



Thorner's Stress Management Policy, Procedure and Guidance

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thorner's CE VA Primary School recognises its duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees. This policy, procedure and guidance take into account the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act and appropriate Regulations under the Act.
- 1.2 We are committed to reducing the incidence and impact of work related stress by addressing the cause of stress in the workplace and providing an appropriate level of support to employees.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy and accompanying documents apply to all employees within the School and has been adopted by the Governing Body.
- 2.2 This policy does not sit in isolation and depending on the nature and effect of stress should be read in conjunction with other relevant people management policies, details of which can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.3 Issues relating to stress may emerge when matters are being progressed through other HR policies, such as the management of attendance policy, capability or grievance policy. In such cases, referral to the stress management policy and procedure should be made.

3. Definition

- 3.1 Stress is defined as '*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them*' (Health & Safety Executive). Pressure can improve performance, but when demands and pressures become excessive, this can lead to stress. As a result individuals, teams and schools may suffer.
- 3.2 Thorner's School recognises that stress related illnesses are rarely the result of work issues alone and that there are often other contributory factors over which the school has no control or influence but which nevertheless may affect performance/attendance at work.
- 3.3 Work related stress is defined as that which is typically caused by factors emanating from work practices/environments. The Health and Safety Executive has identified the following factors that can have an impact on stress:
 - **Job Demands** – such as workload and exposure to physical hazards;
 - **Control** – how much say an individual has in the way they carry out their work;
 - **Support** – support from peers and line management, training to enable the employee to carry out their duties and catering for individual differences, e.g. disability;
 - **Relationships** – with other colleagues, covering issues such as bullying and harassment;
 - **Change** – how organisational change is managed and communicated within an organisation;
 - **Role** – whether the individual understands their role and whether the organisation ensures individuals do not have conflicting roles.

4. Key Principles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that when issues of work related stress are identified, appropriate action is taken at an early stage, with employees and managers arriving at joint solutions. The Governing Body will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy and ensuring that the policy is implemented effectively within the School. This will include arranging for appropriate training to be provided to teachers and managers and the monitoring of sickness absence and employee turnover.
- 4.2 The **Headteacher** will:
- undertake appropriate training;
 - ensure employees undertake appropriate training;
 - ensure all teachers and managers are trained as necessary to undertake risk assessments and are aware of their responsibilities within this policy;
 - ensure that the policy and procedure is effectively implemented within their school;
 - ensure that prompt and appropriate action is taken as a result of a risk assessment or the stress reporting procedure being initiated;
 - ensure that employees have the skills and tools necessary for carrying out their duties;
 - monitor sickness absence;
 - provide a supportive 'open-door' policy to employees who wish to discuss and/or report work related stress;
 - monitor workloads and working hours;
 - ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated;
 - ensure employees are aware of other supportive mechanisms in place, e.g. contact details for Employee Wellbeing Service, the national Teacher Support Network, and Headline (the support line for Dorset Head Teachers); and
 - identify posts where there are potentially high levels of stress, and ensure that additional support is put in place so that high pressure levels will be alleviated, as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 4.3 **Individual employees** will:
- be responsible for ensuring their own health, safety and welfare as far as is reasonably practicable;
 - initiate the reporting procedure(s) as soon as they recognise that levels of stress are becoming unacceptable to them, and understand that the school would not consider this to be a sign of weakness;
 - participate in finding solutions to problems of perceived stress; and
 - assist Thorner's School by reporting areas for improvement and ensuring their own individual behaviour is appropriate.
- 4.4 **Recognised Trades Unions** will:
- co-operate with Thorner's School and the Employee Wellbeing Service in the promotion of health, safety and wellbeing;
 - assist in identifying high risk areas where priority action may be required;
 - assist in monitoring progress towards achieving a reduction in work related stress and in the review of the policy; and
 - participate, where appropriate, in finding solutions to problems of perceived stress.
- 4.5 **The Council on behalf of the Employee Wellbeing Service** will:
- ensure the recommendation of the policy to schools;
 - provide appropriate training which can be accessed by Head Teachers and others which will include the recognition and management of stress in themselves and others;
 - ensure the Employee Wellbeing Team, which includes Occupational Health and the Counselling Service, offers appropriate support and guidance to employees.

