

Stress at Work policy

Adopted from LBC policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The school aims to encourage a positive and safe working environment for its diverse workforce in accordance with its legal obligation and its duty of care. It is recognised that harmful stress may exist within the workplace and the school is committed to protecting its employees from the negative effects of such stress. This may include “risk assessing” individual jobs and introducing stress related matters as part of normal regular supervision.
- 1.2 The school aims to foster a positive culture, not simply to meet its legal obligations but to contribute to physical and mental well-being for the benefit of the individual and the school.
- 1.3 In certain instances this policy will need to be read in conjunction with other school policies (such as the Harassment and Bullying Policy).

2. Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of the Policy is to inform all employees of:
 - the schools commitment to help employees experiencing harmful stress at work. (Defined at section 5.)
 - the actions that Headteachers, Senior Leadership all other employees are expected to take to prevent, identify and reduce harmful stress at work.
 - the support available to employees experiencing harmful stress.

3. Policy Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The overall aim of this policy is to create a working environment where all employees can feel confident that they can declare their feelings of stress, without fear of reprisal and censure, and that they will be supported in dealing with the effects of harmful stress by anyone who works for the school that they come into contact with.
- 3.2 The more specific objectives of this policy are:

To: **prevent** harmful stress by increasing awareness, undertaking risk assessments, managing the work and people (including ourselves) effectively and making sure people have the equipment, skills, knowledge and information to do their jobs;

recognise harmful stress as soon as possible, and resolve the issues and solve the problems; and

rehabilitate and manage the recovery of people suffering from harmful stress.

4. Scope of the Policy

- 4.1 This policy applies to all employees irrespective of their role within the school.
- 4.2 Every employee is expected to treat their fellow employees with dignity and respect and safeguard their fellow employees’ health and safety in line with current legislation and best practice.

5. Definition of Stress

- 5.1 The school supports the Health and Safety Executive's current definition of work related stress as "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them."
- 5.2 Stress is not an illness but a reaction to pressure, which can lead to an illness. Positive pressure at work is healthy; it helps our adrenaline flow, keeping us alert and active.
- 5.3 In this policy, harmful stress is defined as an unwanted, unproductive set of feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

6. Who is Responsible for Preventing and Managing Harmful Stress?

- 6.1 Everyone. Everyone must respect, value and care for themselves and every other person they work with demonstrating this in everything they do and say.
- 6.2 The school aims to preserve confidentiality, except in exceptional cases, so before breaking a confidence relating to another person's stress, advice should be sought from HR.
- 6.3 Everyone in the school has a duty of responsibility to look after the health and well-being of themselves and other people.

7. Rights and Responsibilities of all Employees

- 7.1 Every employee has a right to freedom from excessive pressure at work. Any individual who believes himself or herself to have been subject to excessive pressures at work has the right to ask for it to stop. In response to such a request, the school will make sure a work related stressor assessment is carried out. Wherever possible this assessment will be carried out within 10 working days, excluding school closure periods.
- 7.2 Every employee has a responsibility to ensure that he or she does not encourage, overlook or excuse a working environment or working practices, which create excessive pressure. Such behaviour is unhelpful and may go against this or other schools policies and could result in the use of the grievance, disciplinary or capability procedure.
- 7.3 Every employee has the right to seek support from and offer support to colleagues.

8. How to Prevent and Manage Harmful Stress?

- 8.1 Headteachers **must**:
 - 8.1.1 Make sure that people are given clear and measurable objectives and the time, resources, skills and knowledge to achieve them. Prioritise work so that things get done well and individuals aren't overloaded and/or confused about the school's aims.
 - 8.1.2 Analyse their own management style, and that of others, to make sure it's effective and makes employees feel valued. Remembering that simple requests from them can be interpreted as commands – with all the associated pressures this causes employees.
 - 8.1.3 Motivate and develop employees.
 - 8.1.4 The stress policy recognises that it can get very "lonely at the top". Senior leaders are able to use any of the support packages available. They may feel uncomfortable doing so and some may have strategic and work/service issues which they'd prefer to share with someone who has had similar experiences. What is important is that they seek support from somewhere.

