

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY



YSGOL GYNRADD GATHOLIG PADARN SANT

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David Greaney, Chair of the Governing Body

Signed: *David Greaney*



**CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION &
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

MANAGING STAFF IN SCHOOLS

**Stress Management Policy for all School based
staff**

September 2007

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

STRESS POLICY FOR ALL SCHOOL BASED STAFF

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is provided for Governing Bodies and Headteachers as an example of good practice in dealing with employees and work related stress. If the Governing Body chooses to adopt this policy, details should be issued to all staff so that they are fully aware of their rights and obligations. Ceredigion County Council and St. Padarn's RC Primary School recognises and accepts its duties and responsibilities with regard to the health, safety and welfare of all its employees.

The aim of this policy is to reduce the risk of work-induced stress to a minimum, or if possible, to negate it completely.

To achieve the objectives of this policy, the school will:-

- identify those areas of work/circumstances where an unreasonable level of risk exists by carrying out work reviews and implement measures to minimise potential risks;
- such reviews should be performed as a normal part of the day to day management of the School;
- give appropriate training/information to employees who could be vulnerable to stress;
- provide support, counselling and advice to employees who are exposed to stress in situations in work;
- maintain an appropriate reporting and recording procedure.

This policy deals with work-induced stress no matter how it is caused and is intended as a framework document which individual schools can supplement with their own procedures and guidelines reflecting the principles of this policy and the individual needs of the school concerned.

Stress is not an inevitable result of work. Staff suffering from stress are not weak or to blame.

STRESS POLICY

Introduction

The Governors Body is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of the school workforce and recognise work-related stress as an organisational issue. The Governors acknowledge the requirement under the Management of Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Regulations, 1999 to assess and control the risks arising from work-related stress.

This policy will apply to all school employees. The Governing Body will delegate to the Headteacher the responsibility for the implementation of the policy and ensuring there are the necessary resources available.

Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as:

“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry that they can’t cope”

This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health.

Policy

- Following the HSE guidance HSG218 - “Tackling work-related stress” the school will proactively identify workplace stressors and provide suitable strategies to eliminate or minimise the risk of stress amongst the school workforce.
- After a stress risk assessment has been carried out, the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce stress will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- All staff will be encouraged to consult with their trade union representatives around issues relating to work-related stress.
- Training will be undertaken by designated school staff on stress awareness and how to carry out a stress risk assessment
- The personnel provider for the school will provide easy access to confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Governing Body

- Ensuring that the school has a Stress Management Policy and that the Headteacher has sufficient and suitable resources to enable effective delivery of this policy.
- Responsible for arranging and conducting a stress risk assessment for the Headteacher. Following the stress risk assessments the Governing Body will ensure that an action plan is jointly agreed with the Headteacher to reduce work-related stress factors
- Monitor the implementation of the stress policy through requesting updates from the Headteacher
- Receive reports from the Headteacher on stress-related sickness absence within the school
- Review the policy within 12 months of its implementation and then every two years

Headteacher

- Develop and encourage a positive style of management, which is supportive towards all school staff affected by both work-related stress factors as well as external stress factors e.g. divorce or bereavement.
- Be responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all school staff.
- Attend training on stress risk awareness and where appropriate stress risk assessments along with other senior members of the school's management team
- Carry out and ensure the implementation of measures to minimise employee exposure to stress.
- Ensure that the physical working environment is free from stressors such as excessive noise levels, inadequate space etc.
- Ensure effective communication between management, trade union representatives and employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.

- Ensure school staff are appropriately trained and resourced to effectively carry out their duties.
- Ensure that through performance management and Supervisory systems all staff are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities.
- Ensure that workloads are realistic and manageable.
- Ensure that employees are aware that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within the school
- Recognise that from time to time, staff may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work and which may have a temporary influence on their work performance e.g. bereavement or separation
- Ensure the school's sickness monitoring information is up to date and identifies any stress related illness whether work related or as a consequence of external stress.
- Treat all discussions with staff around personal stress factors as confidential unless the member of staff gives written agreement for disclosure
- Upon identifying that an employee is suffering from stress or a stress related illness, carry out a stress risk assessment around that individual and associated work-related stress factors.
- Following stress risk assessments for individuals, ensure that an action plan is jointly agreed between the Headteacher and the member of staff involved to reduce work-related stress factors
- Review the action plan at regular intervals agreed between the two parties to ensure the effectiveness of any control measures put in place.

Local Authority

- Provide training for school staff in stress awareness and the control of stress factors through the risk assessment process.
- Provide support and guidance to schools in completing the sickness absence returns
- Provide details of courses staff can access on how to identify and manage their own individual stress factors.

- Support individuals who are stressed and advise them and their manager on support available.
- In cases of long-term sickness absence due to stress, this may include a planned/phased return to work.
- At the request of the Headteacher or individual employees make referrals to Occupational Health and / or external counsellors as appropriate.
- Provide support through the At-Risk procedure to those employees who have been medically identified as unable to continue their normal duties or substantive posts.

School Staff

- Have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and should therefore co-operate with management in stress reduction measures including attending any training provided.
- Where staff recognize that they may be suffering from stress, either work-related or due to external stress factors, which may impact upon their work performance, they should raise this with the headteacher or their line manager or alternatively with their trade union representative.
- Where staff feel it inappropriate to discuss issues around stress with their Headteacher, line manager or trade union representatives, they have the option to self-refer to a confidential counselling service provided for all staff within Ceredigion County Council.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Trade Union Representatives and Safety Representatives

- Representatives will be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could induce stress.
- Representatives must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys.
- Representatives must be meaningfully involved in the stress risk assessment process.

- Representatives should be allowed access to collective and anonymous statistical data
- Safety Representatives should conduct joint inspections of the workplace with headteachers or line managers at least every 12 months to ensure that environmental stress factors are properly controlled.

Support and Counselling

The school has access, via. the LA, to Stress Management courses designed to enable senior members of staff to recognise the signs of stress amongst their employees and to enable staff to develop their own skills in preventing the development of high stress levels. (General individual guidance on “Coping with Stress” is also included as Appendix 1 for those members of staff who may be experiencing high levels of stress in domestic situations).

In addition, an independent stress counselling service is also available. Staff experiencing high stress levels can access this service in strict confidentiality via. the Education Departmental Personnel.

Other organisations such as the Teacher Support Network via. the TBF are also available as a source of professional support (Telephone Helpline No: 020 7554 5222).

NUT - “Teacherline” free on 08000 562561
ATL - Stress Helpline on 08705 234828
SHA - SHA Helpline on 0116 299 1122

STATUTORY STANDARDS

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974 (Section 2).
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1992 Regulations 3 & 4.
- *Duty of Care* under common law and Unfair Contract Terms Act, 1977.
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1995.

COPING WITH STRESS

Neither the 'fight' or the 'flight' response is right for every stressful situation. Sometimes it's best to tackle problems head on and sometimes it's better to give yourself time to think. This ideal way to cope with stress in your life is to recognise the signs of stress in yourself and actively choose the best response for you.

Everyone has a different idea of what is stressful and what isn't. Some people are happiest when their phone is ringing constantly with more problems to solve, while others prefer the quiet life. So, although the underlying response of our bodies to stress is the same, the way we behave under stress is different for each person. Similarly, the way we cope with stress is different too.

It is important to realise that everyone experiences stress at times and that to admit it is not a sign of weakness.

There's no magic solution to coping with stress, but here are a few things that seem to work for most people:-

- Analyse the causes of your stress to identify those factors, which have added to the pressures enough to make them unacceptable. Discuss the causes of stress with a close friend/colleague/line manager, who can support you in your analysis.
- Prioritisation of tasks and agreement on reasonable and achievable deadlines.
- Plan your day. You'll be amazed how much extra time you can have if you plan well.
- Exercise: After a hard day, you may just want to slump in front of the TV, but a bit of exercise might make you feel better that much faster. Swimming, walking or aerobics can also help you unwind and give you additional health benefits.
- Relax: Find out what helps you relax most and keep on doing it.

Staying Relaxed

If you adopt some of these suggestions, you'll find you can help yourself to become calmer and more relaxed. The thing to do is to keep working at it, don't just try for a few days and drift back to your old lifestyle. Work out a routine that includes some of the suggestions above and stick to it. If you eat a balanced diet, if you don't smoke or drink too much, if you take regular exercise and try to relax more, you'll soon feel the benefits of being less stressed. Above all, remember to enjoy life, that's the best cure for stress you can have.