Stress Management Policy

In Place   Sept   2020
Review   Aug 2023

Introduction

This policy exists to provide a framework for supporting our mission of 'getting the best out of everyone'.

The Academy is committed to providing a healthy and safe workplace for all of its employees and this commitment extends to all aspects of occupational health and safety and includes the effects of stress and the wellbeing of all our employees.

The Academy recognises that many aspects of modern living can build up levels of stress and that managing the subtle balance of commitment to contractual duties and the need to maintain a healthy work-life balance is an on-going challenge.

The Academy recognises that stress at work can lead to ill health. Although stress itself is not a medical condition, some of the symptoms of stress can lead to medical treatment or intervention.

The Academy has a duty to take reasonable care to ensure that employees' health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress. This can arise from the way work is organised, the way people deal with each other, or from the day to day demands placed on them. However, the needs of the Academy must always be balanced against the needs of the individual and this policy exists to ensure the good attendance of all colleagues so that they might carry out all their duties and contractual obligations to a high standard.

The Academy wishes to ensure a culture where it is recognised that stress is an organisational issue and not just a problem for individuals. It is important that individuals are able to seek support and assistance when they feel they are experiencing excessive levels of stress.

The Academy has a clear commitment to effective Performance Management procedures and the key role this system has in managing an employee's capacity for achievement and job satisfaction. However, all employees should be aware that in our drive to continually improve standards, it is inevitable that most Performance Management reviews will indicate areas for development or improvement. Such

challenge is normal and indeed appropriate in ensuring good professional and personal development, and it would be inappropriate to consider normal workplace challenge and targets for improvement as being automatically stressful.

Each individual employee has a responsibility to use all methods available to help cope with stressful situations as they arise. It is important that colleagues communicate effectively when they are facing difficulties in order that the Academy has an opportunity to provide early support and hopefully prevent more serious problems evolving. It is also necessary that colleagues actively attempt to use the support mechanisms provided by the Academy. Failure to act reasonably in this matter may reduce the Academy's capacity to respond effectively to any identified stressful situations.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is:

- ✓ To increase awareness of stress, its causes and methods to combat it
- ✓ To manage stress through effective and sensitive management
- ✓ To provide support for all members of staff in managing personal stress levels
- ✓ To identify and minimise causes of stress in the workplace

Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as *"the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".* This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

The legal test for cases of alleged ill health caused by occupational stress is "whether this kind of harm to this particular employee was reasonably foreseeable". Also, the employer is usually entitled to assume that an employee can withstand the normal pressures of the job unless he/she is aware of some particular problem or vulnerability.

Responsibilities

While the Academy Governing Body is ultimately responsible the following staff have responsibilities under this policy.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ✓ The operation and management of the policy.
- ✓ Ensuring that colleagues are set clear and measurable work performance objectives.
- ✓ Ensuring that appropriate stress awareness training is made available to staff who have leadership responsibilities.
- ✓ Ensuring that support is provided for individuals who have been absent with stress and advising them on a planned return to work.
- ✓ Referring to Occupational Health and or counselling as required.
- ✓ Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
- ✓ Giving guidance to staff with leadership and management responsibilities on the implementation of the stress management policy.

Line Managers are responsible for:

- ✓ Conducting and implementing recommendations of risk assessments within their area.
- ✓ Ensuring good communication between line managers and staff.
- ✓ Monitoring workloads to ensure that staff are not overloaded.
- ✓ Monitoring working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- ✓ Attending training as requested.
- ✓ Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area.
- ✓ Being vigilant and offering additional support to members of staff who are experiencing stress outside work e.g., bereavement or separation.
- ✓ Raising any issues of stress with an employee who may be exhibiting behaviours which are stress related. If you become aware of a developing situation or if an employee reports, either verbally or in writing, concerns about stress, these must be investigated, and results recorded.

You must inform a member of the Academy Leadership Team or Headteacher directly should this occur.

Employees are responsible for:

- ✓ Raising any issues of concern with the Line Manager.
- ✓ Accepting opportunities to alleviate stress when offered.
- ✓ Accepting referrals to occupational health and or counselling when recommended. The School Business Manager is responsible for:

    - o Ensuring that the Health and Safety Service commissioned by the Academy is delivering to the specified contract which includes: providing specialist advice and awareness training on stress management; training and supporting managers in implementing stress risk assessments; and informing The Academy of any changes in legislation and guidance relating to stress management.

The Governing Body / Academy Trust are responsible for:

- ✓ Providing adequate resources to enable Leaders to implement this policy.
- ✓ Ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- ✓ Monitoring the efficiency of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety. Minimising Stress in the Workplace
- ✓ The Academy will seek to minimise stress in the workplace through a range of strategies including:
- ✓ Undertaking risk assessments in order to prevent potentially stressful situations or to reduce the associated risks to an acceptable level.
- ✓ Assessing the impact on the health and safety of employees of changes in policy and procedures.
- ✓ Ensuring that Line Managers are accessible to employees to discuss problems.
- ✓ Providing opportunities for employees to discuss their performance and professional development.
- ✓ Providing the opportunity for employees to discuss how they balance work and caring responsibilities and considering all flexible working requests fairly.
- ✓ Providing an effective induction and introduction programmes for new employees
- ✓ Engendering team spirit, a sense of belonging and shared goals.
- ✓ Supporting staff in returning to work after a period of absence.

