GREENSIDE SCHOOL

Work related stress guidance

Presented to governors May 2017
To be reviewed Summer 2020

This guidance has been negotiated with the professional associations / trade unions and is recommended for use.

Contents:

1. Scope and objective

This guidance is designed to cover all employees of Greenside school. This guidance does not constitute a policy nor does it form part of any employees contract of employment.

The governors at Greenside school recognise that the management of work related stress has grown in prominence in recent years. It is acknowledged that work related stress can affect anyone regardless of their seniority and length of service. This document therefore offers guidance to all staff in identifying and reducing excessive workplace pressures.

The purpose of this guidance is, as far as it is reasonable, to:
• raise awareness of the school's duty of care, and ensure that managers responsible for staff have an understanding of the term and potential causes of work related stress
• identify the causes of work related stress, and as far as is reasonably possible, ensure they are addressed as appropriate, with relevant reasonable measures introduced to control the risk to health
• promote reasonable steps that can be taken in supporting an employee back to health
• ensure the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined and understood in order to achieve successful management of work related stress

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This guidance is supported by and should be read in conjunction with the schools' policies, particularly; Health & Attendance, Leave of Absence, Bullying & Harassment, Flexible Working, Disciplinary, Capability and Grievance. The appropriate and timely use of the various policies available can help reduce instances of work related stress.

2. What is stress?

Stress is defined by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them".

It should be noted that this definition does not see stress and pressure as one and the same. It is widely recognised that pressure has a positive influence on performance and wellbeing if managed correctly, whereas excessive pressure can be detrimental to the mental and physical health of an employee.

Both the school and the employee should try to identify at what point pressure may become excessive, and for management to implement reasonable adjustments to ensure the avoidance of excessive pressure which may be detriment to the health of their employees.

It is reasonable for management to assume that:
- employees in a school environment will be subjected to periods of pressure at work
- employees are psychologically capable of withstanding reasonable pressures at work
- sustained and / or excessive pressure at work over long periods of time can result in anxiety, depression and/or a poor work-life balance. This is commonly considered to be work related stress and can be detrimental to the physical and mental health of employees

3. Potential Causes of work related stress

The potential causes of work related stress are many and varied, and can in truth relate to an individual's perception of a situation i.e. something one person perceives to be a stressor, another may not. The HSE has identified six factors that can lead to work related stress if they are not managed properly, these are;

3.1 Demands
- Do employees perceive they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs?

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment. The impact of high demands can be reduced if the employee is able to have a high level of control over their work.

3.2 Control
- Do employees perceive they are able to have a say about the way they do their work?

Consider how much say the person has in the way they do their work. The impact of high demands and low control can be reduced by having high levels of support, either from colleagues or from you as their manager.

3.3 Support
- Do employees perceive they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors?

This could include encouragement and/or resources provided by line management and colleagues. Support can range from a simple conversation, to an OH referral. If further advice on management support is required please contact the School's HR advisory team.

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3.4 Relationships

- Do employees perceive they are subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work?

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Relationships can be one of the biggest sources of stress, especially where there are problems like perceptions of bullying and harassment.

3.5 Role

- Do employees perceive there to be a lack of understanding around their own role and / or responsibilities?

This could include whether or not the employee understands their role within school and whether their manager ensures that they do not have conflicting roles. Problems with the role are probably the easier problems to solve, as a simple conversation can often lead to clarification and a greater understanding on both sides of both the perceived problem(s), and the expectations of management.

At Greenside it is recognised that due to the emotional, medical and sensory needs of our learners, staff may need to take time out of the class. Every member of staff is entitled to request time out of the room. If cover is required a member of the SLT must be informed immediately.

3.6 Change

- Do employees have a perception of disengagement from organisational change?

Consider how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation. Change does not have to be at an organisational level to have an impact on individuals or teams, for example, changes in team members, line managers or the type of work or technology used by the team can be just as stressful.

