

Sonning Common
Primary School

**STRESS AT WORK
POLICY**

POLICY No. 70 Version 1
Spring 2008

Stress At Work Policy

Stress is defined by the Health & Safety Executive as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them”. Everyone needs a certain amount of pressure to remain alert, motivated and productive and therefore not all pressure is bad. When demands and pressures become excessive or prolonged, some people find that their ability to cope is challenged. This creates a vulnerability which can manifest itself in a range of ill health effects for the individual and can have negative consequences for the organisation in which they are employed.

The intention of our stress policy is not to eliminate stress from the workplace, nor to reduce it to the lowest possible level, but to ensure that it exists at a level commensurate with balancing the good health and well-being of the members of the school.

Aims

Our aims in recognising stress as a factor are that teachers in school will:

- experience levels of stress that are not inappropriate with the maintenance of good health
- have the opportunity to experience varied levels of stress throughout the working day
- have the opportunity to feel proud about their work and the work of the school so that they can feel that the stress they have experienced has been worthwhile
- have the opportunity to relax out of school hours without constantly worrying about their own work and that of the school
- develop a responsible attitude and understanding towards their own stress levels so that they can take action or seek support, long before stress becomes a critical issue within their lives
- develop a responsible attitude and understanding towards the stress levels of colleagues so that they can help and support colleagues who appear to be suffering from undue levels of stress
- develop a responsible attitude and understanding towards signs of stress in pupils so that they can take action and seek to support children who appear to be suffering from stress

Managing Stress

We see stress management as a process of co-operative teamwork and we welcome the involvement of governors, counsellors and medical practitioners in the community. It involves looking at:

- the amount of work a person is expected to undertake
- the satisfaction derived from that work
- the way in which a person’s work is valued by others

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- the amount of time given to a person in which to undertake that work
- the esteem in which that person is held by others
- the individual's self-esteem
- an understanding of the stress involved in teaching
- an understanding of how stress levels vary throughout the school

Responsibilities

1. All members of the school community work towards the school's aims by
 - esteeming the teachers, pupils and all other members of the school as individuals and respecting their rights, values and beliefs
 - fostering and promoting good relationships and a sense of belonging to the school community
 - providing a well-ordered environment in which all are fully aware of behavioural expectations
 - offering equal opportunities in all aspects of school life and recognising the importance of different cultures
 - encouraging, praising and positively reinforcing good relationships, behaviours and work
 - working as a team, supporting and encouraging one another
2. Teachers work towards the school's aims by
 - providing a challenging and stimulating curriculum designed to enable all children to reach the highest standards of personal achievement
 - recognising the needs of each individual child according to ability and aptitude
 - ensuring that learning is progressive, continuous and always rewarded
 - being good role models – punctual, well-prepared and organised
 - having a high personal self-esteem and working hard to develop and maintain the self-esteem of pupils
 - having a positive attitude to change and the development of their own expertise
 - working collaboratively with a shared philosophy and commonality of purpose
 - appreciating the work of other members of staff
 - being positive in their support for each other
3. Pupils work towards the school's aims by
 - attending school in good health maintained by adequate diet, exercise and sleep
 - attending school regularly, minimising term time holidays
 - being punctual and ready to begin lessons on time

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- being organised – bringing necessary kit, taking letters home promptly.
4. Parents work towards the school's aims of reducing stress in children by
- ensuring that children attend school in good health, regularly and punctually
 - providing support for the discipline within the school and for the teacher's role
 - being realistic about their children's abilities and offering encouragement and praise
 - participating in discussions concerning their child's progress and attainments
 - ensuring early contact with school to discuss matters which affect a child's happiness, progress and behaviour
 - giving due importance to home learning activities – hearing reading, assisting in project work and in the learning of spellings, tables and talks.
 - allowing their children to take increasing responsibility as they progress throughout the school

Procedures

In order to continually enhance self-esteem and thus reduce the build-up of stress we note and appreciate the work of all staff both individually and collectively through

- staff meetings in which achievements are noted and commended
- individual discussions between the head teacher and a member of staff
- individual discussions between a governor and a member of staff
- letters to parents
- local press releases and communications with our local community

Stress does not go away and reviewing the stress level within the school is a continuous process. The following strategies are adopted

- open discussion of stress as an issue is arranged in staff meetings and individual discussion
- every stress issue raised is taken seriously and a solution found
- appropriate monitoring of sickness absence is recognised as an essential early warning measure of increased stress

Stress is monitored through recording absence through illness and the reason for the illness. Staff report absences on the first day of any absence. Regular contact is maintained with absent staff and an agreement on the date and form of the next contact is always made. When a member of staff returns to

work after an absence of some length, a meeting occurs between the individual and their manager. The information gathered is recorded.

The Risk Assessment

1. It is the view of the governors of the school that teaching is a high risk profession in relation to stress overload. Each year the head teacher prepares and reviews a set of measures which will allow the school to be operated in such a way that it minimises the level of stress overload which teachers experience.
2. The governors accept that an ill-organised team can be more stressful to work in than a well-run team. The school therefore provides job descriptions for team leaders and ensures that they are aware of best practice in organising and running their team.
3. The school has a policy of continual school improvement which involves all staff in the school. The intention of this is not only to improve the school's achievements but also to lower the stress that staff might feel as a result of working with any specific problems in the school.

