Wellbeing Policy

Written by	Harriet Carter	September 2025
Next review due by		September 2026

Statement of Intent

This policy applies to all employees of Earley Springs School. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

This policy considers the obligations under relevant legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1999, and the Equality Act 2010.

Earley Springs is committed to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all its employees. We strive to maintain a working environment characterised by dignity, respect, cooperation, and trust. The school acknowledges that stress and mental ill health, regardless of the source, can be significant workplace issues. We recognise the importance of a supportive environment, a positive working culture, and the identification and reduction of workplace stressors.

We are dedicated to promoting positive mental health for all staff and will work collaboratively to achieve this. This includes encouraging open conversations about mental health and ensuring that those with mental health issues have the opportunity to participate fully in the workplace.

Earley Springs is committed to implementing this policy effectively and ensuring that all staff are aware of its contents. The policy applies to all school activities and complies with current UK health and safety legislation. It has been developed in consultation with staff and their safety representatives (trade union and/or health and safety representatives).

This policy must be read alongside the Earley Springs Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Staff wellbeing can intersect with safeguarding concerns, and any issue that raises concerns about a child's or an adult's safety must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Distribution

Copies of this policy and any amendments will be distributed to:

- Headteacher
- Health and Safety Representatives
- All Staff
- Executive Board members
- Administration office

Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Board:

The Executive Board has a legal duty to ensure that staff health is not jeopardised by excessive pressures or demands arising from work allocation and organization.

Headteacher:

- Inform all staff of this policy and their role in its implementation.
- Recognise the value of good management practices and systems for effectively managing staff, and encourage a partnership approach with staff, workplace unions, and the school's health and safety committee.
- Be attentive to changes in staff performance or behavior and promote awareness of signs of stress in colleagues.
- Ensure staff have access to regular training on health and well-being, including practical sessions on managing mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Allocate appropriate time and resources for this training.
- Demonstrate, through school systems and practices, a commitment to work-life balance for employees and communicate these practices effectively.

All Staff:

- Familiarise themselves with and comply with this policy.
- Plan and organise work effectively, seeking support from the headteacher when necessary.
- Raise any concerns with the headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, GP, or Occupational Health as early as possible - Where wellbeing or mental health concerns indicate a safeguarding issue, such as domestic abuse, self-harm, substance misuse, or concerns about the welfare of a child or another adult, the matter must be shared with the DSL without delay. Staff wellbeing support does not replace or override safeguarding procedures..
- Communicate with the headteacher promptly about any increase in stress, mental health difficulties, or situations that may lead to such concerns.
- Cooperate with support, advice, and guidance offered.
- Actively participate in risk assessments and school surveys.
- Be mindful of changes in colleagues' behavior and promote awareness of signs of stress.
- Accept opportunities for counseling or other forms of therapy when recommended.

What is stress?

Stress is the adverse reaction people experience in response to excessive pressures or demands. While not an illness itself, prolonged stress can contribute to mental and/or physical illness and negatively impact an individual's performance and behavior.

It's important to distinguish between working under pressure and experiencing stress. A certain level of pressure is normal and can even be beneficial in the workplace, driving performance and creating a sense of accomplishment. However, when pressure becomes excessive, it can lead to stress.

Stress can also originate from pressures outside of work, such as life events like accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown, or financial worries. These external pressures can amplify workplace pressures and contribute to overall stress levels.

Earley Springs recognises that stress triggers and coping mechanisms vary from person to person. Individuals react differently to similar situations. Some common causes of work-related stress include:

- **Demands:** Feeling unable to cope with the demands of the job.
- **Control:** Lack of control over how work is performed.
- **Support:** Insufficient information or support.
- **Relationships:** Difficulties with workplace relationships, bullying, or harassment.
- **Role:** Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.
- **Change:** Lack of involvement or communication during periods of change within the school.

Mental Ill Health

Mental ill health can emerge suddenly, perhaps after a specific event, or it can develop gradually over time. It encompasses a wide range of conditions, from common issues like anxiety and depression to more serious illnesses such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Some conditions may be persistent and classified as disabilities, while others are episodic, with periods of good and bad days. Even with a diagnosed mental health condition, individuals can still experience positive mental health with the right support.

Understanding mental health is crucial because mental ill health is prevalent.

- Individuals with positive mental health tend to be more productive, interact well with colleagues, and adapt more easily to change.
- Those who feel unable to discuss their mental health with their employer may attend work while unwell, impacting individual and team productivity.

- Feeling supported by their employer can help individuals remain in work or return to work more easily after a period of absence.

Who is Covered?

This policy applies to all individuals working at Earley Springs, regardless of their role, level, or employment status. This includes the headteacher, senior management team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home-workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, and agency staff.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Scope and Purpose

Earley Springs is committed to identifying, addressing, and preventing work-related stress. We will provide appropriate support to staff experiencing stress, maintaining confidentiality where appropriate. This includes:

- Fostering open communication, participation, and encouragement.
- Providing training, effective workload planning, and performance feedback to help staff develop skills, confidence, and the ability to raise concerns.
- Utilizing staff development, support systems, and policies that reflect current best practices to help staff understand and recognise stress and address its impact.
- Providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying, and victimization.
- Addressing violence, aggression, and inappropriate behavior through disciplinary action.
- Ensuring that risk assessments consider workplace stress.
- Maintaining a robust appraisal process and capability procedure to ensure appropriate workloads.
- Facilitating flexible working arrangements where reasonably practicable.
- Following comprehensive change management procedures.
- Providing support services, such as an Employee Assistance Programme and occupational health services, for staff affected by stress.

