

UNITED SCHOOLS TRUST  
Kingsteignton School

# Staff Stress Management Policy

## **Contents**

### Statement of intent

1. Definition
2. Responsibilities
3. Causes of stress
4. Identifying an individual under stress
5. School management
6. Self-management
7. Monitoring and review

## **Statement of intent**

Kingsteignton School is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. Stress and its prevention is a major factor in maintaining the wellbeing of the school's staff, which remains a key priority. In light of this, the school understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed.

The purpose of this policy is to define stress, outline the responsibilities of the school's staff and to advise employees on how to deal with and prevent stress.

## **1. Definition**

- 1.1. The Health and Safety Executive define stress as: “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.” The Health and Safety executive also points out that; “this makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.”

## **2. Responsibilities**

- 2.1. To be able to handle and avoid stress, members of staff, the principal and Board of Trustees will all be expected to take extra care and precautions.
- 2.2. Individual members of staff are responsible for:
- Being able to recognise the early signs of stress in themselves and their colleagues.
  - Supporting co-workers if they become stressed. This may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
  - Undertaking additional training and personal development opportunities.
  - Reporting any incidents of stress, e.g. over-working.
  - Be willing to openly discuss stress.
- 2.3. The Principal is responsible for:
- Organising proper inductions for new starters, explaining the school’s policies and code of conduct.
  - Ensuring all staff have up-to-date, regular training and that they are confident in their ability.
  - Conducting and implementing the recommendations of risk assessments, taking into account the causes of stress.
  - Having regular communication with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress.
  - Monitoring the employee’s workloads and holiday entitlement, ensuring staff aren’t over-worked.
  - Attending all necessary training, keeping skills current and setting a good example for staff.
  - Ensuring that all staff read and understand the policy.
- 2.4. The Board of trustees is responsible for:
- Encouraging stress awareness throughout the school, promoting stress as a serious issue, rather than a weakness.
  - Consulting the Principal on measures to manage stress, including them in any decisions that need to be made.
  - Ensuring the Principal puts measures in place to support staff with stress.
  - Actively trying to eliminate stressors in school.

### **3. Causes of stress**

- 3.1. The school recognises that individuals will react differently to stressful situations and that different people can become stressed throughout their working lives. Because of this it is important that staff understand the different factors that may cause themselves or their colleagues stress.
- 3.2. The following sources of stress can often be attributed to work:
- Over-working or work that doesn't match the employee's skills and ability
  - Fear of change and trying to cope with change, e.g. advancements in technology
  - Insufficient workload or not being able to use skills
  - Lack of job security
  - Poor relationships with colleagues and a lack of involvement
  - Harassment or bullying
  - Crisis management
  - No long-term plan in place
- 3.3. The school recognises staff can also experience stress outside of school, home and personal lives can also prove stressful; bereavement, separation, financial and family problems make people more vulnerable to stress at work. It is common that a combination of stress at home and work can make people stressed.

### **4. Identifying a stressed colleague**

- 4.1. In order to help stressed colleagues, identifying the symptoms of stress is very important. Someone may be suffering from one or more of the negative effects; however, they may not be stressed. When a stressor persists over a longer period of time the indicators become more obvious and acute.
- 4.2. The school will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy work place.
- 4.3. The school has a legal requirement to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of work-related stress.
- 4.4. All members of staff will look out for the following symptoms when identifying a colleague with stress:
- Mood swings and consistently bad moods, such as feeling angry or depressed

- Low self-esteem, loss of confidence, feeling lonely, worthless or overwhelmed
  - Attitude and behaviour, including low morale, feeling unmotivated, poor concentration, lower quality of work, bad timekeeping, difficulty concentrating
  - Noticeable change in behaviours; using drugs, smoking, drinking more alcohol, eating disorders
- 4.5. All members of staff will also look out for physical indicators of stress, which include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Low energy, including fatigue and tiredness.
  - Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation and nausea.
  - High blood pressure, heart disease and ulcers.
  - Frequent colds and infections, due to a weakened immune system.
  - Aches, pains and tension in joints and muscles.

## **5. School management**

- 5.1. In order to positively impact levels of stress in the school, the Principal and the Board of trustees will ensure any changes to the whole school will be implemented to positively affect all staff.
- 5.2. To help manage stress the Principal will:
- Lead by example and encourage staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a life outside of work.
  - Encourage team building; using INSET days to build relationships as feeling comfortable amongst colleagues will make discussing stress easier.
  - Assist with work and help to manage employees' workloads; one of the main contributors to stress is over-working; helping staff manage their workload will make them more relaxed.
  - Provide an employee assistance scheme and work with staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g. a bereavement.
  - Ensure that staff wellbeing is regarded as high priority and is discussed as part of staff meetings and support staff meetings.