- ✓ Treating everyone with respect, valuing diversity and seeking to establish and maintain an environment free from unfair treatment.
- ✓ Allowing individuals to have a degree of control in their jobs.
- ✓ Creating a work environment that is comfortable, safe and healthy.
- ✓ Promoting wellbeing and encouraging employees to achieve a successful work life balance.
- ✓ Providing training to meet changes in tasks, equipment and work practices.
- ✓ Ensuring clear and effective communication. It is recognised that elements of stress will be present in most normal work situations and that the perception of stress is a subjective and a very individual issue. Indeed, a certain amount of acceptable stress will provide stimulation and motivation. In all situations, the Academy will apply a measure of "reasonableness" to calibrate the impact of stressors.

Recognising Stress in the Workplace

It is important that colleagues and Line-Managers are able to recognise the signs of stress in the workplace.

These may include:
- ✓ Missing deadlines
- ✓ Making uncharacteristic mistakes
- ✓ Becoming bad tempered, irritable, cynical
- ✓ Becoming withdrawn
- ✓ Producing uncharacteristically poor work
- ✓ Taking little interest in their appearance or hygiene
- ✓ Taking time off sick

Raising Issues of Stress at Work

If a staff member feels that they are suffering from work related stress or recognises symptoms in another colleague, then they should raise it in the first instance with their Line Manager.

The Line Manager should discuss the situation with the staff member, look at what may be causing the stress and consider possible courses of action to reduce the cause.

Should a staff member feel they cannot raise the issues with their Line Manager, they should approach the Headteacher or a member of the Academy Leadership Team for guidance and support.

Absence Management

When a colleague is absent due to work related stress the Line Manager, in conjunction with the HR Officer will identify the stresses impacting on the member of staff.

Line Managers should be aware that, while most colleagues returning to work after time off with stress related illnesses may return to work without problems, there will be those who will require additional support. Line Managers must undertake a risk assessment for employees who are returning to work after a stress related absence and ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

The detail of these assessments will depend on whether the source of stress was due to work or personal situations.

Employers are bound by the Equalities Act 2010 to consider making reasonable adjustments for employees who are likely to be covered by the Act.

Mental health problems that are clinically well recognised are also covered by the Act. After a staff member returns to work, the Line Manager in conjunction with the Operations Manager should continue to monitor and discuss their recovery and the factors which may have contributed to or caused the stress.

Stress Management Support for Staff

The Academy may consider any of the following adjustments in providing support to a colleague:
- ✓ A phased return to work
- ✓ Short or longer term flexible working arrangements
- ✓ Providing time out from normal duties to catch up on work tasks
- ✓ Transfer to another vacancy/location
- ✓ Identifying the tasks that are particularly stressful and rearranging responsibilities
- ✓ Identifying training, development or support needs
- ✓ Regular supervision to assess progress
- ✓ Time off (usually paid leave) to attend any therapeutic sessions
- ✓ In all of the above it will be necessary to balance the needs of the Academy against those of the individual.

Occupational Health Referrals

Where it is considered appropriate, the Academy may refer a member of staff to Occupational Health.

Occupational Health will:

- ✓ Provide advice and support to employees who are suffering from stress-related problems.
- ✓ Provide advice to Senior Leaders on how to deal with employees who have stress-related health problems.
- ✓ Support individuals who have been absent from work with stress and advise them and the Academy on managing the return to work and associated rehabilitation following a period of absence from the Academy.
- ✓ Provide a report on how to manage the return to work scenario that takes into account the needs of the individual and their contractual obligations and the wider needs of the Academy. For example, this report might provide pertinent advice to both employer and employee regarding appropriate actions to take on return to work after long absence.
- ✓ On rare occasions, Occupational Health will indicate that due to the nature of the employee's condition it is unlikely that they will be able to return to work even with extensive support and reasonable accommodation.

Stress Management Recording

A written record must be kept of all meetings with employees regarding work-related stress and a copy passed to the Headteacher.

Employees are entitled to see the records of any such meetings.

Review of the Policy

The Academy Trust will review this Policy every three years or sooner if changes are made to current legislation and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

Appendix 1:

Health and Safety Executive (H&SE) Stress Management Standards The H&SE Standards, represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, well-being and organisational performance. The process outlined is not law, but following it can help Westfield Academy meet its statutory duties, providing practical information, advice and tools on how to assess the risks from work-related stress in organisations.