Management Responsibilities

Recognising and addressing stress and mental ill health requires proactive management support and action. Managers and supervisors have specific responsibilities, which include:

- Participating in a culture of open communication and providing encouragement without judgment.

- Ensuring that staff receive appropriate training for their duties.
- Providing meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Effectively planning and allocating workloads, and providing feedback on performance.
- Monitoring workloads and reallocating work as needed to prevent overload or underutilisation.
- Discouraging work-related contact outside of normal working hours or during holidays.
- Monitoring working hours and overtime to prevent overwork.
- Monitoring holiday usage to ensure staff are taking their entitled leave.
- Ensuring that bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Providing additional support to staff experiencing stress outside of work.
- Ensuring that staff understand expected standards of behavior and addressing any breaches - managers must also ensure that staff are supported to follow safer working practice at all times. Any concern relating to professional conduct, boundaries, or behaviour will be addressed under the Staff Code of Conduct or Low-Level Concerns Policy in line with KCSIE.
- Carrying out and implementing recommendations from risk assessments.
- Ensuring that personal data, including information about mental health, is handled in accordance with data protection principles and school policies.

To facilitate this process, the headteacher and senior management team will receive training on best practices. They are encouraged to seek advice from the headteacher on recognizing stress in their staff.

Sources of Support

Earley Springs offers various support mechanisms for staff experiencing stress:

- **Education Support:** We can signpost staff to the Education Support website, which offers practical and emotional support to education professionals and their families.
- **Training and Workshops:** We provide training and workshops on stress management and awareness to help staff recognise and cope with stress.
- **Risk Assessments:** We conduct risk assessments to identify and mitigate workplace stressors.
- **Consultation:** We consult with trade union safety representatives or staff representatives on proposed actions related to preventing workplace stress.

Resolving Cases of Stress/Mental Ill Health at Work

Some staff wellbeing or mental health concerns may raise safeguarding issues. Staff must always share concerns that relate to safety, risk, domestic abuse, self-harm, or the welfare of children or adults with the DSL, even where they arise in the context of wellbeing discussions.

If you are experiencing stress or mental ill health, please discuss this with your Designated Safeguarding Lead, the headteacher, or a member of the Senior Management Team. If you are aware of a colleague experiencing mental health difficulties, encourage them to seek support from a trusted person or their GP/Occupational Health.

Once an issue affecting your health is raised, the school will take steps to address it. These steps may include:

- Workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload, or possible redeployment.
- Reasonable adjustments, such as temporary adjustments to working hours.
- Investigation under the school's Disciplinary and/or Grievance policies and procedures, where appropriate.
- Referral for medical advice and/or a medical report from Occupational Health or a GP, including guidance on reasonable adjustments.
- Reintegration support and keeping staff informed of developments while they are off work.
- An open-door policy for staff to talk to a designated senior member of staff.
- Information about available support services.
- Discussion of a return-to-work program for those on sickness absence.

The Occupational Health Service will continue to play a key role in supporting staff with work-related stress and other challenges that impact their ability to perform their duties.

Absence Due to Stress

If you are absent due to stress or mental ill health, please follow the sickness absence reporting procedure outlined in the school's Sickness Absence Policy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is paramount. All staff members are responsible for maintaining confidentiality related to stress and mental health, whether they are personally affected, supporting a colleague, or involved in related policies and procedures.

Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the school's Disciplinary Policy and procedure.

However, there may be circumstances where information needs to be shared with others, such as when duties need to be reallocated or when a disciplinary investigation is necessary. In such cases, the affected staff member will be consulted, and an appropriate communication plan will be agreed upon before any action is taken.

Where wellbeing concerns intersect with safeguarding issues, records will be maintained in accordance with KCSIE and stored securely within the school's safeguarding recording system. Confidential wellbeing information will never be stored on a safeguarding system unless it meets the threshold for DSL involvement.

Monitoring and Review

The school will monitor the effectiveness of this policy, including the dissemination of good practice, recognition of stress symptoms, and staff awareness.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on this policy and suggest improvements by contacting the headteacher.

Conclusions

This Wellbeing policy reflects Earley Springs commitment to the well-being of its employees. It outlines clear lines of responsibility and organisational arrangements for implementing all aspects of the policy.

Further Guidance

Additional guidance and resources on workplace well-being can be found through the following organisations:

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE):** https://www.hse.gov.uk/
- **HSE - Preventing Work-Related Stress in Schools:** https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/talking-toolkits.htm
- **NASUWT:** https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/
- **National Education Union (NEU):** https://neu.org.uk/advice/tackling-stress
- **Acas:** https://www.acas.org.uk/
- **NHS 111:** https://111.nhs.uk/
- **National Children's Bureau:** https://www.ncb.org.uk/
- **Education Support:** https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/
- **World Health Organization:** https://www.who.int/

The school's Health and Safety lead will ensure these links remain up-to-date.