



Staff Stress Management Policy

At Parsons Green Prep we recognise that we all work under some pressure and for most people, most of the time, this enhances performance. However, staff and managers need to consider the following issues:

- Where an employee is known to suffer from stress or have a mental health problem, extra care should be taken.
- Signs of stress or complaints from an employee who is known to be at risk should not be ignored.
- You should know the risks placed on employees; ignorance of the facts is not acceptable in law.
- We should provide safe systems of work for everyone.

What employees and managers can do to help

Stress may be a consequence of factors at home and/or work. You should identify external stressors and what you can do, or ask a manager to help.

Together, you and your manager may feel it appropriate to consider some or all of the following:

- identify stress-related hazards and risks in the workplace
- whether the workload is greater than normal for the particular job
- make sure that you are adopting safe systems of work
- as a manager, adopt good people management skills and be sensitive to the effect that your style of management is having on employees. Changing the style, if it is contributing to employee stress, should not be taken as relinquishing your right to manage
- make sure everyone receives fair and equal treatment
- do not allow bullying or harassment to take place - take immediate action
- meet with employees when they return to work after sickness absence - this may help identify concerns before they become a problem
- consider other support we could give that might reduce stress at home

Some of the symptoms of stress

- irritability
- withdrawal from social groups
- emotional outbursts which are out of character
- apathy
- negative thinking
- mental exhaustion
- irrational thinking
- difficulty in making decisions
- being difficult
- behaviour which is out of character

People react to stress in different ways. It is also important to remember that the above symptoms are not necessarily an indicator that an employee is suffering from stress as

everyone is different.

Managing employees who are suffering from stress

If someone at school is suffering from stress, here is a range of options to consider:

- referral to a GP or external counsellor
- reallocation of some duties on a temporary basis
- reassess allocation of work in the team – is it fairly distributed?
- reassess targets – are they realistic?
- training and coaching where time management is an issue
- training or coaching where employees don't have the skills to do the job, particularly if new systems have been introduced
- changes to working practices
- changes to physical working conditions
- more management/supervisory support
- making use of flexible working practices, such as a staged return to work
- make a full assessment of the employee's situation and do what is reasonably practical to adjust that person's working arrangements on their return

If someone in your school is off work with a stress-related absence

Management of the school should consider whether or not a home visit is appropriate. The Headmaster needs to telephone the employee to ask their permission. You must make it quite clear that you would like to visit out of concern for the employee's health. You must also be sensitive to the employee's needs and what may cause further stress. In any event some form of contact should be made with the employee, whether it is by you or one of the employee's colleagues on your behalf. Before carrying out a home visit or making contact you should consider what support you can offer where the stress may be work related.

If the absence exceeds six weeks, you should consider inviting the person in to see you or a more senior manager. The employee should be allowed to bring a relative or friend and you should also have someone else present. The purpose of the meeting will be to find out what support you can provide which will help the employee return to work.



When an employee returns to work after a stress-related absence

You must monitor the situation very carefully. You must conduct a return to work interview and you should discuss and agree what you can do to help. This should be put in writing. You should also make clear to the employee that if they feel that a work situation will cause them to be ill, they must bring it to your immediate attention. You should also arrange to see them regularly to make sure that action promised is taking place, that they do not suffer a relapse and to provide them with support.

If after considering all the options and implementing what is reasonably practicable, the employee still feels that they will be stressed in particular situations, or in effect the employee is incapable of doing their job, they may need to be advised to go home and see their doctor for a medical certificate.

Assessing the risk of stress

Harmful levels of stress are very difficult to predict. An employee's ability to deal with work pressure is affected by a number of factors including their home circumstances and personality. This should be taken into account when assessing the risk relating to an individual employee.

Carry out a risk assessment in the usual way

- identify the stress risk factors
- decide who might be harmed and how
- evaluate the control measures
- record the assessment
- inform employees
- implement the control
- review regularly

Some hazards are difficult to assess, for example gauging whether or not workloads are too heavy and therefore a hazard. As a rule of thumb, if you believe they would cause the average healthy person working at that level to be ill from stress, they should be classed as a hazard.

Some possible causes of stress at work

WORK DEMANDS

- dealing with pupils or parents where there is a risk from physical violence
- dealing with pupils or parents where there is risk from sexual or verbal abuse
- introduction of new technology
- any form of change which affects the job or job holder
- too much or too little work
- too complex or too simple work
- unclear work objectives
- responsibility for people, whether it be other employees or pupils
- coping after a traumatic incident



PEOPLE

- relationships in the team
- relationships with pupils, parents and staff
- management style

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- poor classroom organisation
- poor lighting, noise or uncomfortable temperature
- poor equipment
- working with hazardous materials
- lack of support and poor management

Assessing risk and control measures

For the hazards you have identified, determine whether the risk of illness from stress is high, medium or low. Then consider what reasonable and practicable measures can be introduced to eliminate the hazard. Where the hazard cannot be eliminated, consider what reasonable and practicable measures can be taken to reduce and/or control the risk.

Possible action to reduce or control risk from stress

- consider whether or not training or coaching would help
- introduce safer working practices
- make sure relevant policies are followed, such as monitoring verbal abuse
- consider reallocation of workloads
- consider whether tasks which are not adding value can be dispensed with
- consider changes to the physical environment (e.g. heating, lighting etc.)
- provide information on reducing stress to employees

BE A GOOD MANAGER

- listen to an employee's requests and view on what might be done
- involve employees in the evaluation and management
- know your employees, their strengths and weaknesses
- make sure each team member has been trained to do their job
- recognise and praise good achievements
- show people that you value them and their job
- be fair and ensure equality of opportunity
- communicate with your team
- hold regular team meetings
- set clear, realistic objectives and targets
- monitor and evaluate the achievement of targets and provide feedback
- treat each team member as an individual and with respect
- where there are problems speak to the employee in private
- do not allow harassment or bullying - act immediately
- know what personnel policies help balance demands of home and work
- help newly appointed employees become competent and feel valued
- look out for symptoms of stress and changes in behaviour



- support employees through bad patches

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