Understanding that these six factors can cause stress for employees can help employers and managers answer the questions:
- Does the school or a particular department / team have a problem with stress?
- if 'yes', what do we need to do or change to reduce that stress?
- if 'no' what do we need to do to prevent stress becoming a problem in the future?
- as a supportive first step, identifying where the stressors are can be helpful. Tools such as an Individual Assessment Form (appendix 2) can be useful here
- good practice guidance for each of the above factors can be found in the Management Standards section of the HSE website, which can help you to encourage a proactive approach to preventing and managing stress in the workplace; http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

4. Duty of Care

The case of Walker v. Northumberland County Council (1995) established the precedent that an employer can be held liable for mental injury to an employee caused by work related stress. This judgement underlined the employer's duty of care to provide safe systems of work in respect of occupational stress as well as other hazards and to take steps to protect employees from foreseeable risks to mental health.

Although the employer is under no legal duty to prevent ill health caused by stress due to problems outside of work (e.g. domestic and/or personal issues), it is recognised that out of work problems can make it difficult for employees to cope with the pressure of work, and that their performance at work may suffer as a result. The school should therefore try their utmost to empathise with the employees' situation without undue interference, and through measures such as an Occupational Health referral or the schools

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Employee Assistance Programme (if appropriate), should look to support the employee where possible, with a view to enabling the employee to achieve emotional wellbeing and their full capacity.

5. Recognising the signs and symptoms of workplace stress / mental health conditions

Symptoms of workplace stress or mental health conditions can be many and varied depending on the individual and their circumstances. The below list of common symptoms is not exhaustive and will not occur in every case, but is a guide which may help you identify work related stress and mental health concerns sooner, both in yourself and staff you line manage.

5.1 Cognitive symptoms
- memory problems
- difficulty concentrating
- anxiety
- mind racing or blanking
- only seeing the negative
- feeling suspicious / defensive
- (over) sensitivity to criticism

5.2 Emotional symptoms
- irritability / short temper
- hostility
- tearfulness
- mood swings / heightened emotion
- loss of self-esteem
- lack of self-confidence
- feeling helpless / overwhelmed
- depression / low mood

5.3 Physical symptoms
- fatigue / lethargy
- chest pain / palpitations
- frequent colds / minor ailments
- nausea / dizziness
- sleep problems
- headaches
- agitation / inability to relax

5.4 Behavioural symptoms
- loss of appetite / over eating
- poor punctuality
- withdrawal / isolation
- procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- reduced work performance
- (increased) use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs
- (increased) nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing etc.)

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6. Roles and suggested responsibilities

6.1 Employee
- to apply reasonable management of their own emotional wellbeing at work
- cooperate with management, Human Resources and Occupational Health personnel in relation to the appropriate support and management action
- to raise an area of concern at the first available opportunity with the appropriate person, proposing solutions to how this may be remedied in the short and/or long term

6.2 Manager
- to support individuals who report work related stress through discussion, asking appropriate questions (see appendix 1), identifying stressors (see appendix 2) and early resolution where possible through short term measures such reasonable adjustments
- carry out stress risk assessments of work related stressors (see appendix 3)
- implement reasonable management strategies identified by the risk assessment
- review risk assessments as appropriate
- implement any adjustments suggested by Occupational Health which are deemed to be reasonable by management. These adjustments should not cause long term detriment to school

6.3 Headteacher
- to give guidance and support to managers regarding the management of stress in the workplace
- ensure there is appropriate communication between staff and managers
- offer additional support for staff suffering from work related stress where practicable

6.4 Governing body
- to promote a healthy workforce

6.5 School's HR advisory team
- to give guidance and support to headteachers regarding the principles of this guidance
- coordinate the provision of internal support services e.g. ill health review meetings and Occupational Health appointments

6.6 Occupational Health
- support School through providing specialist advice regarding work related stress
- support the employee through consultation and advice, particularly if their work related stress has resulted in absence

7. Agencies offering employee assistance, confidential support and advice

Confidential Support and Advice
Mind - Providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Campaigning to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. Accessed via - http://www.mind.org.uk/

Mind in Mid-Herts - The Stevenage Wellbeing Centre at 13 Town Square, Stevenage, SG1 1BP is a one-stop shop to improve your emotional and physical wellbeing. The centre offers a range of services, including self-help groups, training courses and exercise programmes. Accessed via - http://www.mindinmidherts.org.uk/stevenage

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Rethink Mental Illness - Challenging attitudes and changing lives since 1972, helping people living with conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, personality disorders and more to recover a better quality of life. Accessed via - http://www.rethink.org/

Depression Alliance - Depression Alliance has almost 40 years' experience in working closely with healthcare professionals and government agencies, to improve local services and to ensure a healthier, happier life for the millions affected by depression. Accessed via - http://www.depressionalliance.org/

Time to Change - Mental health problems are common - but nearly nine out of ten people who experience them say they face stigma and discrimination as a result. This can be even worse than the symptoms themselves. Time to Change is England's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination. Accessed via - http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/

Teacher Support Network - Teacher Support Network believes no teacher should have to cope with emotional strain alone and is always there to listen. Their dedicated helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Accessed via - http://teachersupport.info/

Appendix 1 – Approaching stress at work / mental health concerns
As a manager, if you have specific concerns or you recognise possible signs and symptoms of stress at work or mental health concerns, it is important that you address these at an early stage. Using a one-to-one meeting or informal discussion to talk to your employee, here are some tips for an effective discussion:
- meet in a private, confidential setting
- be clear about confidentiality, and that you have a duty as a manager to disclose information if you suspect the employee could cause harm to themselves (or others)
- use open questions when talking to the employee to help them open up. A good starting point is to simply ask them how they feel
- listen to what the employee says, do not make judgements or assume everyone deals with stress in the same way
- ask the employee whether there are any problems at work (or outside of work) impacting upon their wellbeing that they wish to talk about
- signpost the employee to interventions which can offer further support (see Section 7), encouraging them to make contact and obtain further support

Questions to ask	Phrases to avoid
How are you feeling at the moment?	You're clearly struggling
I've noticed you don't seem to be your usual self, you seem to be a bit down / upset / under pressure / frustrated / angry etc. etc. Is everything OK?	You need to drop this mood; it's affecting others within the team.
I've noticed you've been late (quite) a few times recently, is everything OK?	Your timekeeping is poor; I'll be keeping my eye on things going forward.

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I've noticed your books haven't been marked in a while and you're usually great at keeping on top of this. Is everything OK?	Your performance is unacceptable at the moment.
What would you like to happen? How? Is there anything I can do to help?	What do you want?
What support do you think you might help?	We're all in the same boat here. Who do you expect to pick up the work you can't manage?
Have you spoken to your GP or looked anywhere else for support?	What do you expect me to do?

As per the Disability Discrimination provision of the Equality Act 2010, it is important to note that the employee is not required to tell you about a health condition or disability; however you can put it to them that should they not disclose a problem, it is hard for you to make workplace adjustments around it.

It should be further noted that if you break confidentiality this could be a breach of the Disability Discrimination provision of the Equality Act 2010.

If you have concerns about yours skills in handling these difficult conversations, then consider developing these skills as part of your professional development, check The Grid for the various courses on offer.

Appendix 2: Individual Stress Assessment Form
Please read and consider the following questions, ticking the appropriate answer.

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I am clear what is expected of me at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I can decide when to take a break	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I know how to go about getting my job done	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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6	I have unachievable deadlines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I have to work very intensively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I have a say in my own work speed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	There is friction or anger between colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	I am unable to take sufficient breaks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	I am pressured to work long hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	I have to work very fast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	I am subject to bullying at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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22	I have unrealistic time pressures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23	I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	I get help and support I need from colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	I have some say over the way I work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	I receive the respect at work I deserve from my Colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	Staff are always consulted about change at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	I can talk to my manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	My working time can be flexible	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34	Relationships at work are strained	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35	My line manager encourages me at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Do you have any additional concerns not covered by this form?