5. Monitoring/Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Governing Body of Thorner's School.

6. Linked Policies

Attendance Management
Fairness and Dignity at Work (included in Grievance procedure)
Health and Safety

STRESS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

7. Aim

- 7.1 The aim of this procedure is to ensure that issues of work related stress are raised by employees as soon as possible, that appropriate action is taken at any early stage and that employees and managers together arrive at solutions.
- 7.2 Thorner's School recognises that excessive levels of stress can have a negative effect on mental and physical health. It will therefore seek to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect employees from high levels of stress and support them as appropriate. It will not consider reporting of work related stress as a weakness but a mechanism to ensure support through a systematic managed approach.
- 7.3 Thorner's School recognises that stress related illnesses are rarely the result of work issues alone. There are often other contributory factors over which the school has no control or influence but which nevertheless may affect performance or attendance at work. In these circumstances there may be temporary adjustments to working patterns, for example, which would assist in reducing stress. Head Teachers have the discretion to agree such adjustments at any time. There are also statutory obligations that the School complies with, such as Parental Leave and Time Off for Dependents.
- 7.4 Where pressures have been identified on particular posts which may lead to stress, Thorner's School will ensure that additional support is put in place and that high pressure levels will be alleviated, as far as is reasonably practicable.

8. Stage 1 – Informal Discussions

Concerns relating to stress may be raised either by an employee or their Line Manager/Headteacher but irrespective of who initiates the discussion, the use of an informal approach is often regarded as the best option in the first instance. A template for use can be found at Appendix A.

Managers are responsible for monitoring workloads and any consequent pressure through the normal supervision process and should discuss any concerns with the employee at the earliest opportunity. If a member of staff is experiencing symptoms of stress, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager at an early stage, particularly if they feel the issues are work related.

Where the causes of stress are not directly work related, the individual may also find it helpful to have an informal discussion with their line manager so that their line manager is aware of the pressures they are experiencing outside of work. They may be able to agree some temporary adjustments to support the employee at a difficult time.

Every effort should be made to include the Line Manager/Headteacher as the first point of contact/discussion when issues are raised. However, in the event that the employee feels unable to approach their Line Manager

contributing to the symptoms, then an informal discussion should be held with the Headteacher. Where the Headteacher is the line manager then an informal discussion should be held with the Chair of Governors (CoG).

Where a Headteacher identifies stress, an informal discussion should be held with the CoG or another nominated Governor.

Informal discussions will often result in an agreed way forward but to be effective, solutions must be mutually acceptable. Employees should therefore be invited to contribute solutions which are mutually acceptable

A timescale for implementing any agreed actions should be put into place and a note made of the proposals. Arrangements should then be made to review at regular intervals the effect of any measures in reducing the employee's stress levels.

If informal measures are not effective and the stress is work related, a more structured risk assessment and action plan will be required as outlined at stage 2 of this procedure.

3. Stage 2 – Stress Risk Assessment and Stress Action Plan

Where the informal approach is not successful in resolving the stress related issues that have been raised or the employee is absent from work due to work related stress or has just returned to work following a period of absence for work related stress, the Stress Risk Assessment at Appendix B should be completed. Once completed the form should be returned to the Employee Wellbeing Team at County Hall.

A stress risk assessment is a step by step approach to identify what is contributing towards an individual's stress in the work environment. The stress risk assessment used by the Employee Wellbeing Team has been developed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and is in questionnaire format.

Once the completed stress risk assessment has been received by the Employee Wellbeing Team, they will assess the form and send a risk assessment analysis to the employee and the line manager/Headteacher named on the form. This includes a summary of key outcomes compared against nationally recognised research and data.

Upon receipt of the risk assessment analysis, the Line Manager/Headteacher should arrange to meet with the employee to complete the Stress Risk Assessment Action Plan found at Appendix C. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or a Trade Union representative at this meeting. The line manager/Headteacher is advised to take advice from HR, who may also attend the meeting. A copy of the completed action plan should be given to the employee and a date for a review should be set. Both parties should retain a copy of the form.

The stress action plan should contain:

- A summary of the key issues identified by the stress risk assessment
- An outline of agreed actions (control measures) that may help to manage the causes of stress in the workplace for the employee
- Timescales for the implementation of the actions and review of the effectiveness of the plan.

In seeking to find solutions to any problems of perceived stress, the employee should be encouraged to participate in any discussion with the Headteacher/Line Manager, and will be invited to contribute solutions that are mutually acceptable. Each employee has their own threshold for handling stress and this threshold may vary in different situations and at different times.