## **6. Self-management**

- 6.1. Staff can also make changes to avoid and prevent stress, stress is a problem that should be tackled and not ignored

- 6.2. Staff should be prepared to speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they're feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work.
- 6.3. Staff will take action in order to manage their own stress, these actions will include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Keeping active as a way of releasing emotional intensity and any negative feelings, exercise will also help to clear thoughts and deal with problems more calmly.
  - Managing their workload, establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life is vital.
  - Prioritising work, leaving the least important tasks until the end of the day and concentrating on the work that will make the biggest difference.
  - Avoiding unhealthy habits, such as drinking and smoking, these may provide temporary relief; however, in the long-term unhealthy habits will only create more problems.

## **7. Monitoring and review**

- 7.1. This policy will be delegated to the Principal for review bi –annually.
- 7.2. Any changes made to this policy by the Principal will be communicated to all members of staff.
- 7.3. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.
- 7.4. The next scheduled review date for this policy is February 2023

Date of review: February 11<sup>th</sup> 2021

Next review: February 2023

### **When to use this Tool**

This risk assessment is aimed to assist in the identification of potential work pressures or demands which may be causing an individual to perceive they are feeling under excessive pressure or are feeling stressed.

This form can be completed in any of the following circumstances by:

- A manager and employee, when the employee perceives at any time they are feeling 'stressed' or, they feel they are working under excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them, which they perceive to be having a direct impact on their ability to undertake their role.
- A manager and employee, when the manager perceives the employee to be behaving 'out of character' which may be stress related, or perceives they are working under excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them, which is having a direct impact on their ability to cope and undertake their role.
- A manager and employee returning to work following a period of absence due to stress.
- A manager and employee during part of an annual appraisal (to be kept with employee's personnel file).

In each case the employee and their line manager should discuss the outcome of the risk assessment and agree an action plan (refer to example provided at the end of this form).

If an individual perceives there are workplace stressors when completing this tool, then temporary 'reasonable adjustments' should be considered, alongside an outcomes action plan, to minimise the risk of further harm from those perceived stressors. There is no specific right or wrong method when making reasonable adjustments; rather, these should be negotiated between the employee and line manager.

An employee may choose to seek support from their Trade Union representative which should be supported. The manager may seek advice from their HR Provider.

This risk assessment should not be seen as a one-off exercise. If on initial completion reasonable adjustments have been made, then these should be reviewed at the end of a 4 week period to ascertain their effectiveness.

Further advice about completing this risk assessment can be obtained by contacting the Devon Health & Safety Service by telephone on 01392 382027 or email [healthandsafety@devon.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@devon.gov.uk)

Further advice can also be obtained from the Health & Safety Executive:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

**Please note: This is not a diagnostic tool for medical purposes. It should only be used as a guide to identify perceived or potential workplace stressors / triggers and to assist in the management of these to prevent further harm. If an employee raises concerns in relation to their wellbeing they should be advised to contact their G.P**

**To be completed in all cases**

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Present at the Discussion:</b>	
<b>D.O.B. (for I.D. purposes):</b>		<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Service / Establishment:</b>		<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>		<b>Contact number:</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment :</b>		<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Line Manager:</b>		<b>Role:</b>	

**Reason for completion of the Risk Assessment**

- Member of staff informs Line Manager that they perceive themselves to be experiencing excessive pressure or are feeling stressed
- Line Manager perceives an employee to be behaving out of character which may be stress related and is having a direct impact on their ability to undertake their role
- A return to work following period of absence due to stress
- As part of an audit of whole establishment
- As part of an annual appraisal

**How to complete this risk assessment**

The following table is divided into 6 categories; ***Demands, Control, Support, Role, Relationships and Change***. Within each of these 6 categories there is a list of brief questions which you indicate your preference ranging from 'never' to 'always'. Read the statements listed on the following page carefully. Place a tick in the box which best describes your perception in relation to that statement. Try to average your answer in relation to how you have been feeling over the ***past 2-3 weeks***.

**How to use the results**



Look carefully at each individual answer and for those answered 'Never', 'Seldom' and 'Sometimes' discuss with the member of staff to try and identify their concerns. Record your results in the 'Outcomes Action Plan'.

Please tick the most appropriate answer

	Action States			Desired States			Action States			Desired States			Action States			Desired States	
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
<u>Change</u>						<u>Role</u>						<u>Relationships</u>					
I am provided with information to enable me to understand the reasons for proposed changes						My employer provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities						My employer promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness in the workplace					
I feel that my employer consults me regarding changes and provides opportunities for open discussion						My employer ensures that the different requirements it places upon me are clear and that these are compatible with my role						I share information relevant to my work with colleagues					
I am made aware of the probable impact of any changes to my job						There are adequate opportunities to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts concerning my role and responsibilities						My employer has policies / procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour					
I am given training to enable me to facilitate changes within my job						I have a good understanding of my role and what is expected of me during my duties						I feel that managers deal appropriately with reports of unacceptable behaviour					
I am made aware of time tables for change						My current job role adequately reflects my current job description						There is a supportive team atmosphere and dynamics between the team are good					
I have access to relevant support during change						I know the standards I have to meet in my job						If I had a problem I feel that I would be able to approach my manager					
When change is implemented, I feel equipped to deal with it						I know what I am expected to achieve in my job						The team works positively together					

Please tick the most appropriate answer

	Action States			Desired States			Action States			Desired States			Action States			Desired States	
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
<b><u>Demands</u></b>						<b><u>Control</u></b>						<b><u>Support</u></b>					
My employer provides me with adequate & achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work						Where possible I have control over the pace of my work						My employer has policies & procedures to adequately support me					
My skills & abilities are matched to the job demands						My employer encourages me to use my skills and initiative to do my work						I feel supported by my manager or line manager					
I feel empowered to use my full skills and potential abilities at work in the day to day tasks						Where possible I am encouraged to develop new skills to help me undertake new and challenging pieces of work						I feel able to support and encourage my colleagues					
I feel my skills and abilities are used to their full potential						I have a say when I can take my breaks						I know what support is available and how and when to access it					
In general my job is designed to be within my capabilities						I am consulted over my work patterns and annual leave						I know how to access the required resources to do my job					
My concerns about my work environment are addressed						I feel supported by my employer in line with friendly family policies						I have regular supervision and appraisal from my manager					
I regularly only work my contracted hours						I have opportunities to express my ideas and points of view						I have the right equipment to do my job well					

### OUTCOMES ACTION PLAN

Use this space to record statements the employee has answered 'never, seldom, sometimes' and the agreed action plan you are putting in place to manage these. It may be helpful to consider other resources of support you could build into your action plan.

Category	Current state	Practical solutions	Who will take the work forward?	When?	How will staff receive feedback?	Action completed?
<i>Demands</i> My employer provides me with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work	<i>Seldom</i> Workloads are not planned and peaks often occur during summer when people are on annual leave	Monitor workloads prior to summer break and plan additional help where required	Manager (Name)	End of July	Specific meeting to gauge demand	Yes. [Date]

Continue on separate sheet if required



**Examples of adjustments or other forms of management support to control or reduce work-related stress (NB it is for management to decide if adjustments are “reasonable” and workable for the organisation).**

**Demands**

- Realistic expectations. Consider if the responsibilities of the role are achievable within the agreed working hours, and offer support with prioritisation and monitoring of outstanding work where necessary.
- In the event of acute stress, consider a temporary reduction in responsibilities to make the work more manageable.
- Where an employee raises concerns about work-life balance, consider adjustment to working hours – short, medium or long term.
- Consider ways of meeting learning needs, either formal (for example, internal or external training) or informal (for example, shadowing colleagues or mentoring).

**Control**

- Where possible, support employees in their use of flexible work arrangements – direct them to relevant policies.
- Include an opportunity during supervision sessions to discuss employee development needs.
- Acknowledge varying capacities within the team (within reasonable limits) and how these might fluctuate during periods of stress.

**Support**

- Regular management supervision sessions to ensure that the role is manageable and to catch any concerns at an early stage.
- Create a culture of mutual support within the team.
- Respond promptly to employee queries or concerns, or explain if there will be a delay in responding.
- Ensure that employees have the right resources to fulfil the requirements of their role.
- Recognise a possible need for increased support during times of heightened pressure.

**Role**

- Ensure that Job Descriptions are up to date.
- Ensure work procedures are clearly stated.
- Regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals to reflect on performance and identify development objectives.

**Relationships**

- Consider activities that would enhance cohesive working within the team.
- Respond promptly to evidence/reports of disharmony within the team.
- Take reports of unacceptable behaviour seriously, and ensure that all parties feel supported through any formal processes.

- In the event of a breakdown in working relationships, discuss with the individuals concerned the option of mediation.

### **Change**

- During periods of organisations change, ensure employees are updated at the earliest opportunity. Explain any delays in disseminating information.
- Where possible consult employees at each stage of the change process.
- Help staff feel prepared for the change. For example:
  - In the event of changing roles, ensure that employee learning needs are met.
  - In the event of potential job losses, signpost staff to relevant support.