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Appendix 3: Stress Risk Assessment Form

Review and tailor the contents of this generic risk assessment to meet your school's individual circumstances, actions determined as required but not yet in place should be moved from the 'What are you already doing'? column to the "What further action is necessary?' column. Record any other significant findings and actions required to reduce risk further where existing controls are insufficient, assigning these actions to an appropriate manager or member of staff.

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR: All employees	What are you risk assessing? **STRESS** The potential for stress to staff whilst carrying out their day to day role or following a period of intensive or potentially distressing activity or change within the school **NB – if an individual advises that they are suffering from stress or has a period of ill health absence due to stress a separate assessment must be carried out.**	

Establishment:	Assessment by:	Date:
Risk assessment number/ref:	**Manager Approval:**	**Date:**

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Are there excessive job demands **Workload, work patterns and work environment** **Dealing with bad behaviour** **Ofsted inspections**	Staff Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• performance management process in place • regular meetings with staff, both team meetings and one to one/ performance management which would discuss and anticipate workload • ensure that skills and abilities are correctly matched to job (person spec and job description) • head / managers monitor sickness absence data and staff turnover rates • work environment concerns, e.g. temperature, ventilation, noise, are taken seriously and investigated • times and lengths of meetings agreed and adhered to. A limit to after-school meetings as far as reasonable • staff have an opportunity to take a genuine break at lunch time • ensure teachers and middle leaders in particular maintain a reasonable work life balance • governing bodies have considered how they can support the headteacher in terms of work-life balance, new models of leadership, leadership time, career coaching and professional development opportunities				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Control – how much say a person has in the way they do their work	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• staff encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work • staff encouraged to develop new skills to help them. Undertaken new and challenging pieces of work • staff consulted over their work patterns or changes to their work patterns • consideration of the workload impact of each new initiative **before** it is introduced • PPA time in operation, reliable and can be completed offsite • scope for flexible working arrangements considered				

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Support – includes the encouragement and resources provided	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• employees are supported through school policies and procedures • regular team meetings / one-to-ones to discuss emergent issues • staff are aware of the support that is available to them • staff receive regular constructive feedback as part of their performance management • identification of any training needs conducted through performance management • staff can access CPD on a fair and equitable basis • mentoring and coaching available where necessary • schools have the option of buying into the Employee Assistance Programme provided by PPC Worldwide (Positive People Company). It offers online, telephone and face to face counselling on a range of personal and professional themes. • headteacher support service – confidential support service provided for headteachers. •	.			

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Role – whether people understand their role and the school ensures there are not conflicting roles	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• staff understand their role and are suitably trained • performance management used to help individuals clarify their role and priorities • standards of performance agreed • new employees receive adequate induction into their role and objectives • recruitment process in place with Job Descriptions and Person Specifications • effective system of induction for new and supply staff				
Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• staff made aware of why change is happening and key steps for change • realistic timetable set out for change • individuals directly affected are involved in the change process • regular communication and consultation with all those affected • 'open door' policy to help individuals who have concerns • training provided for new / changed roles				

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Relationships – promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• the school promotes positive behaviours: schools behaviour policy robust and adhered to • discipline, grievance and bullying/harassment procedures in place and accessible to staff • managers are encouraged to deal with and staff encouraged to report unacceptable behaviour • training provided to help staff deal with difficult situations • identify ways to celebrate success • explore team building exercises • whole school / departmental activities / events held				

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Undetected / poorly managed stress **Failure to recognise signs leading to more serious ill health** **Repeated ill health through poor managemen t**	Employees Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.	• all incidents of potential / actual work related stress reviewed • advice from HR and/or Occupational Health sought • sickness absence policy in place and adhered to, return to work interviews held remedial action taken as appropriate • all staff encouraged to pro-actively raise issues / concerns with their manager / head • staff awareness of available support improved e.g. counselling, occupational health, GP, employee assistance programmes etc. • school has participated in the wellbeing programme for schools or undertaken HSE survey tool • exit interviews held				

Assessment review date: dd/mm/20yy (usually within one year, or earlier in the event of an incident, a change in conditions or if more frequent review is warranted)

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