



Oakfield School

70. Staff Wellbeing/Work Related Stress Policy

To be Reviewed:	October 2021
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Current practices

Oakfield School are working in Accordance to the Government Guidance for school – Covid 19 protocols

We find ourselves in unprecedented times, the Covid 19 pandemic has had a profound impact on many lives, staff may feel that they have been exposed to increased levels of anxieties, bereavements and financial difficulties.

This pandemic has had huge consequences for us all. Staff may have had their lives turned upside down and it's important we recognise the effect this can/could have on their mental wellbeing.

We wanted to emphasize that Oakfield School are here to support you not only during this extremely difficult time but looking to the future.

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.

The following guidance has been taken from the NHS

Prevent

In these very challenging times, being able to support your team is crucial.

The [World Health Organization](#) has published Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak. This provides advice to a range of audiences, including team leaders and managers to protect staff from chronic stress and poor mental health during this response.

Recognise

Being able to recognise potential signs of poor mental health will help you identify those members of staff who may be experiencing difficulties.

Poor mental health can affect the way we think, feel or behave and our experiences of poor mental health, symptoms and coping mechanisms will be different.

Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'.

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid, particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Occasional anxiety is normal, but if feelings of anxiety are very strong, or last for a long time, they can be overwhelming.

Potential triggers that exist in the workplace include: long working hours; not taking breaks; unrealistic expectations; high-pressure environments; unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work; poor communication; negative relationships; high-risk roles.

A change in typical behaviour can be an indicator. Symptoms will vary but there are some potential physical, psychological or behaviour indicators to look out for:

Physical	Fatigue; indigestion or upset stomach; headaches; appetite and weight changes; joint and back pain; changes in sleep patterns; visible tension or trembling; nervous trembling speech; chest or throat pain; sweating; constantly feeling cold.
Psychological	Anxiety or distress; tearfulness; feeling low; mood changes; indecision; loss of motivation; loss of humour; increased sensitivity; distraction or confusion; difficult relaxing; lapses in memory; illogical or irrational thought processes; difficulty taking information in; responding to experiences, sensations or people not observable by other; increased suicidal thoughts.
Behavioural	Increased smoking and drinking; using recreational drugs; withdrawal; resigned attitude; irritability, anger or aggression; over-excitement or euphoria; restlessness; lateness, leaving early or extended lunches; working far longer hours; intense or obsessive activity; repetitive speech or activity; impaired or inconsistent performance; uncharacteristic errors; increased sickness absence; uncharacteristic problems with colleagues; apparent over-reaction to problems; risk-taking; disruptive or anti-social behaviour.

Source: [People managers' guide to mental health at work](#), Mind and CIPD

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/mental-health-at-work-1_tcm18-10567.pdf

Recognising when a colleague's wellbeing or mental health may be at risk at an early stage means you can take steps to help them manage this, before it escalates.

Respond

Where you can, work in partnership with other services, including human resources, occupational health, health and safety and other services that support staff health. Know what support services exist in your organisation so that you can quickly engage them and signpost staff to them for support.

Encourage people to speak openly about how they feel. [NHS Employers](#) provides a range of health and wellbeing resources for employers. This includes an easy to use emotional wellbeing tool to help bridge a gap in understanding and enable you to talk openly and regularly about emotional health.

[Mental health guidance for managers](#), jointly developed by Mind and the CIPD, explains, when having conversations about mental health, questions should be simple, open and non-judgmental to give the employee ample opportunity to explain the situation in their own words.

Questions to ask include:



Understanding how to support staff and how to have open conversations about how they are feeling and copying will help create a positive culture around mental wellbeing. Creating opportunities for staff to feel safe talking about their mental health and how they are feeling at this time is particularly important.

Further information to help you support your staff can be found here:

[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) – Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

[MIND](#) – Taking care of your staff resources

[Health and Safety Executive's](#) talking toolkit for preventing work related stress

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.

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This Policy was agreed by Governors October 2020

Signed:

Lee Morfitt (Chair of Governors)