8.2 Managers **must:**

- 8.2.1 Make sure each team member knows their job purpose and what they should achieve.
- 8.2.2 Set performance standards, and provide individual or team objectives that are specific, measurable, stretching and achievable.
- 8.2.3 Monitor work output and performance. Appraise people at least once a year, train, coach and develop them. Value them. Use the coaching model of asking them to explain any problems and causes and involve them in the problem solving and decision making processes.
- 8.2.4 Ensure new and existing staff receive a copy of the stress policy.
- 8.2.5 Apply the stress policy and the other key policies that integrate with it effectively (summarised at appendix 1).
- 8.2.6 Keep calm during all discussions –Remember the person needs supporting.
- 8.2.7 The stress policy recognises that leaders and managers have a very difficult job. They have to balance the needs of individuals, the team and the organisation with “getting the job done”. The support packages are as much for them as anyone else. No one should suffer in silence if they’re under pressure and the strain is becoming too much.

8.3 **Employees must:**

- 8.3.1 Treat anyone they come into contact with through work with dignity, care and respect. Show they value them.
- 8.3.2 Talk to their manager when the pressure gets too much. Discuss and resolve the issues before the pressure leads to harmful stress in them or other people.
- 8.3.3 Make sure they don’t go along with or create a working environment or practices that result in excess pressure on them or anyone else.
- 8.3.4 Look after themselves and others, making use of the training and support packages available whenever they need to.

9. **What support is there?**

9.1 **Managers**

Managers are the people most likely to be able to help solve problems - whether or not they’re related to harmful stress. They are able and willing to work in partnership with individuals. Employees are therefore encouraged to seek the advice and support from their line managers when they are experiencing issues at work.

9.2 **The External Counselling Service**

The School buy into an external Employee Assistance Programme - AXA. This is a confidential 24-hour telephone, email and web support service. Employees can call the service as often as they need to and at any time.

To contact this service, please ring 08000 727 072 or visit www.axabesupported.co.uk

AXA holds copies of all our policies and procedures and can support individuals on work related issues.

The role of the Employee Assistance Programme is to:

- listen and try to understand
- help people think about ways to overcome or cope with problems
- help make decisions which are right for individuals
- suggest referral to other specialists.

9.3 **The Trade Unions**

A list of trade union representatives is available in the Personnel Handbook

http://www.luton.gov.uk/Education_and_learning/Schools_and_colleges/schools-staff/personnel-handbook-for-schools

The trade unions have a long history of supporting union members who are experiencing work related problems and/or who are involved in procedures like discipline, grievance, sickness absence, capability and redeployment.

9.4 **The Occupational Health Team**

The Occupational Health team can be contacted on 547202 or 546373 or 546374.

The Occupational Health Advisers will:

- listen
- be supportive
- help you deal with the emotions arising from harmful stress-or refer you to an appropriate person
- help you bring situations to the attention of management
- aim to help you and management identify possible solutions
- try to help you manage long or short term stress related absence
- advise on re-assimilation support - for example phased return to work and other reasonable adjustments

9.5 **The Health and Safety Team**

The LBC Health and Safety team can be contacted on 546299.

The Health and Safety team will through the Corporate Training programme:

- provide you with training to carry out workplace inspections
- provide training in the management and awareness of health and safety

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Governing Body on an annual basis.

Policy updated: April 2020

Staff responsible: Sally Bacon

This policy was ratified by the Governing body/Local Authority on:

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body: _____(signature)

_____(printed)

Appendix 1

Recruitment Policy

Make sure job descriptions and person specifications are clear, full and accurate and clearly understood by all candidates.

Employee Performance Procedure

If someone cannot (as opposed to will not) do their job develop an Improvement Plan to help resolve the issue. Wherever possible support the person to enable them to do their existing job effectively.

Discipline

The primary objective is to solve problems constructively and modify behaviour, not to punish someone.

Grievance

If you're not getting the support and/or solutions you need you're able to use this procedure to help you resolve issues.

Harassment and Equal Opportunities Policies

Treat everyone with dignity, care and respect whether or not they look like you or hold the same values as you.

Induction

Explain the context of people's jobs, the standards they're expected to achieve and their rights and responsibilities as employees.

Talk to them regularly, listen, show you value them and nip any problems in the bud.

Equality in Employment Procedure

Welcome diversity and make reasonable adjustments to make the best use of everyone's skills and abilities.

Health and Safety

Be alert and take action to ensure no-one's mental or physical well being is put in jeopardy.

Training

Make sure you and your teams have the right knowledge, skills and attitude to do your jobs and get on with everyone. Provide development opportunities, coaching and mentoring where appropriate.

