

Swift Academies

Management of Stress Policy

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Approving Body : Board of Trustees

Committee : Standards

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Every job brings its own set of tasks, responsibilities and day-to-day problems. The pressures and demands that these place on employees are an unavoidable part of working life and can, in fact, have a positive effect on employees' motivation, sense of achievement and job satisfaction.
- 1.2 However, the ability to deal with pressure is not limitless. Extreme and/or prolonged workplace pressure can lead to stress, which can be harmful to the health and effectiveness of the workforce and consequently to the performance of the Trust.
- 1.3 Although eliminating pressure from work is neither possible nor desirable, this policy aims to demonstrate the Trust's commitment towards controlling harmful or unnecessary levels of stress in order to keep employees fit and healthy and to maximise the performance of the Trust and subsequently the achievement of its pupils.

2.0 The Legal Position

- 2.1 As an employer, the Trust recognises that stress at work is a health and safety issue and that it has a duty under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to take all reasonably practicable measures to prevent stress at work. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also require the Trust to assess health and safety risks **including stress** and to introduce prevention and control measures based on the risk assessment.
- 2.2 The Health and Safety Executive states that ill health resulting from stress caused at work should be treated in the same way as ill health due to other physical causes present in the workplace. This means that the Trust has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, the way people deal with each other in their work, or from the day-to-day demands placed on its workforce.
- 2.3 In some extreme circumstances, stress can be a disability under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As such, the Trust must make reasonable adjustments to meet identified needs.
- 2.4 Under Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, **employees** have a duty not to endanger themselves or others and to co-operate with their employer in

meeting statutory requirements.

3.0 Policy Statement

- 3.1 The Trust will seek to maintain a well-managed work environment in which every reasonable effort will be made to keep stress caused by work factors to an acceptable level.
- 3.2 The Trust will integrate the management of stress into its current arrangements for health and safety management.

4.0 Implementation

- 4.1 The Head Teacher/Head of School will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. **However, its ultimate success will rely on the participation of all managers and employees.**
- 4.2 In order to manage stress levels in the workplace effectively, the Trust will strive to achieve the following:
- To assess the causes of stress at work under the existing risk assessment system, introduce measures to reduce work pressure to acceptable levels and take appropriate intervention measures where excessive levels of work pressure are identified.
 - To keep up-to-date with and endeavour to implement best practice regarding stress management
 - To develop an open culture in which stress is taken seriously and in which employees are encouraged to seek any help and support they need
 - To communicate this policy and related guidance to all employees and managers
 - To provide training for all managers to help them to identify and manage stress levels and ensure that, if problems are identified, managers are able to provide support to their staff and to refer them for further help if necessary
 - To encourage employees to attend stress awareness training to help them to cope with pressures that they may encounter in their day-to-day work, or pressures in their personal/home lives which could impact on their performance at work. This training will also include arrangements for reporting causes of stress and arrangements for seeking help.
 - To operate reporting procedures on a confidential basis and monitor stress on an on-going basis via return to work interviews as part of the Trust's Sickness Management Policy.

5.0 Application

- 5.1 This policy applies to all employees of the Trust.

5.2 This policy is linked to the Trust Health and Safety Policy. It also refers to other policies adopted by the Trust in the text where relevant.

6.0 Definition of Stress

6.1 Stress is a reaction that people have to excessive pressure or demands placed upon them. It arises when individuals try to cope with tasks, responsibilities or other types of pressure, but find difficulty, strain or worry in doing so. This can produce negative physical, emotional or behavioural effects.

7.0 Causes of Stress

7.1 There are many causes of stress and for much of the time, individuals may be able to cope with one or even a combination of factors. In general, harmful levels of stress are most likely to occur where pressures pile on top of each other or are prolonged; people feel trapped or unable to exert any control over the demands placed on them; or are confused by conflicting demands.

7.2 Work may not be the only cause of stress. People may come to work against a background of bereavement, family sickness or worry, marital or other interpersonal problems or exhausting travel. Although these factors are technically beyond the Trust's responsibilities, they can make employees more vulnerable to stress at work, as well as affecting their performance and judgement. As such, the Trust will deal sympathetically with staff whose home/personal lives make it difficult for them to cope with the pressures of work as far as is reasonably practicable.

8.0 Effects of Stress

8.1 An employee suffering from stress may display various symptoms, which can subsequently have a negative effect on their performance at work and ultimately on the organisation. Further information on the effects of stress on both employees and the organisation is available in the 'Managers' Guide to Workplace Stress'.

9.0 Employee Assistance

9.1 The Trust hopes that instances of workplace stress can be minimised by taking a proactive approach to stress management involving risk assessment and training for managers/employees.

9.2 However, in cases where employees feel under stress due to perceived excessive pressure or demands placed upon them in the workplace, or due to other work-related issues, they should discuss this with their manager to explore ways of addressing the situation in the first instance. Further guidance for both managers and employees on ways of managing stress is available in the Trust's 'Managers' Guide to Workplace Stress' and 'Employees' Guide to Coping with Stress'.

9.3 Employees may also wish to speak to their trade union representative.

9.4 In cases where employees do not feel that their concern is being adequately addressed, they may take action under the Trust's Grievance procedures.

However, this should be only used as the last resort and not as a substitute for effective communication between the employee and their manager.

- 9.5 If the cause of the stress relates to possible harassment or bullying, the procedures set out in the Trust's Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy should be followed.
- 9.6 If the cause of the stress relates to a possible employee concern that they are unable to reach the standards required of the post, the procedures set out in the Trust's Capability Policy should be followed.
- 9.7 If stress is leading to substance misuse or increased alcohol consumption, the procedures set out in the Trust's Substance Misuse and Alcohol at Work policies should be followed.
- 9.8 Stress counselling may be available. Details of the service can be obtained from the Trust's Admin Team.
- 9.9 Teaching staff may also/alternatively wish to contact 'Teacherline', which offers a specifically targeted counselling service. The 'phone number is 08000 562 561.
- 9.10 Reasonable time off with pay may be available to enable employees suffering from stress and stress-related illnesses to attend stress counselling sessions should this be required. However, efforts should be made to make arrangements for counselling around work commitments if possible. Alternatively, employees may make arrangements for counselling outside their working hours if they wish.
- 9.11 Stress counselling will be strictly confidential between the counsellor and the employee. No details or records will be disclosed without the written permission of the employee concerned.

10.0 Links with Sickness Absence

- 10.1 If an employee's sickness absence record seems to indicate possible stress, this should be raised sensitively at the return to work interview. Further guidance on how to address this issue is available in the Trust's Sickness Management Policy and in the 'Managers' Guide to Workplace Stress'.
- 10.2 Where stress causes deterioration in job performance, it will be treated as a health problem and the employee will be encouraged to seek help under the terms of the Trust's Sickness Management Policy.
- 10.3 Employees unable to continue in their job because of stress related illness may be considered for suitable re-deployment if they wish, **subject to advice from the Occupational Health Service.**

11.0 Further Guidance

- 11.1 The policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's 'Managers Guide to Workplace Stress' and 'Employees' Guide to Coping with Stress', which provide more in-depth help and guidance.

11.2 Further advice on specific aspects of this guidance may be obtained from the Trust's HR and Health and Safety Providers.