**APPENDIX 1**

**Employees Guide to Managing Stress**

**(This section is contained in a booklet format and is available for all staff from Human Resources).**

**1. WHAT IS STRESS?**

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as

“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them”.

Stress is part of everyday life and an individual’s stress level can vary depending on their tolerance and threshold. However, there is an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which is the reaction to the demands that a person feels when they cannot cope at a given time.

**2. THE DUTIES OF YOUR EMPLOYER**

The LA and your Governing Body has a duty to ensure that the health of employees is not harmed by work related stress. In particular they must:

Assess the risk to your health from work related stress

Put in place measures to eliminate, or where that is not possible, to reduce that risk

Consult you, either directly or through your trade union about workplace and organisational changes that are likely to significantly affect your health and safety.

Your Governing Body’s commitment to addressing stress is confirmed in the school’s Stress Policy.

**3. YOUR ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES**

You and your colleagues may suffer at sometime in your working life from stress at work. It is important that you are able to recognise factors in the workplace which may cause stress. It is also helpful if you recognise the signs and symptoms of stress in yourselves or others in order to take positive action.

Legally you have a duty under Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 14 of the Management if Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to take reasonable care of your own

health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your acts or omission whilst at work.

**4. THE EFFECTS OF STRESS**

Different people perceive different events as stressful. Therefore stress may be experienced as a result of exposure to a wide range of work demands and this therefore may contribute to an equally wide range of health issues.

We respond to short-term stress in a number of ways. These responses allow the body to get rid of built up energies on a regular basis and the let the body recover and return to normal. These responses include the heart beating faster, tense muscles, extra cholesterol and sugar in the blood and slower immune and digestive responses.

Prolonged stress, or if it is particularly intense can lead to increased problems with ill health e.g. heart disease, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure etc. It can also lead to other behaviours that are not helpful to health such as weight loss/gain, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol and smoking.

**5. THE SIGNS OF STRESS**

Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to all. It is important to recognise that we demonstrate some of the symptoms of stress at various times in their life. This does not necessarily mean we are suffering from stress. The levels of stress we feel will correspond to the symptoms we experience.

Physical Signs Nausea Headaches Fatigue

Shoulders, neck, back pain

Cramps Chest pain Palpitations Weight loss/gain

Behavioural Signs Smoking

Alcohol – increased drinking

Nail biting

Changes to eating habits

Erratic mood changes

Emotional Signs Intolerance and irritability

Withdrawal of social contact

Low self-esteem

Guilt

Panic

Worrying inappropriately

Work Related Signs Reduction in productivity

Increase in error rates

Indecisive/ poor decision making Deterioration in planning/control of work

Tension/conflict between colleagues

Increase in disciplinary issues Loss of motivation/commitment Working longer hours with little achievement

Erratic/poor timekeeping Increased absence Evading deadlines

Lack of concentration

Generally the best way to identify your own or a colleague’s stress is to be aware of normal performance levels, general demeanour and behaviour at work. Where there are changes in any of these behaviour patterns it could be the effects of stress. These signs are often picked up by other people before we acknowledges them ourselves.

**6. WHAT DO I DO IF I FEEL STRESSED**

There are support mechanisms and procedures in school to help you resolve workplace stress:

6.1 **Communication**

If you feel that there are aspects of your work which are causing you to feel excessively stressed you should discuss them with your head teacher/manager who will try and help you resolve the situation.

They may also ask you if you have any problems related to stress, either as part of performance management/management supervision sessions or absence control procedures.

If your problems are related to home or are of a personal nature you may also wish to discuss them with your head teacher/manager. They may be able to assist with emotional support or practical help such as compassionate leave.

Your head teacher/manager will treat all your conversations in strictest confidence.

6.2 **Seeking Other Support**

You may feel that talking to your head teacher/manager is difficult and in these circumstances you may wish to contact your trade union representative for support and advice. They have contacts with their own support systems, the LA and other outside agencies who they can approach with you or on your behalf.

The City Council also provides an Employee Assistance Programme (by BUPA) which can provide a confidential counselling service and advice on a wide range of issues including stress but also financial issues, legal issues, bereavement, marital relations, health concerns, alcohol/drug abuse etc. Details can be obtained from the Employee Wellbeing service. The service is independent of management and the only way anyone else will know if you contact them is if you chose to tell them.

If you are a teacher you may wish to call the Teacher Support Line which provides free information, support and counselling 24 hours a day.

Support can also be gained from your GP, the LA, agencies who provide information and advice in respect of specific issues e.g. Relate. A full list of these with the contact numbers can be found in the ‘Stress Pack’.

6.3 **Individual Strategies**

On a personal level it is useful to be able to analyse and examine your reactions to stress and to be able to reduce the effects as much as possible. Your chosen methods of reducing stress are as individual as the causes of it.

There are many things which can help you improve the situation to gain short-term relief and provide strategies for dealing with on-going stress:

Be assertive – stand up for yourself

Develop good points both in yourself and others

Be positive, see the positive side of yourself and others

Relaxation – this opposes the stress response and helps the re- balancing process

Physical activity – use up the energy created by the stress response, this helps restore balance and build fitness

Sleeping well – adopt regular sleep patterns

Avoid trying things which cause more side effects than the stress such as alcohol, smoking, caffeine, overeating, aggression

Eat well – the basis for good health which helps you to handle the pressure of stress

Friendships – give the opportunity to talk and share

• Emotional release - laughing, crying and talking helps release some of the tensions of stress rather than keeping them bottled up

• Appreciate the present rather than dwelling on the past.