

Headteacher Wellbeing and Work Life Balance

From Clerk to the Governors website

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- Worklife Support website – information on their “[Headspace](#)” programme
- [Teacher Support Network](#) Tel 08000 562 561
- [Governors Supporting Headteachers’ Wellbeing](#) document from Cumbria Grid for Learning
- [Lambeth Headteacher Wellbeing Guidance](#)
- [Health & Safety Executive Standards](#)
- Guidance from [Wirral Governor Services on Work-life Balance](#)
- Teachers TV “[The Work Less Challenge](#)” (15 mins)
- School Governing’s blog on [Dedicated Headship Time](#)

Introduction: Governing Bodies have a statutory responsibility for supporting the well-being of their headteacher. [Suffolk Governor Services](#) suggest these “10 Top Tips” as a useful guide for reviewing the head’s work/life balance.

1. Look at the timing and length of governors’ meetings. Heads will already have had a long day. How long is their drive home? Legally, there must be an eleven hour gap before returning to work.
2. Heads may be taking on many of the tasks teachers aren’t expected to do as a result of workforce reform. Check to see if they are doing these things.
3. Ask if the head is having a lunchbreak – do people respect this? Can the head leave the building?
4. Heads need praise, encouragement and acknowledgement of their achievements – just like the rest of us. Sometimes it is difficult for them to get this from the staff, so there’s a role for governors here.
5. Work with your head to sort the important from the urgent – governors with business or other experience can help with this.

6. Identify one evening a week free from governors' meetings, concerts, PTA gatherings etc and preserve that as a going home early night for the head. Inform and involve staff to support the head in having this break from school.
7. Consider including a Performance Management target for the head about personal well-being.
8. Show an interest in the head's work-life balance
9. Support the head in identifying a slot in the week for 'deskttime', free from interruptions.
10. Encourage the head to work away from school on particular projects that require solitude e.g. the budget

Acknowledgements to [Suffolk Governor Services Handbook 2010/11](#) (Page 25)

From: "[Governors Supporting Headteachers' Wellbeing](#)" (Cumbria Grid for learning)

The governing body is responsible for the strategic development of the school, while the head is charged with day-to-day management. The governing body has specific and clearly defined statutory responsibilities, including a requirement to conduct an annual performance and salary review of the headteacher. The governing body also has a statutory duty to maintain an overview of headteacher well-being to ensure an appropriate work-life balance.

Suggestions made by heads on the ways governing bodies can provide support included a significant number of suggestions related to the timing, conduct and length of **MEETINGS**; over 25% were concerned with some aspect of this routine element of the relationship with heads. Many headteachers would prefer all meetings to take place in school time, but recognise that there are competing demands on governors' time too. However, every effort should be made to ensure that meetings are concise and effective, recognising the potential impact on the heads' working day.

Suggestions from heads included:-

- Always start meetings on time.
- Ensure that meetings have a guillotined deadline time to finish.

- Assume that governors have read all papers before the meeting.
- Ensure meetings are no longer than a football match.
- Delegate items to committees for longer discussion and debate.
- Avoid delegating matters to the head and chair.
- Meet at more flexible times, for example at the end of school.
- Amalgamate committees or run them 'back to back'.
- Recognise that most meetings result in a long working day for heads and some governors.
- Don't expect to socialise after the meeting.
- Review the committee structure; remove unnecessary committees.
- Decide if the head is required at every meeting. Can the governing body be serviced by another senior member of staff, providing excellent staff training whilst reducing the demands on the head?
- Understand the implications for time when the governing body requests the head to prepare papers or policies.

Whilst meetings are an obvious issue for heads and governors to address, the largest number of suggestions fell under the heading of **The Role of Governors**. Ideas here are subsumed under three broad headings:-

A) Relationship with the headteacher. The theoretical division of responsibilities into strategic development and day-to-day management is rarely clarified in practice, and can lead to tensions. Heads suggestions to avoid this included:

- Governors/heads should know respective briefs and stick to them.
- Following appointment engage in discussion specifying working relationship and understanding. Review at regular intervals.
- Governors should have reasonable expectation of head's teaching load.
- Heads – especially in small schools – should have protected leadership and management time.
- Ensure the head is well supported with admin staff.
- Heads should not routinely be required to write reports and policies for which governing bodies are responsible.

B) Salary issues and performance management arrangements are obvious areas for potential disagreement between heads and governing bodies. Messages in this group included:

- Take the responsibility for heads' performance management as seriously as the head does for the rest of the staff.
- Governing bodies need to understand comparative ISRs in order to set an appropriate one for the school's context. (*ISR – Individual Salary Range*)
- Need to be more flexible, realistic and proactive in paying heads what they are worth.

C) The behaviour of governors. Governors are 'critical friends' to the head. This involves maintaining a balance between a sound knowledge of the school and a lack of interference in its running, described by heads as:-

- Come into school more often when invited.
- Send apologies.
- Have a greater involvement in the life of the school.
- Get a real insight into the school by, for example, shadowing the head for a day.
- Be involved – but don't interfere.
- Ensure you know what words like 'challenge', 'control', 'consult', 'responsibility' mean as a governor.

Acknowledgements: [Governors Supporting Headteacher Wellbeing](#)

The following is from: [Headteacher Wellbeing Guidance](#) (Lambeth)

Headteacher Well Being Guidance for governing bodies and Well Being policy development

“A school that is committed to work-life balance recognises that effective practices to promote work-life balance will benefit both teachers and pupils” (STPCD 2009)

Governing bodies should have regular discussion with headteachers to ensure they are benefiting fully from Workforce Reform and receiving their entitlements under the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document, with a view to implementing a Well Being policy in school. This guidance provides the basis for that discussion, which should include **the governing body's own demands on the Headteacher; issues around distributed leadership and succession planning; work-life balance; dedicated headship time; cover, planning and administration.**

The national Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) suggests that the formal performance management process provides an ideal opportunity for this discussion.

Employers have a duty to employees at common law and a legal duty under health and safety legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and related legislation and the Working Time Regulations 1998. The School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2009 also states that:

“All teachers and head teachers should enjoy a reasonable work-life balance ... In relation to head teachers, specific provisions have been put in place through regulations made under section 21 of the Education Act 2002 which put a responsibility on the relevant body (normally a school governing body or LA) to have regard to the work-life balance of the head teacher.”

In addition, Phase three of the National Workforce Agreement places responsibility on governing bodies for:

- ensuring that *“their headteacher has a reasonable workload, in support of a reasonable work/life balance, having regard to their health and welfare.”*

and

- providing headteachers with a *“dedicated time that recognises their significant Leadership responsibilities for their school”*

Plenty of guidance and materials have been produced to help improve the well being, work life balance and workload of teachers, but headteachers may not have benefited in the same way and have, in some cases, taken on additional duties to ensure they meet their responsibilities to their staff. Lambeth is committed to meeting its responsibilities to headteachers in the borough and this guidance has been produced to support governors to fulfil their legal responsibilities, based on the following:

- The National Workload Agreement, introduced in 2003
- School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document
- Performance Management:

ACTIONS FOR THE GOVERNING BODY TO CONSIDER

The governing body can review its structures and processes:

- What could the governing body do to reduce the number and length of meetings?
- Could meetings be more focussed? Are meetings timetabled for the year and are they time restricted? Could more decisions be delegated to committees?
- Does the governing body have an efficient and effective committee structure?
- Could the number of committees and the frequency of meetings be reduced?
- Is it necessary for the Headteacher to attend all committee meetings? Could another member of the SLT take the lead?
- Could some meetings take place during school time?
- Does the governing body expect a formal written report at every full governing body meeting? Is this necessary or could a written report alternate with a verbal update or presentation?
- Can data and information be presented in a way that meets the needs of more than one audience? For example, do the headings in the Headteacher's Report correspond with the Ofsted Self Evaluation Form headings and/or the five Every Child Matters Outcomes?
- Does the governing body have appropriate and effective administration arrangements, including clerking, for all governing body and committee meetings?
- Completion of the School Profile is the governing body's responsibility. Has the governing body made arrangements for this or is its completion left to the Headteacher?
- When a vacancy arises, does the governing body review its staffing structure with a view to securing a better work/life balance for its staff?