10. **Responsibility of Headteacher**

- 10.1 The Headteacher/Chair of Governors is responsible for ensuring that any issue of work related stress is dealt with speedily and effectively. They may arrange for an appropriate line manager to undertake actions within this procedure but cannot delegate the overall responsibility of ensuring that each issue is dealt with appropriately i.e. the Headteacher/Chair of Governors is responsible for determining what reasonable action can be taken to reduce any unacceptably high levels of stress.
- 10.2 The Headteacher/Chair of Governors must ensure that any additional notes or documentation (to that of the pro-forma) are kept for audit/evidence purposes, and copied to the employee.

11. **Support**

11.1 **Headline**

Headline is a confidential support service for Dorset Head Teachers staffed by experienced clinical psychologists. They specialise in supporting Head Teachers through stressful periods and aim to help them in the management of stress and the development of personal resilience. The aim is to maintain strong leadership in schools and reduce absences through stress related illness. They can be contacted on 07502 226 328.

- 11.2 **Education Support Partnership (*formerly known as Teacher Support Network*)** – The Education Support Partnership is available to all serving and trainee teachers, which offers information, support or concentrated short term counselling to help employees cope with the demands of teaching. Further information can be found at www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk or 08000 562 561.

- 11.3 **Staff Counselling** – The counselling service is provided free for all employees of the council including school and academy based staff where the school/academy buys into the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Package. The service provides for up to six sessions in normal working hours. They can be contacted on 01305 224266 or staffcounselling@dorsetcc.gov.

In accordance with the Equality Duty we seek to ensure that all pupils achieve their best, according to their capabilities and regardless of their special needs, disability, gender, race, culture, social, economic, ethnic, religious background and denominational diversity.

Thorner's CE VA Primary School recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in its care.

Date adopted by Governing Body: June 2019

Date to be reviewed: June 2024

Appendix A: Template for recording work related stress

Name: _____ School: _____

Department: _____ Line Manager: _____

I have stress related symptoms and I am currently at work/on sick leave (please delete as appropriate)

- The nature of my symptoms are:

- I believe the reason for my symptoms is:

Informal discussion held on: _____ Held with: (name and Job Title)

Outcome of discussion/Action points following informal discussion:

Review date (to be agreed by employee and Line Manager):

Signed employee: _____ Date: _____

Signed Line Manager: _____ Date: _____



Appendix B: Stress Risk Assessment – schools

A stress risk assessment is a step by step approach designed to identify what is contributing to an individual's stress in the work environment. The attached stress risk assessment has been developed by the Health and Safety Executive and is based on research, identifying a number of potential stressors in a workplace.

On receipt of the completed questionnaire, the Employee Wellbeing Team will provide both you and the manager named below with a copy of the outcomes. These outcomes should be used as part of a further discussion with your manager and help in the completion of a stress action plan where appropriate.

All information will be treated as confidential by the Employee Wellbeing Team.

Name of staff member:	
Job Title:	
Workplace/School:	
Contact email:	
Contact telephone no.:	
Name of manager/supervisor:	
Contact email of manager/supervisor:	
Date of completion:	

Please complete the questionnaire and return to:

Restricted/Confidential
Employee Wellbeing Team
Human Resources
Dorset Council
County Hall
Colliton Park
Dorchester
DT1 1XJ

employeewellbeing@dorsetcc.gov.uk

01305 225701/224095

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I am clear what is expected of me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2	I feel responsible for what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3	Different people at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
4	I know how to go about getting my job done	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5	I am subject to personal harassment from pupils in the form of unkind words and behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
6	I have unachievable deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9	I have to work very intensively for more than 50% of my working time	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
10	I have a say in my own work speed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14	There is friction or anger between colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
15	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16	I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
17	I understand how my work fits in to the overall aim of	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

the school

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
18	I am pressured to work long hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
19	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20	I have to work at a pace that can feel out of control	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
21	I feel bullied by colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
22	I have unrealistic time pressures	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
23	I can rely on my colleagues to help me out with a work problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24	I get help and support I need from colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
25	I have some say over the way I work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
26	I have sufficient opportunities to question the senior team about changes at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
27	I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
28	Staff are always consulted about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
29	I can talk to my manager/supervisor about something that has upset or annoyed me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
30	My working time can be flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
31	My colleagues are available to listen to my work related problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
32	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
34	Relationships at work are strained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
35	The senior team encourage me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

Appendix C: Stress Risk Assessment – Action Plan

to be jointly completed by employee and Line Manager

Often an **informal discussion** provides an effective and agreed solution to the identified sources of work related stress

Outcome of discussion and agreed action plan including review dates:

Signed (employee):
Name (print):

Date:

Signed (Line Manager):
Name (print):

Date:

Review Date: