

ST PIRAN'S SCHOOL

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS POLICY

Introduction

St Piran's 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.

This policy will apply to all those employed by the school. The Headmaster is responsible for its implementation and the school is responsible for providing the necessary resources. 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.

Definition and Symptoms of Stress

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.

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 work performance.
- Decrease in decision making ability.
- Changes in work relationships, e.g. conflict between colleagues.
- Decrease in staff motivation/commitment.
- Working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.
- Lack of enthusiasm.

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.

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.

Managing the working environment:

St Piran's 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. In order to achieve these policy goals, the school will seek to give effect to the following:

- The school will take reasonable steps to identify all workplace stress factors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress.
- The school will consult with staff/safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- The school will communicate to all staff the content of this policy.
- The school will encourage SMT, wherever possible, to remedy institutional features which create stress. Where this is not possible, such issues should be identified and reported.
- The school will operate reporting procedures with proper safeguard for confidentiality.

Responsibilities of the Senior Management Team

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their area.
- Ensure good communication between staff particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff have opportunity for career progression as appropriate.
- Monitor workloads to ensure a fair distribution of work.
- Monitor working hours to ensure that staff are not working to excess.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested on good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their department.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Meet regularly with staff to listen to any concerns.
- Create a culture in which staff know they can raise concerns and that their concerns will be treated sympathetically and seriously.

Responsibilities of Staff

- Raise issues of concern (including concern relating to colleagues) with a member of SMT. Do not wait until a formal appraisal to identify concerns.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Establishing the problem

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 a member of SMT. 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 a member of SMT.

Where time off is required

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.

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.

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 time frame for return to work. The school may also require the employee to see an independent doctor or other health professional.

Prior to, or on the employee's return to work, a meeting will take place with the employee and the Headmaster 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:

- 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.
- An initial return to work on a part time or flexible basis.
- The offer of a job on a lower level of responsibility with a correspondingly lower salary.

It will be the responsibility of the employee and SMT to ensure that any recommendations resulting from the meeting are implemented and that the employee meets regularly with the member of SMT supporting the employee to discuss any additional steps which need to be taken to mitigate a recurrence of stress.

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.

Where stress, depression or anxiety are given as the reasons for short-term, frequent absences the Headmaster should meet with the employee to seek to address any underlying work problems as soon as possible.

Where time off is not required

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:

- The employee will meet with the Headmaster to discuss the matter.
- If recommended by the Headmaster, the employee will visit his/her GP or an independent specialist for further examination.
- If time off is recommended by the medical practitioner the employee will take the appropriate time off work.
- Otherwise the employee and Headmaster will identify reasonable steps which can be taken to mitigate and minimise the factors occasioning stress.

Reviewed by: **Headmaster**
Date: **July 2016**
Next Review Date: **July 2017**