



Stress at Work Policy

for

The ACE Centre Nursery School

This policy was adopted by a meeting of The ACE Centre Nursery School governors:

Held on:

Date to be reviewed:

Signed: **(Chair of Governors)**

Signed: **(Headteacher)**

Introduction

The ACE Centre Nursery School is focused on maintaining a positive and supportive working environment for all employees. We accept that workplace stressors may have a detrimental and negative impact on the school and employees, which could affect absenteeism, health, moral and workplace performance.

Aim

This policy aims to establish an effective and consistent approach to the management and prevention of occupational stress. The school has adopted the approach recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), based on a set of "Management Standards" focusing on six key areas:

- Change
- Control
- Demands
- Relationships
- Role
- Support

Definition

Understanding the difference between pressure and stress is essential to enable employees and managers to determine the severity of events, hazards and situations.

The school adopts the definition of stress used by the HSE

- The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them

Stress: Stress, in itself is not an illness, but prolonged exposure to excessive pressure can lead to psychological conditions such as anxiety or depression. There are also physical health conditions that can be aggravated or caused stress.

Pressure: Pressure is the positive, motivating or driving factor that motivates and inspires people to achieve their full potential. A reasonable amount of pressure enables staff to perform to their capabilities and achieve goals. However prolonged high levels of pressure can lead to the development of stress related symptoms that may impact negatively on workplace performance and personal wellbeing.

Stressors

Stressors are the causes of stress, defined as:

Factors that cause stress: An event that elevates adrenaline and triggers the stress response, unbalancing the body forcing a response. It is accepted that any job can cause stress and that stress is not just caused by workload, boredom and monotony are also a factor.

Presenteeism: Presenteeism occurs if staff attend work when they are unwell or have work or personal issues on their mind which prevent them from working effectively. Presenteeism has a similar impact on the workplace as sickness absence, affecting productivity and morale.

Prevention

Although the school is aware that personal stress, unrelated to the work environment is beyond organisational control, it does recognise that personal stress can have an adverse impact on staff wellbeing and the school community. The school will therefore support staff, wherever possible in stress management, irrespective of the source by:

Promoting the mental wellbeing of all staff through:

- Providing information and training to raise awareness about mental wellbeing
- Providing opportunities for employees to take care of their mental wellbeing through volunteering, attendance of wellbeing groups and social or team events
- Promoting policy and practice that promote wellbeing, such as agile and flexible working policies, where appropriate
- Providing appropriate employee support services, such the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of processes that they can take to minimise the effects of stress upon themselves (5 ways to wellbeing). Whilst promoting staff adherence to their own duty of care, raising concerns with line management and completion of a stress risk assessment
- Fostering a culture which provides practicable and reasonable support, where appropriate, for staff with stress-related or mental health related issues, through implementation of reasonable adjustments
- Monitoring the school's stress levels through surveys, completed every other year
- Monitoring and recording of staff related sickness

Developing skills for managers to:

- Promote and provide sound management practice and appropriate management behaviour
- Promote the wellbeing of employees through ensuring that teams have the opportunity to build successful relationships
- Deal with issues surrounding mental health and stress effectively through coaching and attendance at absence management courses
- Undertake stress risk assessment action planning
- Complete the Stress Management Competency Indicator tool, if appropriate; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm>
- Discuss health and wellbeing with staff at one-to-one's, team meetings and appraisals, focusing on work related pressures and levels of staff resilience, associated with change and service demand
- Seek advice when needed from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Health & safety or HR teams and occupational health services, if advised

- Identify problematic areas through use of sickness absence data
- Monitoring working hours and holidays, ensuring that staff are not overworking and are taking appropriate breaks
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful training and development opportunities
- Ensuring clear lines of communication and reporting structures, providing employees with clear definitions relating to demands and responsibilities reasonable for their post
- Ensure that bullying and harassment of any kind is not tolerated and that inappropriate behaviour is addressed through associated policy

Providing support to employees through:

- Providing a work environment that promotes and supports mental wellbeing
- Providing support upon returning to work following a period of absence relating to mental health issues or stress, including consideration of reasonable adjustments
- Ensuring individuals affected by mental health and stress are treated fairly and consistently and are not pressured to feel guilty
- Investigating the impact of working conditions and other factors to mental ill health and work related stress, rectifying where practicable
- Providing professional support for those employees where high levels of stress are identified

Occasionally managers are required to address performance and conduct issues through disciplinary processes. It is recognised that the prospect of these proceedings or indeed the proceedings themselves may be a source of anxiety or stress for those involved. However this should not in itself prevent managers from undertaking appropriate management action, indeed undue delay in dealing with such processes may result the exacerbation of symptoms, equally failure to address the issue of workplace stress with an employee could also have an adverse effect.

Work Related Stress Risk Assessment and Management Case

The school has a legal duty under the Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace Regulations to undertake risk assessments, identifying hazards in the workplace. Where cases of workplace stress are identified, managers should gain information from the employee relating to the contributory factors perceived and possible solutions. To support this process risk assessment action planning should be completed.

The HSE has identified six key “Management Standards” associated with the primary sources of work related stress. Through completion of the Stress Survey the school focuses on these key standards:

1. **Demands:** Workload, working patterns and the working environment
2. **Control:** How much say someone has in the way they do their work
3. **Support:** Staff receive adequate information and support from line managers and colleagues
4. **Relationships:** Promoting positive working, avoiding conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
5. **Roles:** Clarity and understanding of the role, how to carry it out, how it relates to the immediate team, service and OCC’s wider strategy
6. **Change:** Communication, consultation and management of change

In addition:

- **External factors:** Other factors that can impact upon an individuals ability to cope with work pressure

Employee Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to:

- Raise issues of concern and seek line management support at the earliest opportunity
- Accept opportunities for counselling and other support when recommended
- Complete the stress survey and associated risk assessment if necessary