The Nelson Thomlinson School

Work Related Stress Management Policy

1. Guiding Principles

1.1 The Nelson Thomlinson School places a high value on maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all its employees and it recognises that 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 The Nelson Thomlinson 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.

2. Policy Aims

2.1 To develop and implement procedures to manage problems that occur within the workplace and to support individuals who are suffering from stress.

2.2 To increase awareness of stress and methods to combat it.

2.3 To offer practical support to staff in managing stress in themselves and others.

2.4 To monitor procedures and outcomes, and to review 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 challenging. 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,

4. Strategies for Dealing with Stress

4.1 *Preventative Measures at an Organisational Level*

The Nelson Thomlinson School will:

(a)   establish, promote and maintain a culture of consultation, participation and open communication throughout the organisation, particularly during times of change

(b)   raise the awareness of staff about stress and its causes;

4.2   *Identification and Management*

The Nelson Thomlinson School will:

(a)   make information available for all staff on stress awareness to help them to handle pressures they may encounter, and to recognise stress when it occurs in themselves and others;

(b)   develop risk assessments on hazards that are seen to be causing stress and taking appropriate action to reduce stress.

(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.

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)   for example, when stress is experienced over long periods, high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, anxiety, long-term depression.
(e)   poor work performance – less output, lower quality, poor decision making;
(f)   worsened relationships at work, such as conflict between colleagues, poor relationships with pupils/parents;
(g)   related to staff attitude and behaviour, such as loss of motivation or commitment, poor time-keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.

5.   Supportive Measures for Employees

5.1   The Nelson Thomlinson School will:

(a)   identify internal and external sources of assistance for employees with stress. This will include a confidential counselling scheme for all staff who request it;

(b)   provide access to stress management courses if deemed necessary.

6.   Safe Systems of Work

6.1   *Employee Responsibilities*

(a) 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.

(b) If individuals believe that they are suffering from stress in their personal life, they may wish to contact the head teacher or their supervisor.   If they are struggling with work-based duties then they should contact the line-manager to discuss the issues with him/her. If this is not possible then they may wish to contact the School Personnel Services Provider or the Health and Safety Team for further advice or assistance. The Teacher Support Network is a nationally recognised organisation which can offer support to staff in schools. Telephone 08000 562 561, or via the website www.teacherline.org.uk

(c) The use of a formal system of performance appraisal offers an opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion about work and to explore whether people in your team are experiencing excessive pressure at work.

6.2 *Managerial/Supervisor Responsibilities*

The Head teacher and supervisors have a particular responsibility to be aware of the legal duty as an employer and also to be aware of how to recognise the early warning 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 which must include consideration of stress related factors and action taken to minimise the effects of risk upon the individual and the organisation;
- ensuring that newly appointed employees receive appropriate health and safety induction training which includes the process for reporting concerns which may ultimately lead to stress related illness;
- observing and evaluating work performance;
- providing information on the policy and where possible helping individuals to overcome their problems before job performance is affected;
- becoming familiar with this policy;
- ensuring that all absences are appropriately and consistently recorded
- ensuring that all absences which may have been caused by stress are acted upon sympathetically and with understanding;
- act with sensitivity and tact when dealing with individuals that they suspect may be suffering from stress, or who have been diagnosed as such;
- ensuring that staff have access to the Occupational Health Service once made aware of a stress related illness;
- contacting the Health and Safety Team or the School's Personnel Services provider promptly when a GP medical certificate is received which indicates that absence is possibly stress related.
- ensuring that staff within the management team have received training covering all aspects of their work, including health and safety.

7. Integration with other Policies

7.1 *Recruitment and Selection*

(a)   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.

(b)   All references must seek information about candidates' sickness and absence records for the previous two years and must comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

(c)   Pre-employment health screening procedures must be followed.

(d)   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*

(a)   All employees must receive full and appropriate induction into their jobs. Starting a new job can be a stressful time and a planned induction will help eliminate any concerns. Safety Advice Note (G)12 (revised) provides a checklist for health and safety induction.

(b)   Within the induction programme, the stress policy, and the procedure for reporting concerns must be discussed.

