



Merrydale Infant School Stress Management Policy

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1 Guiding Principles

- 1.1 Merrydale Infant School places a high value on maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all its employees and it recognises its duty of care extends to mental health as well as physical health at work.
- 1.2 It is committed to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and well being of all its employees.
- 1.3 Merrydale Infant School is committed to implementing a stress management policy for all employees throughout the organisation. This includes improving the organisational environment through effective and sensitive management, enabling individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work, and providing support for employees whose health and well-being are affected by stress and bereavement.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Employee Absence Management Policy and Procedure – School-based Employees. In that policy stress is referred to thus:

It is important that management action is taken with a view to reducing the risk of employees being absent due to work-related stress, or minimising the potential for further absence when an employee returns to work following a period of stress-related absence. Refer to the council's Stress Management Safety Management Standard.

Where an employee is absent due to stress and does not feel able to have contact with the school themselves, it is acceptable for them to communicate via a representative.

2 Policy Aims

- 2.1 To minimise the number of days lost by stress related absence.
- 2.2 To develop and implement procedures to manage problems that occur within the work place and to support individuals who are suffering from stress.
- 2.3 To increase awareness of stress and methods to combat it.
- 2.4 To offer practical support to staff in managing stress in themselves and others.
- 2.5 To monitor procedures and outcomes, and to annually assess the effectiveness of the policy.

3 Definition Of Stress

- 3.1 There is no universal definition of stress. However the Health and Safety Executive has recently defined stress as .The reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry they can no longer cope. (1999) In its positive manifestation stress can act as a motivational and enabling force, in its negative format however stress becomes harmful and disabling and therefore a potential cause of physical and mental illness.
- 3.2 Pressures can arise from an individual's personal life as well as from work and people vary in their capacity and ability to cope with different types of pressure. Some individuals will recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others will not recognise or acknowledge that they are stressed although it may be apparent to their manager and work colleagues. Although in itself, stress is not an illness, there is evidence that stress can lead to mental and physical ill health
- 3.3 All work has its pressures. We all vary in our capacity to cope with different types of pressure. Some pressure, even when high, can be motivating and a challenge. Pressures that we can respond to effectively are likely to lead to job satisfaction. However, pressures at a level we cannot cope with, even in some cases too little pressure or challenge, are likely to result in stress for the individual. This document is concerned with the negative aspects of stress.

1 *Annual Report HSE 1999*

4 Strategies for Dealing with Stress

4.1 Preventative Measures At An Organisational Level

4.1.1 Merrydale Infant School will...

- a) Establish promote and maintain a culture of consultation e.g Stress questionnaire/ Stress Action Group, participation and open communication throughout the organisation.
- b) Raise the awareness of staff about stress and its causes.
- c) Signpost opportunities for employees to maintain and promote their health and well being.

4.2 Identification and Management

4.2.1 Merrydale Infant School will:

- a) make information available for staff on stress awareness to help them to handle pressures they may encounter, and to recognise stress when it occurs in themselves and others. From May 2015 A Stress handbook will be available from the school office to offer advice and signposting support for staff.
- b) Manage workplace pressures which may affect employees by undertaking regular risk assessments and taking appropriate action to reduce stress. Participation in risk assessments by employees is to be encouraged.
- c) Undertake annual Performance Management reviews with each member of staff to ensure that the work role and tasks match the relevant job descriptions, and to ensure that job descriptions are up to date.

4.2.2 It is in the interests of all to recognise the possible signs of stress.

These may be...

- a) Persistent or recurrent moods:- anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt, and sadness.
- b) Physical sensations/effects:- aches and pains, raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.
- c) Changed behaviours:- difficulty concentrating or remembering things, unable to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, loss of interest in sex, eating disorders, increasing use of tobacco, alcohol, coffee, drugs.
- d) When stress is experienced over long periods other signs can develop, for example, high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, anxiety, long-term depression.
- e) Poor work performance:- less output, lower quality, poor decision making.
- f) Relationships at work:- conflict between colleagues, poor relationships with clients/customers.
- g) Staff attitude and behaviour:- loss of motivation or commitment, poor time-keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.

