

Queensmill School

Policy guidance on support for staff working in a stressful environment

Aims

To ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and support to deal with the challenging demands of the work environment

Strategies

All of our training and work with the children is aimed at providing children with the techniques to manage their own behaviours and be as calm as possible. However we recognize that there may be times when the children's anxiety levels are high and challenging behaviours may occur. Staff working with children at these times may themselves experience high levels of stress and anxiety.

From the recruitment process onward we aim to make staff fully aware of the complex needs of our children and understand that because our children suffer from high levels of arousal, anxiety and stress they may demonstrate challenging behaviours.

Queensmill Schools offers a comprehensive training program to both new and existing staff as outlined in the following paragraph from the training plan;

"Queensmill School aims to give the skills our staff need to meet the very discrete needs of our children, through a range of appropriate training. This training provides staff opportunities for their own professional development in regards to knowledge of autism, specific subject knowledge and any other relevant knowledge related to providing an appropriate education and environment for children with autism."

All new members of staff are engaged in an induction program which highlights the needs of our children and also focuses on understanding autism and physical intervention techniques. The school uses the Team Teach approach when having to use physical intervention. All staff are trained in Team Teach to the level of two staff working together to hold and guide a child.

Underpinning Principles:

- The use of Physical Intervention (PI) should, wherever possible, be avoided
- There are occasions when the use of PI is necessary
- When PI is necessary, it must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned.

Staff may need time to calm down and relax after interacting with a child demonstrating challenging behaviours. We have appropriate levels of staffing to allow staff to have time out of the class, especially if they have been hurt in an incident. The school is also aware of class groups where challenging behaviours are most likely to occur and these class groups have extra staffing above the normal three adults staff ratio.

When staff have been hurt, they will receive the treatment necessary for their injury, e.g. going home, going to their doctor or going to the hospital. When staff have been hurt and are able to stay at work, they will have the opportunity for any of the following:

- their class team takes over so they can have a short break to spend time on their own, go to the staff room to have a hot drink, etc

- there is support from SMT so that staff feel they can talk about the incident without any judgement, and confidentially
- there will be a follow-up review of any Behaviour Plans or Risk Assessments that are in place to see if they are adequate
- they can be honest about the extent of their injuries, and not feel that anyone thinks that it was their fault that they were hurt.

If appropriate, staff can see the borough's Occupational Health Service, and where we can make the reasonable adjustments suggested we will try to do so. Making reasonable adjustments to the premises however would be an issue for the local authority rather than the school. Staff can also have access to the borough's Counselling Service at the Town Hall.

The school also offers support to the staff in the following ways

- Good communication systems through memo, staff notice board, staff briefings and an "open-door to management" policy
- Regular teacher and support staff meetings
- Staff breakfasts
- Social evenings
- Celebrations of events for staff such as Birthdays, baby showers etc
- Membership of BUPA for all staff
- Staff wellbeing box where staff can leave positive messages anonymously for staff across the school

We have responded as a school to Workforce Reform, and have both increased admin support and set up a new support staff structure which has a positive effect on pupil behaviour. We follow the LEA's policy on managing staff sickness absence in order to minimise additional workload and stress on other colleagues. We have good links with the unions represented in the school.

Guidance for calming pupils and staff support can also be found in "Behaviour Policy and Use of Physical Intervention".

Updated by SMT in Sept 08 in relation to "Preventing Work-Related Mental Health Conditions by Tackling Stress". Copies sent to all staff for their comments, Sept 08, and then to Govs Finance and Personnel Committee on Monday 13th October 2008.

Updated by all staff Feb 2010.
Reviewed Spring 2014

Policy reviewed – Oct 2017

Reviewed by*F*
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Date for next review – October 2018