7.3   *Attendance Management*

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

(b)   The Head teacher 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 School's Personnel Services provider or the Health and Safety Team.

7.4   *Return to Work*

Before the employee returns to work, the Head teacher will agree a planned return to work with the member of staff. This planned return should include identifying any changes to the working conditions and must identify the underlying causes and the measures to be put in place to reduce the risk of a reoccurrence. Any such measures should be recorded and fully implemented by those involved.

7.5   *Training and Development*

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 and support activities should be agreed at the beginning of a new post and reviewed regularly in line with the Performance Management process.

8.   Implementation, Monitoring, Audit and Review

8.1   This Policy will be implemented from October 2011 and will apply to all employees at The Nelson Thomlinson School.

8.2   The Head teacher is responsible for monitoring adherence to and effectiveness of this Policy. The effectiveness of this policy will be discussed regularly by the Governors' Health & safety Committee.

9.   Conclusion

The Nelson Thomlinson School recognises that organisational stress requires a broad-based approach to ensuring that people are valued. This policy represents this. The Governing Body will actively support all initiatives designed to promote health and reduce stress.

Reviewed by the Health & Safety & Security Committee October 2011

Review: Every 2 years or earlier if required.

Next review due: Autumn 2013

10 TIPS FOR MANAGERS TO REDUCE ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

1. **Adopt the attitude that stress is not a weakness, and develop this culture in your school.**

    Nobody's perfect, we all have too much pressure from time to time, and stress can result given an accumulation of circumstances. Foster the mindset that it isn't a weakness – it's a strength to admit it and do something about it.

2. **Ensure you are not suffering from stress yourself**

    A stressed manager has a 'knock-on effect' throughout the organisation. Dealing with stress will prevent your staff from suffering, and results in a more relaxed and productive atmosphere.

3. **Analyse your management style and behaviour**

    Ask yourself (honestly) if this is causing any stress. Good management is the best method of reducing organisational stress. A good manager:

    - Ensures a realistic understanding of the workload and time it should take
    - Sets individual work objectives and targets, and consults and discusses before setting them
    - Gives clear, effective instructions
    - Makes sure he/she defines roles and tasks adequately – and discusses priorities
    - In times of high workload, prepares employees ahead
    - Varies work where possible, and provides opportunities for individuals to influence their jobs
    - Delegates effectively, and not just the boring bits
    - Ensures staff have adequate training to do a good job, or coaches where training is needed
    - Gives fast feedback (both positive and negative), and constructive criticism where necessary
    - Is approachable. Admits to weaknesses and takes responsibility for own mistakes
    - Communicates effectively through "one-to-one" appraisals, staff meetings and staff briefings
    - Is flexible in approach
    - Is enthusiastic about the school and role models good practice

    Which of these could you improve upon?

4. **Ensure the working environment is suitable**

    A poor working environment can cause employees a great deal of stress. While this is impossible to change completely, many small things can be done to improve the situation.

5. **Help your staff to cope with change – no matter how big or how small**

    Before introducing a change, listen to the views of your staff. How will it be for them? Where possible, update employees on any changes taking place, and explain the reasons.

    Identify those who resist change and help them to accept it. Listen to doubts and fears, coach and boost self-esteem. Check how things are progressing during and after change.

6. **Improve Communications**

    Where possible, keep employees informed of all changes and major decisions. Listen and hear what they are saying. Act on any good ideas around service improvement.

    Talk to your staff informally and regularly. It will be easier for them to come to you or approach them if there's a problem.

7. **Think of yourself in your employees' shoes**

    What causes your staff stress may be healthy pressure to you, so do not belittle it. If it isn't a problem for you it does not mean it isn't a problem for them. Remember, they may be able to deal with issues that cause you stress.

8. **Do regular risk assessments of your staff to check nobody is subjected to work related stress**

9. **Attend training on Managing Stress and encourage your staff to attend courses on Managing their own stress**

10. **Create an overall environment that promotes well being**

    Remember that relaxed and happy employees will work more effectively, so increasing the organisation's performance and productivity.

    The above tips first appeared in an article written by Dr Rosemary Anderson