5 Supportive Measures for Employees

5.1 Merrydale Infant School will...

5.1.1 Identify internal and external sources of assistance e.g unions, HR or the health service for employees with stress. This will include a confidential counselling scheme for all staff who request it.

5.1.2 Provide a range of stress management courses

5.1.3 be committed to developing a Healthy Workforce strategy, where a need has been identified, designed to equip staff who are suffering from stress to access a range of activities which will encourage a healthy lifestyle.

6 Safe Systems Of Work

6.1 Employee Responsibilities

- 6.1.1 All individuals should recognise the importance of training and development as a means of developing competence and well-being in the job. Individuals should take an active part in determining their own training needs in conjunction with the person responsible for his/her performance management.
- 6.1.2 If individuals believe that they are suffering from stress in their personal life they may wish to contact the Headteacher/ deputy or their line manager.
- 6.1.3 if they are struggling to manage their work, then they should contact the line-manager in the first instance to discuss the issues with him/her. If this is not possible then they may wish to contact support signposted on Health & Safety posters or speak to the head or deputy

6.2 Managerial / Supervisor / Responsibilities

- 6.2.1 The Headteacher and line managers have a particular responsibility to be aware of the legal duty as an employer and also to be aware of how to recognise early signs of stress in their employees. It is important for the success of this policy that those with management responsibilities play an active role in its implementation. The responsibilities include:
 - Regular workplace risk assessments must include consideration of stress related factors and action must be taken to minimise the effects of risk upon the individual and the organisation.
 - Observing and evaluating work performance
 - Providing information on the policy and where possible help individuals to overcome their problems before job performance is affected
 - Becoming familiar with this policy, and attending stress management training.
 - Ensuring that absences which may have been caused by stress are acted upon sympathetically and with understanding.
 - Act with sensitivity and tact when dealing with individuals either they suspect of suffering from stress, or who have been diagnosed.
 - Contacting Human Resources promptly when a GP medical certificate is received which indicates that absence is possibly stress related. Guidance will then be provided on the appropriate action to take.
 - Ensuring staff within the management team have received training covering all relevant aspects of their work, including health and safety,

7 Integration With Other Policies

7.1 Recruitment & Selection

- 7.1.1 The full range of tasks and demands of the job should be set out clearly in the job description and should be fully discussed in the interview process. Areas of potential pressure should be identified.
- 7.1.2 All references must seek information about candidates. sickness and absence records for the previous 12 months and must comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 7.1.3 For posts where it is recognised that a higher than normal level of pressure and stress exists, candidates tolerance to stress should become a more important factor in the selection process.

7.2 Induction

- 7.2.1 All employees must receive induction into their jobs. Starting a new job can be a stressful time and a planned induction should help eliminate any concerns.
- 7.2.2 Within the induction programme, the stress policy must be discussed.

7.3 Attendance Management

7.3.1 As part of professional review meetings with staff, all absences should be discussed with the staff member, and underlying reasons identified.

7.3.2 The Headteacher will arrange appropriate communication mechanisms with an absent employee, upon receipt of a GP certificate which identifies a stress related illness, to discuss any underlying causes and to arrange support and assistance if the absence is likely to continue. This is a very sensitive area and further advice can be obtained from the Human Resources Section for appropriate mechanisms.

7.4 Return To Work

7.4.1 Before the employee returns to work the Headteacher will agree a planned return to work with the member of staff

7.5 Training & Development

7.5.1 Many employees experience stress through feeling that they are not adequately trained for their existing job and especially when they move into a new or a changed role. The identification of appropriate training activities should be agreed at the beginning of a new post and reviewed no less than annually in line with the Performance Management Process.

8 Implementation, Monitoring, Audit And Review

8.1 This policy will be implemented from November 2011 and will apply to all Employees at Merrydale Infant School. .

8.2 The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring adherence and effectiveness of this policy and for reporting annually to the Governing Body.

9 Conclusion

Merrydale Infant School recognises that organisational stress requires a broad-based approach to ensuring that people are valued. This policy represents one strand of this and the healthy workforce strategy, which is designed to actively promote health and well being, is another. The Governing Body will actively support all initiatives designed to promote health and reduce stress.