



## HEALTH POLICIES

### 4.4 MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This school is committed to protecting, so far as is reasonably possible, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees. We recognise that workplace stress is an issue that can have an adverse impact on those affected and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress factors.
- 1.2 This policy will apply to all those employed by Westonbirt School or Rose Hill Westonbirt School. Heads of Department (HoDs) are responsible for its implementation and the school is responsible for providing the necessary resources.
- 1.3 This policy is not contractually binding on the school and it may be amended from time to time. It applies equally to all employees of the school regardless of status or seniority.

#### **2. Definition and Symptoms of Stress**

- 2.1 This policy will use the following definition of stress as defined by the Health and Safety Executive: "stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". This definition makes the distinction between pressure, which can have a positive effect when managed correctly and stress which can be detrimental to health.
- 2.2 Signs of Stress in Others All staff should be alert to possible symptoms of stress in others which may include: increase in sickness related absence, particularly short term absence; decrease in staff motivation/commitment, work performance and decision making ability; changes in work relationships, e.g. conflict between colleagues; working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness; lack of enthusiasm.
- 2.3 Signs of Stress in Yourself Symptoms to be alert for in recognising stress in yourself include: fatigue, disturbed sleep, aching muscles; loss of appetite, indigestion; dependence on alcohol or drugs; headaches; inability to relax; sense of not being in control; difficulty in retaining information; poor concentration and indecisiveness; increased irritability; change in attitude to work/colleagues; anxiety/depression.
- 2.4 Each member of staff should be alert to these symptoms either in themselves or in colleagues and to take appropriate action to address the issue in accordance with the steps set out in this policy.



### **3. Policy**

- 3.1 The school will seek to maintain a well managed work environment, in which all reasonably practicable steps will be made to keep work related stress to a minimum. Where stress factors are identified, the school aims to work with employees to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to reduce and manage stress.
- 3.2 In order to achieve these policy goals, the school will:
- 3.2.1 take reasonable steps to identify all workplace stress factors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress;
  - 3.2.2 consult with staff/safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress;
  - 3.2.3 provide adequate resources to enable HoDs to implement this policy;
  - 3.2.4 communicate to all staff the content of this policy;
  - 3.2.5 encourage HoDs, wherever possible, to remedy institutional features which create stress; where this is not possible, such issues should be identified and reported;
  - 3.2.6 operate reporting procedures with proper safeguard for confidentiality.

### **4. Responsibilities of Departmental Heads**

- 4.1 HoDs must ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their department. Also, they must sustain a workplace culture in which staff know they can raise concerns, and that their concerns will be treated sympathetically and seriously. It is also important that HoDs are vigilant and offer additional support to staff who experience stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- 4.2 HoDs must ensure that their staff are fully trained to discharge their duties, and have opportunities for career progression as appropriate. Workloads and working hours should be monitored to ensure a fair distribution of work and that staff are not working to excess. There is also a need to ensure that the full annual entitlement to holidays is always taken.

### **5. Identifying the Problem**

- 5.1 Employees who know or suspect they have a stress-related problem, or that they are at risk of developing one, should make an appointment at the earliest opportunity with their respective HoD. The issues of concern to the employee will be fully discussed and appropriate steps will be agreed. If a member of staff suspects that a colleague has or is developing an adverse stress reaction he/she should raise the matter in confidence with his/her HoD.



## **6. Where Time Off is Required**

- 6.1 There may be occasions where stress impacts so negatively on health that individuals have to take time off work. It is the school's objective to minimise such absence by providing support for its staff and to help plan a structured return to work.
- 6.2 Where time off is identified as an appropriate measure, the employee will be on sick leave and entitled to all benefits under the contract of employment. It is important that employees in such circumstances seek immediate advice from their GP or other medical expert since anxiety and depression are medical conditions which can often be effectively treated through medicine and counselling and through a structured return to the work environment.
- 6.3 While the employee is undergoing treatment, the school has the right to obtain confirmation from the GP or advisory body that ongoing treatment is being obtained and to ask for the likely timeframe for return to work. The school may also require the employee to see an independent doctor or other health professional.
- 6.4 Prior to, or on, the employee's return to work, a meeting will take place with the employee and his/her HoD to consider the medical position and the circumstances leading up to the employee's absence. Consideration will be given to an appropriate strategy for the individual to return to work which may include:-
  - 6.4.1 adjustments to the individual's duties, workload or place of work where this can be reasonably be achieved, either on a temporary or long term basis, with consideration of any salary implications;
  - 6.4.2 an initial return to work on a part time or flexible basis;
  - 6.4.3 the offer of a job on a lower level of responsibility on an appropriate salary.
- 6.5 It will be the responsibility of the employee and HoD to ensure that any recommendations resulting from the meeting are implemented and that the employee meets regularly with his/her HoD to discuss any additional steps which need to be taken to mitigate a recurrence of stress.
- 6.6 Where a return to work is unlikely in the foreseeable future, either because of the severity of the condition or where the school cannot reasonably create the changes in working environment that the employee and/or GP or medical expert sets out as a precondition to return to work, then early retirement on medical grounds or termination of employment on grounds of medical incapacity will be considered.
- 6.7 Where stress, depression or anxiety are given as the reasons for short-term, frequent absences the employee's HoD should meet with the employee to seek to address any underlying work problems as soon as possible.



## **7. Where Time Off is Not Required**

7.1 Where a member of staff has indicated that he/she is suffering from stress but does not want to take time off work, the following steps will normally be followed:

- 7.1.1 the employee will meet with his/her HoD to discuss the matter;
- 7.1.2 if recommended by the HoD, the employee will visit his/her GP or an independent specialist for further examination;
- 7.1.3 if time off is recommended by the medical practitioner the employee will take the appropriate time off work;
- 7.1.4 otherwise the employee and his/her HoD will identify reasonable steps which can be taken to mitigate and minimise the factors occasioning stress.