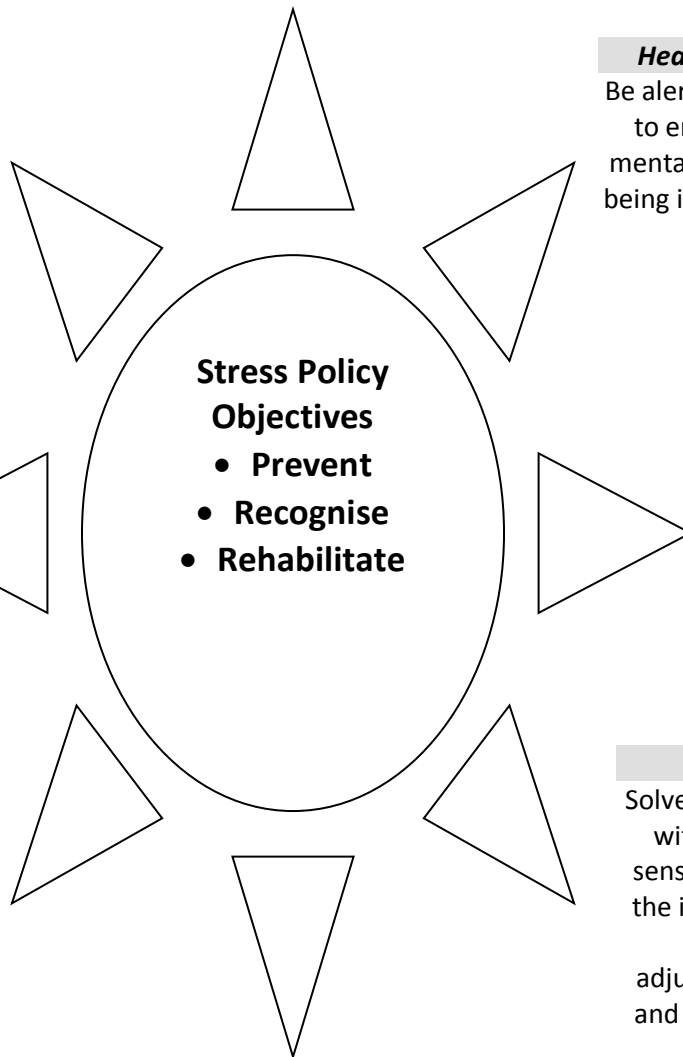
Sickness Absence

Solve sickness absence problems with an open mind and with sensitivity to meet the needs of the individual and organisation. Implement reasonable adjustments where reasonable and as advised by Occupational Health.

Performance Appraisal Policy

Set clear performance standards and objectives, review them regularly (at least once a year).

Praise and constructively criticise performance - your own and that of others. Listen.



Work-related stress risk assessment guidance

1. Purpose

The School has the following risk assessment process in place to ensure that work-related stressors are identified and addressed as necessary in accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

2. Primary causes of work related stress

When considering the likelihood that a work activity could result in employees experiencing harmful stress; it is necessary to first identify potential hazards, or 'stressors'. A stressor is an activity or situation with the potential to result in stress to postholders.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a 'management standard' for examining stress in the workplace, with the aim of helping employers manage the causes of work-related stress. The management standard covers six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity, increased sickness absence and work related stress. This risk assessment template is based on the HSE Management Standards approach. The six areas are:

- Demands – workload, work patterns and the work environment
- Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- Support – the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line manager and colleagues
- Relationships – promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated

3. Undertaking the risk assessment

Step 1 – Identify the stress risk factors or 'hazards' and consider the adverse effects these could cause

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks – Consider the information you have for each hazard, alongside any existing control measures that are already in place to control the level of risk posed by the potential hazards you have identified. The template includes some suggested control measures. Do not include any measures that are not currently in place - these can be included as required actions. You must delete any suggested measures that are not in place or are not relevant. Then assess the risk level posed by the hazard i.e. the severity and likelihood of the hazard, taking the control measures into account.

Step 4 – Record the findings – the template below is designed to ensure the risk assessment is appropriately recorded. Ensure this is kept up to date and that agreed actions are undertaken.

Step 5 – Monitor and Review required actions – Use the template to record actions that are required to reduce the potential impact of the identified stressor. Whilst ideally, the goal should be to remove the hazard, in relation to work-related stress, this may only be possible in limited situations. The next best measure is to identify actions to reduce the hazard or the likelihood of it causing harm. It is recommended that work-related stress risk assessments are reviewed annually. Employees are also responsible for advising their line manager of any changes which may affect the findings.

4. Individual risk assessment

Where an individual member of staff indicates that they may be experiencing stress which is work-related or following a period of absence due to work-related stress, an individual stress risk assessment can be undertaken. Contact HR for further advice.

WORK RELATED STRESSOR ASSESSMENT FORM		
JOB TITLE: POST NUMBERS: NB – if an individual advises that they are experiencing stress which is work related or has a period of sickness absence due to work related stress a separate assessment can be carried out.	Additional information/notes:	
School:	Assessment by:	Date:
	Headteacher/Manager Approval:	Date:

Guidance Notes on assessing a risk score:

The assessment of risk is based on the probability of an event or factor occurring that constitutes a risk to an individual.

The risk exposure is based on two factors – **SEVERITY and LIKELIHOOD**. The **RISK SCORE** is a combination of SEVERITY x LIKLIHOOD.

Make a realistic judgement on the potential outcome of the identified hazard/stressor. The main purpose of the exercise is to identify, prioritise and address actual and likely problems. When assessing the score for each question in the assessment consider the following points:

- How often does the stressor happen – daily, weekly, monthly, annually or less?
- How much control does the postholder have over it – some or no responsibility?
- What are the consequences of the postholder’s actions – very serious, serious or not serious?
- Is the postholder fully accountable for the outcome, or do they have some or no responsibility?

For example, if the stressor occurs often, the postholder has little control over it, the consequences of getting the task wrong are serious and the postholder will held accountable – the score will be high.

Score each stressor as a LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH risk level.

Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
A. DEMANDS				
Does the job have periods with peaks in the volume of work?	postholder	Regular supervision with line manager		
Are there elements of the work that have to be achieved to strict deadlines?		Guidance provided over prioritisation of tasks		
Does the job require long or anti-social hours or shifts to be worked?				
Are there serious immediate consequences for the jobholder if work is not completed accurately or on time?		Appropriate staff training		
Does the job require making decisions that directly affect the well-being of others?		Employee Assistance Programme Policy guidelines HR support Training		
Does the job involve 'boring' or repetitive work? Are there periods with less or insufficient work to do?				
Are there adequate and appropriate resources to complete the required tasks?				
Does the job involve working in difficult working conditions? (temperature/light/noise etc)		Personal Protective Equipment Training Risk assessments completed where required Work environment concerns are taken seriously and investigated		

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B. CONTROL				
To what extent can the jobholder manage their own workload?	postholder			
Does the job involve fixed deadlines?				
Can the jobholder determine the timing of their breaks?				
Does the job's work pattern inhibit the job holder's ability to access necessary training?				
To what extent can the job holder use their initiative or the opportunity develop their skills?		Personal development discussed via one to one meetings		
Does the job allow the jobholder to balance the demands of work and life outside of work?				
Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
C. SUPPORT				
Does the job require the jobholder to work alone or away from other team members?		Team meetings Regular face to face/phone/email contact with line manager		
Is support from team members or colleagues readily available and accessible?				
Does the jobholder have infrequent opportunity to have direct contact with their line manager?				
Does the jobholder receive feedback on how the job is done?		Regular one to one meetings		
Are there aspects of the role that may be emotionally demanding? Is relevant support available?		Employee Assistance programme Manager support		

Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
D. RELATIONSHIPS				
Does the job require the jobholder to manage difficult or challenging behaviour from others?		Behaviour Policy Relevant training provided to help staff deal with difficult situations		
Does the job require employees to frequently deal with confrontational situations/conversations, by phone, email or face-to-face?		Access to appropriate training Employee Assistance Programme		
Is the jobholder exposed to possible physical violence?		Access to appropriate training		
Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
E. ROLE				
Is there a wide variety of different roles in the course of carrying out the job? i.e. does the jobholder have to wear different 'hats'?		Performance management process used to help individuals clarify their role		
Are there frequent conflicting demands on the time and skills of the jobholder?		Clear objectives and priorities set through performance management process		
Does the job require the jobholder to balance conflicting guidance/direction from different stakeholders?				
Is the remit and responsibilities of the job clear to the jobholder? Are there conflicting roles within the School?		Induction process completed Review job description at appraisal or as needed Clear team structures in place		

Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
F. CHANGE				
Does the jobholder work in an environment where that is rapid change that must be embraced readily?		Management/colleague support Clear communication of training or guidance Team meetings Access to appropriate training		
Does the job rely on funding or other factors that may affect the jobholder's feelings of job security?		Post holder kept informed of relevant questions Post holder has opportunity to discuss concerns		
Does the job require the jobholder to frequently adapt to new technologies or equipment?		Appropriate training		
Hazard/Stressor	Persons at risk Who might be harmed?	Existing Control Measures What is already in place? (delete or add as appropriate)	Risk Score High/Medium/Low	Required Action and Target date (Further controls to be introduced by whom/by when). When actioned these will become existing control measures and influence the risk score
G. ANY OTHER FACTORS DISCUSSED				