



Staff working in a stressful environment policy



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1. Aims

- Support the wellbeing of all staff to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health
- Provide a supportive work environment for all staff
- To ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and support to deal with the challenging demands of the work environment

2. Rationale

All of our training and work with the students at Queensmill School is aimed at providing them with the techniques to understand their autism and help them to live happy and fulfilling lives. However, we recognize that there may be times when their anxiety levels are high and dysregulation may occur. Staff working with these students at these times may themselves experience high levels of stress and anxiety, too.

From the recruitment process onward, we aim to make staff fully aware of the complex needs of our students and understand that because our students experience high levels of arousal, anxiety and stress, they may become dysregulated.

Queensmill School 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 students and also focuses on understanding autism, de-escalation strategies, and physical intervention techniques. The school uses the Team Teach approach when having to use physical intervention. All staff will be trained in Team Teach.

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.

3. Significant Incidents

Staff may need time to recover and relax after being involved in a significant incident or using physical intervention. 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 (e.g. open door policy)
- 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.
- there will be a debrief arranged to check in with the staff members involved, reflect on the situation, and put action points and additional supports and strategies in place. Debriefs will involve a deputy head, Team Teach trainer, the phase leader, class team or those staff directly involved with the incident, and the relevant therapists.

Staff are supported with and encouraged to engage in restorative practice with a student following a significant incident. For example, the staff member leading a highly motivating session with the student the following day or, where appropriate, reflecting on the incident with the student.

4. Supporting Staff Wellbeing

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

- › Good communication systems through email, staff notice board, staff briefings and an “open-door to management” policy
- › Regular teacher and support staff meetings
- › Staff wellbeing breakfasts
- › Social gatherings
- › Celebrations of events for staff such as baby showers
- › Staff wellbeing board where staff can leave positive messages anonymously for staff across the school.
- › Staff wellbeing workshops delivered by external agencies (Back on Track, ConnectEd School Therapy and Counselling Service)
- › Reflective practice group work supported by the school Educational Psychologist and external agencies (ConnectEd School Therapy and Counselling Service)
- › Having access to mental health first aiders (see Queensmill’s Staff Wellbeing Policy for further information)

5. Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Role of all staff

Good practice indicates all staff should:

- › Treat each other with empathy and respect
- › Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff
- › Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- › Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support
- › Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit
- › Use shared areas respectfully, such as the staff room or offices
- › Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing

1.2. Role of Mental Health Aiders

- › To be a point of contact for a member of staff experiencing, mental health issue or emotional distress.
- › Communicating any concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of anyone in your workplace to an appropriate manager or signposting staff experiencing wellbeing difficulties to an appropriate manager.
- › Provide non-judgemental and confidential support for staff
- › Promote information about and access to external mental health support services
- › Establishing appropriate boundaries between yourself and colleagues you may be supporting
- › Keeping yourself safe and well – for more information refer to your MHFA England course manual
- › Following your workplace’s policies and procedures on how MHFA is implemented in the workplace
- › Upholding your role as a Mental Health First Aider alongside your other responsibilities

- › Refreshing your skills every three years on an MHFA Refresher course.
- › Make sure new staff are checked on and feel able to ask for help
- › Logging in incoming concerns

1.3 Role of line managers

Good practice indicates Line managers should:

- › Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern
- › Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their staff
- › Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies
- › Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance
- › Make sure new staff and staff in new roles (new teachers) are properly and thoroughly inducted, checked on and feel able to ask for help
- › Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures
- › Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate
- › Keep in touch with staff if they're absent for long periods
- › Monitor staff sickness absence, and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge
- › Conduct return to work interviews to support staff back into work
- › Conduct exit interviews with resigning staff to help identify any wellbeing issues that lead to their resignation

1.4 Role of senior staff

Good practice indicates senior staff should:

- › Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff and adhering to agreed working hours
- › Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff
- › Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- › Make sure accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring
- › Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork, and seek alternative solutions wherever possible
- › Make sure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes
- › Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- › Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school
- › Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- › Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload
- › Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities
- › Promote information about and access to external support services
- › Organise extra support during times of stress, such as Ofsted inspections

1.5 Role of the governing board

Good practice indicates the governing board should:

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, such as by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the headteacher
- Ensure that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing
- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regards to workload
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them

6. Monitoring arrangements

The headteacher will review and update this policy annually.

7. Links with other policies

This document links to the following policies:

- Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy