



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND AVOIDANCE POLICY

REVIEWED: OCTOBER 2025
NEXT REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2027

SPARKEN HILL ACADEMY
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STRESS MANAGEMENT AND AVOIDANCE

Introduction

The governing board of Sparken Hill Academy is committed to making every effort to protect the health, safety and welfare of all staff. The importance of avoiding, identifying and managing work-related stress is seen as crucial to this commitment.

The governing board is looking to create an environment that enables all staff to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of their jobs and to offer support to those staff whose health and well-being are affected by stress.

As a governing board, we have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that our employees' health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

The school will work towards compliance with the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) six management standards for work-related stress:

- Demands (workload, environment, etc).
- Control (how much say staff have in how they work).
- Support (from colleagues and managers).
- Relationships (including conflict and unacceptable behaviour).
- Role (clarity on responsibilities).
- Change (how organisational change is managed).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Health and safety policy.
- Sickness absence policy.
- Equality policies.
- Staff code of conduct.
- Capability policy.
- Grievance and disciplinary policies.
- Anti-bullying and harassment policy.

Prevention of work-related stress

The governing board shall ensure that:

- There is appropriate consultation with accredited union representatives on issues affecting the working environment of staff.

- The procedures for communication throughout the school are open and informative.
- Strategies are in place to inform staff about stress and its causes.
- Opportunities are provided for staff to undertake training on stress avoidance, identification and management.
- Necessary job training needs are identified and agreed with the staff concerned, reviewing these annually and upon appointment or changing role.
- Where appropriate, a stress risk assessment will be used by the academy.

It is expected that governing boards will delegate some or all of these responsibilities to the principal. It is important for the governing board to recognise responsibility for the principal and monitor potential stress relating to that role.

Identification of stress

The academy shall ensure that regular risk assessments are undertaken in respect of potential workplace pressures and that reasonable steps are taken to reduce potential stress factors.

As part of the annual appraisal process for teaching staff or informal supervision meetings, any mismatch between the role and the job description shall be identified and the job description updated as required.

The academy will make information and training available to staff to help identify the signs of stress in themselves and others.

Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and can be normal in any job. These pressures can assist in improving personal performance and can enable individuals to reach their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction.

When pressure becomes excessive it can produce stress and undermines mental health. Stress is not in itself a medical diagnosis, but it can be a symptom or cause of physical or mental health conditions. Not everyone will experience stress in the same way, although all people are likely to experience it within their personal and private lives.

The way people cope with stress will also differ. No two people are the same.

Management of stress

The principal holds operational responsibility for the implementation of this policy, supported by line managers and with oversight from the governing board.

The academy will identify internal and external sources of support for any member of staff suffering from work-related stress.

Appropriate stress management courses will be provided for all staff together with advice and guidance on strategies and activities to reduce the incidence and effects of stress.

Staff with line management responsibilities shall:

- Be assisted through advice and training to recognise the symptoms of stress in order to provide early intervention and support.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that they are manageable without undue stress.
- Endeavour to act particularly sensitively towards absences that are potentially stress related.
- Seek appropriate advice where any absence is identified medically as being due to work related stress before taking any action.

The principal/governing board shall ensure that any incidence of bullying or harassment is not tolerated.

The governing board shall be responsible for the management role in respect of the principal.

Any member of staff who thinks they are suffering from stress, whether work-related or in their personal life should inform the principal to determine what support can be made available and to minimise the effect upon carrying out their job.

Advice should always be sought in relation to work-related stress. Counselling services can often be provided through the GP or occupational health, but some academies might wish to develop their own provision. It is considered appropriate to offer additional support to any member of staff experiencing stress outside the work situation eg separation, divorce, bereavement.

Staff responsibilities

Staff who believe they are suffering from work-related stress should discuss the matter with their manager or supervisor in the first instance. If they feel unable to do so they should contact the academy's HR and consider seeking advice from their union.

Staff are expected to participate fully in the implementation of this policy and in any associated training provided individually or collectively. Staff shall be expected to take up any appropriate offer of support/counselling that the school provides.

Staff should care for their own wellbeing and mental health too. There are many external organisations that can support staff in respect of their mental health ranging from family and friends to medical practitioners and charities such as MIND.

Monitoring and review

The principal shall report to the governing board upon the implementation and effectiveness of this policy at least annually. Report should be by way of the normal procedure for the principal's report to governors.

The governing board shall initiate review of the policy as necessary in light of the principal's report. Review should involve representatives of all staff.

The safety committee will monitor this policy and make recommendations to the principal as appropriate.

Confidentiality

Information about a person's mental health is both sensitive and categorised as special category data in accordance with the GDPR and the DPA 2018.

All staff are therefore responsible for maintaining confidentiality, whether they are supporting a colleague or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure. Failing to maintain such confidence may lead to disciplinary action.

There are occasions when information about stress or mental wellbeing may need to be shared with third parties. For example:

- To reallocate work.
- Where medical advice is required on how to support a member of staff, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill health.
- Where the issues of stress and mental health are tied in with other policies and procedures, such as sickness absence, disciplinary or grievance procedures and investigations.
- Where a member of staff is an immediate danger to themselves or others.

In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

Conclusion

The governing board recognises the importance of reducing stress in the working environment and will take all possible steps so to do. In particular it will support all initiatives developed and agreed to further the success of this policy.