



Love Learning, Love Life



Management of Stress Policy

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POLICY STATEMENT

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS POLICY

1. Introduction

The Embark trust and Family of Schools is committed to promoting the good health and wellbeing of its employees which it sees as its most valuable asset.

The Embark trust and Family of Schools recognises that stress is a problem which could potentially affect all employees. It is committed to managing stress in the workplace.

Nationally, the incidence of stress related illness at work is increasing and this has prompted the Health and Safety Executive to publish six management standards which they have identified as the key areas for focus in relation to work related stress. The detailed guidance forms the basis of the school's approach to managing the potential for workplace stress.

The trust recognises that excessive stress at work may affect any of its employees, undertaking any role at any time, anywhere within the organisation.

Through the consideration of the six stress management standards and the school's Policy, with its associated control strategies, it is intended to reduce the exposure and effects of excessive stress within the workplace to acceptable levels wherever reasonably practicable.

2. Policy

To reduce the risk to health and safety of its employees from undue stress at work to the lowest reasonable and practicable level, the Local Governing Team agrees to:-

- Apply the principles of Risk Assessment to all activities, to identify undue levels of stress and put in place control measures to mitigate the risk.
- Monitor levels of work related stress in the School and carry out a stress assessment of any employee who has been identified as suffering from excessive stress at work.
- Develop safe systems of work and introduce practical preventative measures where unacceptable risks of undue stress are identified.
- Provide appropriate training for managers to help them recognise the

symptoms of stress and give practical guidance on the measures that may be taken to assist individuals suffering from potentially stress related symptoms.

- Provide information to all employees and training where appropriate to enable them to recognise the symptoms of stress and the appropriate measures that may be adopted.
- Provide appropriate support or guidance to any employees who suffer through undue stress at work.
- Monitor and evaluate absence levels due to stress related illness.
- Evaluate and review the effectiveness of the Policy and procedures as required.

3. Implementation

The Headteacher shall have responsibility for ensuring that all employees are made aware of the procedures laid out in this Policy and for taking action in relation to identified potential causes of workplace stress.

Trade Union and Professional Association representatives, will be provided with relevant information concerning this Policy.

Through the control measures identified in the Managers' and Employees' Guidelines, the Local Governing Team will monitor the workforce for indicators of excessive stress at work and take all reasonable steps to reduce exposure to the identified causes of stress.

4. Monitoring

The Local Governing Team will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Policy and its implementation.

5. **THE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS APPROACH TO MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS**

The Management Standards for Work Related Stress have been formulated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and provide a comprehensive, strategic approach.

The following steps to be applied as a cycle:-

- i. Understand the Standards and use them to identify potential stress risk factors.

Familiarise senior leaders, governors, and TU/Professional Association Representatives with the 6 areas where risk factors can occur. Key leaders/managers/governors need to be involved and committed.

The Areas are:-

- **Demands:** workload, work patterns and the environment.
- **Control:** how much say the person has in the way they work.
- **Support:** encouragement, line management, colleagues, resources.
- **Relationships:** culture, positive approach, addressing conflict or unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role:** clarity and understanding of role within the school and avoidance of conflicting roles.
- **Change:** how changes are managed and communicated within the school.

Practical examples within each category are given on the generic risk assessment (section 13, page 19 of Headteachers' and Managers' Guidelines).

- ii. Gather Data

Some information is readily available and should be regularly and systematically collected and analysed.

- Sickness absence data
- Employee turnover and exit interviews
- Generic issues gleaned from appraisal meetings
- Stress Risk Assessment pro-forma

Leaders and managers will seek to secure the involvement of all

employees, or representative employees, to obtain rounded information.

Use all available sources of information

- Informal meetings
- Feedback from Dept/team meetings – regular agenda item
- Focus group(s) (could be each team or representatives drawn from across workforce) fill in generic stress risk assessment to identify their issues.

iii. Evaluate the Risks and Take Action

Identify hot spots – e.g. particular groups of employees, certain activities, correlate hard/soft data, identify strengths too.

Feed back the analysis to the teams/representatives to seek their prioritisation – to inform management's action.

Identify what can be changed/amended and what can only be counter-balanced.

Groups/teams invited to suggest potential ways to address “stressors”? Promote feeling of ownership throughout the staff (managers do not have all the answers!). Foster personal and collective responsibility, the understanding that each person can make a difference, for themselves and others.

Do some groups/individuals have successful approaches to share? What can be learned from colleagues from wider professional networks/dedicated websites.

Leaders to bring relevant staff together to spread good practice and successful coping strategies. Leaders' involvement important, to enable pursuit of solutions and show commitment.

iv. Action Planning

Give priority to:

- Any quick wins that can soon show action will be taken.
- Identifying measures that will address shared issues and/or most critical issues.
- Identifying those interventions which should be pursued but will take medium to long term.
- Giving named individuals responsibility for progressing each action and have reporting method/timeframe built in.

Important to keep everyone informed regularly. Larger organisations may need a Communication Plan. Use existing structures, regular communication routines.

v. Embed the Approach

Management of Stress needs to be part of everyday routines, practise and leaders' strategies.

- Use Action Plans to deliver according to defined outcomes and build evaluation/review into existing processes. Build responsibilities into team/individual's plans and objectives.
- Share lessons learned – create continuous feedback loop (regular agenda item).
- Recognise some demands are inherent in the School workplace, but can be ameliorated by a collaborative/supportive culture and activities that promote a reasonable work-life balance.
- Seek ways to identify effectiveness of interventions on organisational performance and staff well being. Use these to either build further improvement or adapt strategies.

Use same surveys/data collection activities annually at same time in year, to identify changes, trends, patterns.

Summary

To be effective, the strategic approach needs to be incorporated into existing school improvement and staff management mechanisms.

- Leadership – sustained commitment to recognising the importance of assessing/managing stress and keeping it on the agenda are vital.
- Staff – consultation, involvement, communication are key.
- Understanding that solutions are everybody's responsibility is central.

The organisational culture is most important and can be facilitated and reinforced through the development of all leaders/managers/supervisors in line with the HSE Management Competencies. (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm>)

More information on the background and detail of the HSE approach can be found on <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards>