Section1 – Introduction

This policy conforms to the Education Service Advisory Committee/Health & Safety Commission's (ESAC/HSC) definition and advice on managing occupational stress.

The School recognises that stress can be a major problem at both the individual and institutional levels - particularly in education where change appears to be constant yet resources or support are finite and limited. Therefore, the School attempts to prevent, identify, manage and remove stress at both the individual and institutional levels and has therefore adopted a whole school approach to the management of occupational stress. The associated benefits, to the school, of good stress management are manifest. However some common benefits are:

- increased performance by staff and pupils;
- increased job satisfaction and retention of good staff;
- a more effective use of the available school budget, e.g. the budget for supply cover should reduce and will then be available for other purposes.

Although the causes and signs of stress are well documented many of the symptoms taken in isolation can occur in situations where no stress is occurring, will occur or has ever occurred. Many of the signs of stress may also be indications of other medical, social or psychological problems. Management therefore need to be careful, thoughtful and sensitive in ascertaining whether stress is being caused or experienced. The responsibility for monitoring stress levels is undertaken by all line managers as this important function appears in their job description. The large number of signs and symptoms described in this policy need to be considered in the light of normal human personality and mood swings.

There is no specific law on controlling stress at work, but broad health and safety law applies:

- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees;
- Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed at work. Such an assessment should include an analysis of the risks to employees' health caused by stress at work.
- Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees on account of their disability as defined under the Act. This involves making reasonable adjustments to the workplace or to the way the work is done, if the existing working arrangements or physical features place the disabled person concerned at a substantial disadvantage. Ill health arising from, or exacerbated by, stress at work may constitute a disability under the Act.

Ill health resulting from stress caused at work has to be treated in the same way as ill health due to physical causes in the workplace. This means that employers have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not put at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, or from the day-to-day demands placed on their workforce. All staff have an individual responsibility to minimise the risk of any kind of harm to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the School in its efforts to manage work-related stress.

Case law has established that, unless the employer knows otherwise, it can be assumed that employees are mentally capable of withstanding reasonable pressure from work.

Employers are not under a legal duty to prevent ill-health caused by stress due to problems outside work, e.g. financial or domestic worries. However, non-work pressures can make it difficult for staff to cope with work and, consequently, their performance at work might suffer. Therefore, being understanding to staff in this position is in the employer's best interest.

Section 2 - The Symptoms of Stress and Distress

a) The Individual

From a personal level, when an individual is suffering from occupational stress he/she will nearly always display some of the following signs, e.g.

▫ a fall-off in performance at work;
▫ aggressive or hostile behaviour towards colleagues or pupils;
▫ moodiness, depression, irritability, listlessness, tiredness, short concentration span, acting withdrawn or crying at minor occurrences;
▫ difficulties in relationships with colleagues and pupils;
▫ low self esteem;
▫ absenteeism;
▫ disturbed sleep;
▫ headaches and difficulty in concentrating;
▫ high blood pressure.

b) The Institution

From an institutional point of view a School where occupational stress is manifest and badly managed will often exhibit one or more of the following:

▫ high staff turnover and/or absenteeism rates;
▫ a variety of ways of appointing/promoting staff;
▫ a lot of negative discussion within the staff room - including criticism of the School's management;
▫ bad systems of communication;
▫ out-dated or inappropriate job descriptions;
▫ high incidences of bullying and/or violence;
▫ large class sizes.

Section 3 - Aims and Objectives:

Aims

The School works to the ESCA/HSC definition of occupational stress, i.e. stress can result when there is a mismatch between the perceived pressures of work and an individual's capacity to cope. By the implementation of this policy the School Management aims to:

1.   Prevent, identify, manage and remove stress at both the individual and institutional levels. To reaffirm that stress is not caused by, or a symptom of, incompetence or weakness.
2.   Help staff and pupils to identify and address the causes of stress themselves (whether they be minor or debilitating) and to have clear lines and methods of support.

Objectives

These objectives relate directly to the two aims of Stress Management at Roedean Moira House and are intended to show how the aims are actually put into practice.

1.   a)   We adopt a high priority preventative approach towards potentially stressful events or demands in order to reduce the incidences of stress.
        b)   The School's management consistently thank the staff for their work and thereby show that their work is valued.
        c)   We have effective lines of communication between the School management and the staff, e.g. two staff briefings when the senior management address forthcoming issues and staff have an opportunity to raise current issues - naturally

formal discussion may be deferred to a staff meeting. By these and other methods, such as staff meetings, staff can discuss and share their successes and failures and their experiences and remedial strategies for particular situations.

d)   In the formulation, implementation and communication of management initiatives, managers will consider and address the effects on staff and their training needs and requirements for specific resources.

e)   Appropriate consideration is given to stress as a contributing factor when considering the formulation and implementation of the School's policies linked to disciplinary issues and performance management.

f)   The School has a detailed policy on the recruitment and appointment of staff. The major aspect of this policy related to stress management is the production of detailed personnel specifications detailing criteria that are 'essential' and those that are 'desirable' - these criteria are used during both the selection and interview processes. In this way we hope to match skills to the duties of the post and thereby appoint suitable staff.

g)   The victims of stress are treated sensitively, fairly and in confidence. Staff are supported by the offer of help and advice relating to the underlying causes of the stress. If necessary staff are encouraged to obtain counselling, occupational health therapy or medical treatment as appropriate. In doing so good use is made of any resources that the local community has to offer.

h)   We have a policy on staff induction. Staff whose role/job description has changed will receive support from their line manager and will be considered with respect to the allocation of funds for professional development.

i)   The School makes full use of the School's performance management system and associated criteria to identify personal and organisational development needs.

j)   The School's policies are reviewed as part of the rolling programme of monitoring and evaluation - this process involves a large amount of consultation. The School believes that there is a consensus in agreeing to implement and support the School's aims and objectives. Issues relating to pupil discipline and community relations have a direct effect on staff stress levels and frequently feature on the agenda for discussion and evaluation.

2.   a)   We include this policy in our policies as it can help staff to realise that they are under stress or are likely to suffer from stress.

b)   We include the identification, prevention and management of occupational stress within the School's training programme.

c)   The school recognises that as an employer it has a special statutory responsibility to the staff to effectively manage occupational stress. However, the School also has a professional responsibility to manage the stress caused to pupils by factors within the School's control. In order to minimise stress levels within the pupils we:

▫ discuss stress and how to deal with it as part of the PSHCE course;
▫ have an induction programme for all new pupils;
▫ possess a high profile Pastoral System;
▫ give particular advice to pupils at times when exam revision is underway;
▫ make it clear to pupils what the school's policies (e.g. Homework, Behaviour, Bullying) are.

d)   The responsibility for monitoring stress levels is undertaken by all line managers as this important function appears in their job description.

Responsibilities

Line managers should be alert to the risk of work-related stress in their staff and to signs of adverse reactions in individuals. This awareness will prompt them to take remedial action. Their responsibilities are to:

- Ensure good communication especially where there are organisational or procedural changes
- Ensure staff understand and, if necessary, are trained to perform their roles and, as appropriate, encouraged to develop further
- Monitor workload, working hours, annual leave and sickness absence to ensure that staff are not overloaded
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
- Offer support to any member of staff who is experiencing stress outside the workplace
- As part of the monitoring process, conduct return to work interviews with staff when they resume work after any period of sick leave and exit interviews with staff leaving the School
- Refer the employee to the Occupational Health Service should they or their doctor attribute a period of sickness absence to work-related stress.

All staff have an individual responsibility to minimise the risk of any kind of harm to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the School in its efforts to manage work-related stress.

- Staff must co-operate with their managers to reduce hazards that may affect their physical and/or mental well-being, including attending any training provided and following guidance regarding work-related hazards.
- Where an individual believes they are at significant risk of work-related stress, then they should inform their manager so that appropriate steps can be taken to reduce the risk; this would include access to the School Nurse.
- Staff must recognise their own training and development needs.
- Staff should be aware that a healthy lifestyle supported by an appropriate work-life balance is an important contribution to a person's well-being.

Section 4 - Monitoring and Evaluating Occupational Stress

The Governing Body will monitor and evaluate (from an institutional level) the following specific criteria to obtain an indication of organisational stress levels - to be effective this monitoring and evaluation is dependent upon the maintenance of accurate and up to date records. The criteria by which the monitoring and evaluation of the pastoral provision is undertaken are described below:

PARENTS
1. The number of complaints about the lack of effective support in dealing with pupils' bad behaviour.
2. Any pertinent feedback from pupils and parents.

PUPILS
3. The number of pupils on detention and excluded (temporary or permanent).
4. The number of individuals who have sought help and who have benefited from that help.
5. The number of incidents of reported violent, racist, sexist and bullying incidents.
6. The sizes of classes - when compared to others both nationally and locally.

BUDGET
7. The amounts of the budget allocated to stress management or related issues.

8. Any appropriate adjustments in budget allocation to reflect changing needs and priorities.

PLANNING
9. The inclusion of stress related issues in development planning.

TRAINING
10. Involvement by all staff in training courses relating to stress issues.
11. Senior management involvement in stress related issues.
12. Implementation of the school development plan with particular reference to training requirements and resources.

STAFF
13. Staff absences due to sickness.
14. Staff turnover rates.
15. Early retirement on medical grounds.
16. The accuracy of job descriptions - having considered changing roles and requirements.
17. The degree of adherence to the School's policy on recruitment and appointment of staff.

INDEPENDENT REPORTS
18. The analysis and publication of ISI/BSA reports.

Section 5 - What to do if you are suffering from occupational stress

The line manager is the first point of contact; if this is not successful or appropriate then arrange to speak to their line manager. All staff have access to the School Nurse.

Related policies and documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents:

  Employee Handbook
  Staff Handbook
  Code of Conduct for Employees
  Health Safety Handbook
  Boarding Staff Handbook
  National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
  ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools, Regulatory Requirements
  Teachers' Standards
  Departmental Handbook
  Complaints Policy (Parents)
  Complaints Policy (Pupils)

POLICY REVIEWED BY SCHOOL: June 2018

POLICY REVIEWED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL: June 2018

NEXT REVIEW: June 2019