Occupational Health and Human Resources for further support and guidance.
- Staff access to advice and support from the Emotional Wellbeing Team.
- Use of Restorative Practices to deal with issues and areas of conflict.
- Individual Risk Assessments for staff suffering from stress-related issues.

This Policy was agreed by Governors November 2018

Signed:

Lee Morfitt (Chair of Governors)