The descriptors for each standard provide a set of desirable outcomes for Academy to work towards. Demands - includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

The standard is that:

Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ The Academy provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
- ✓ Peoples' skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- ✓ Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees.
- ✓ Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed (applying conditions of "reasonableness"). Control - how much say the person has in the way they do their work. The standard is that: employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work.
- ✓ Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work.
- ✓ Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
- ✓ The Academy encourages employees to develop their skills.
- ✓ Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken.
- ✓ Employees are consulted over their work patterns. Support - includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the Academy, line management and colleagues. The standard is that: employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ The Academy has policies and procedures to adequately support employees.
- ✓ Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers/leaders to support their staff.
- ✓ Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues.
- ✓ Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it.
- ✓ Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job.
- ✓ Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationships - includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The standard is that:

employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours,
e.g. bullying at work; and systems are in place to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ The Academy promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness.
- ✓ Employees share information relevant to their work
- ✓ The Academy has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour.
- ✓ Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour.
- ✓ Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Role - Whether people understand their role within the Academy and whether the Academy ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The standard is that:

employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ The Academy ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible.
- ✓ The Academy provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities.
- ✓ The Academy ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear.
- ✓ Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the Academy.

The standard is that:

employees indicate that the Academy engages them frequently when undergoing an

organisational change and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What this should look like:

- ✓ The Academy provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- ✓ The Academy ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals.
- ✓ Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs.
- ✓ Employees are aware of timetables for changes
- ✓ Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

Appendix 2:

Tips for Employees

We all experience stress from time to time, but if your stress is the result of some aspect of your work, you should discuss this with your Line Manager to see if the cause of the problem can be addressed.

The following advice may also help:

- ✓ Take time to relax - We all need time to recharge and get things into perspective, and it is essential for your wellbeing that you take time out to relax if you are having a busy day.
- ✓ Do something you enjoy, take a walk, or get some fresh air.
- ✓ Make sure you take breaks, and make sure you take a lunch break, even if it's only for a short period. Prioritise - Sometimes we can be busy but not very productive.
- ✓ Prioritise your work and agree with your Line Manager to ensure that the important tasks get done, and less important activities do not get in the way.
- ✓ Good time management will help you to take control of your workload.
- ✓ Ensure that you receive regular supervision, feedback and performance reviews so that workloads and pressures can be discussed and adjusted if necessary.
- ✓ Make sure you are clear about what is expected from you.
- ✓ Have realistic expectations - Aim for goals which are well within reach, and talk to your Line Manager or Supervisor about your ambitions to see if they can give any help or advice.
- ✓ Try to meet changes made in tasks, equipment and work practices through training and advice from other more experienced colleagues.
- ✓ Take a larger view of your life – think about where you would like to be in five years and what plans could you make now for the future.
- ✓ Be Assertive - Ensure that your concerns are discussed with your Line Manager (or other suitable colleague) to see what can be re-prioritised. Some areas of work must be done, but it may be that someone else can share these. Don't say 'yes' if it means taking on more work than you can handle. Refusing a request can be hard, but you don't have to be rude to be clear about stating your needs. If necessary, say 'Yes, I will if…' which still gives you room to negotiate.
- ✓ Balance your Life - A healthy work life balance is good for you and your employer; it makes you more productive and creative.

- ✓ Make sure that you take part in outside interests and hobbies and engage in social activities away from work. Being involved in something like volunteering, charity work, a choir or theatre group, can improve your emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ Keep as healthy as possible - Take care of yourself, cut down on junk food, caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol, and drink more water – aim for six to eight glasses a day.
- ✓ Try to eat a sensible and balanced diet with at least five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ Take regular exercise, such as a brisk walk each day, cycling etc. All of the above will help you to deal with the pressures of life in general.
- ✓ Think positive - It is important to think positive. Try practicing in your head how you will successfully complete a task or manage a situation.
- ✓ If you can picture yourself coping successfully then you probably will.
- ✓ Keep things in perspective and remember that every problem has a solution.

Appendix 3:

Guidance to Line Managers

You should be aware that colleagues who are suffering stress may exhibit the following signs:

- ✓ Work performance: Reduction in output; poor decision making; deterioration in planning and control of work.
- ✓ Staff Attitude and Behaviour: Loss of motivation and commitment; erratic/poor time keeping Working longer hours but for diminishing returns.
- ✓ Relationships at Work: Tension and conflict between colleagues; poor relationships with students; increase in disciplinary problems
- ✓ Sickness Absence: Increase in overall sickness absences especially short frequent periods

You can minimise stress in your team by:

- ✓ Ensuring that you are accessible to employees to discuss problems.
- ✓ Identifying stress, conduct stress risk assessments and introduce appropriate remedial measures within the team.
- ✓ Through the performance management process, ensure that colleagues have adequate and reasonable access to training and personal development opportunities.
- ✓ Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within the team.
- ✓ Monitoring workloads and working hours to ensure that people are not overworked.
- ✓ Monitoring holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement (support staff).
- ✓ Monitoring sickness absence to ensure that important trigger points are identified.
- ✓ Ensuring that colleagues are set clear and measurable work performance objectives.
- ✓ Ensuring that good communication between yourselves and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- ✓ Creating opportunities and an appropriate atmosphere for colleagues to discuss issues of concern.
- ✓ Offering support to staff who are experiencing stress out of work, for example following bereavement