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

What the law says

Under the National Workload Agreement governing bodies have a legal duty to:

- ensure that *“their headteacher has a reasonable workload, in support of a reasonable work/life balance, having regard to their health and welfare.”*

The Teachers Pay & Conditions Document requires that:

- *“all....headteachers should enjoy a reasonable work/life balance.”*

The Working Time Regulations 1998:

- limit working hours to 48 per week (averaged over 12 weeks).
- 11 hours consecutive rest in a 24 hour period (compensatory rest can be given).

What is a reasonable work/life balance?

What constitutes a reasonable work/life balance is different for different people and different for individuals at different times in their life. Headteachers have a responsibility themselves for their own work/life balance but do not always recognise this. Governing Bodies need to be proactive in exploring this issue with their headteacher, to challenge them and to watch out for contra-indications such as health issues, stress, reduced attendance etc.

What areas should be explored?

A range of factors assist or hinder work/life balance and the Governing Body cannot control an employee's personal life. However, a variety of work related issues may impact on the ability to achieve a reasonable balance and may be a starting point for discussion:

- Flexible working/absence – does the school have and operate effective policies which provide for mutual flexibility e.g. time off for personal issues, part-time working?
- Resources – are there sufficient staff, with appropriate distribution of responsibilities, are staff empowered, are other resources (e.g. IT) adequate?
- Meetings – number, frequency and timing, does the headteacher have to attend them all?
- Workload – is this reasonable, the impact of any work activities peripheral or external to the school, is there too much to do in the time available?
- Support – what support does the headteacher receive, do they have access to appropriate training ?
- Individual work styles – could the head work smarter, do they delegate enough, do they self-impose long hours/staying late?
- Consider incorporating discussion of the Headteacher's work/life balance as part of the formal performance management process, as recommended by the national Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG).

DEDICATED HEADSHIP TIME

“Headteachers must have dedicated time to lead their schools, not just manage them.” National Workload Agreement

Since September 2005 governing bodies have had a statutory responsibility to ensure that the Headteacher has dedicated headship time during the school week. It is particularly important that governors take an active role in strategically monitoring the use of this time where headteachers have a heavy teaching timetable or where the management aspects of the role leave little time for leadership.

The headteacher needs time to focus on the important, rather than the urgent, in order to develop the necessary vision and direction to improve the quality of education and raise standards.

What the law says

The National Workload Agreement places the responsibility on governing bodies for:

- providing headteachers with *“dedicated time that recognises their significant leadership responsibilities for their school”*

The Teachers Pay & Conditions Document states that:

- *“a headteacher shall be entitled to a reasonable amount of time during school sessions, having regard to his teaching responsibilities, for the purpose of discharging his leadership and management responsibilities”* and
- *“a headteacher who participates in the teaching of pupils at the school shall have (an) entitlement to planning and preparation time.”*

How much time should be given?

- PPA is 10% of teaching time
- There is no prescribed amount of, or guidance on, a reasonable amount of Dedicated Headship Time (it is suggested 10% of the working week)

The reasonableness of the amount of time will depend on a range of factors:

- amount of teaching commitment

- staffing structure – amount of other management time/support available
- the scope, nature and breadth of responsibilities of the post
- Time must be allocated during the school day (i.e. time when pupils are in attendance)
- It is probably most beneficial for time to be allocated in a single block to allow a reasonable period of uninterrupted time
- This time may be spent off site

Clearly, this time alone will not be sufficient for heads to complete all of their strategic activities. However, it will ensure at least some highly productive, dedicated time, free from interruptions to lead rather than just manage their schools.

What is the time for?

The aim of Dedicated Headship Time is to free headteachers for strategic activity – in other words time to think, analyse, plan and carry out any of the associated activities to manage strategically rather than operationally.

Heads may focus on:

- School improvement
- Raising standards
- School development/improvement
- Improved monitoring and evaluation
- Improved well-being of staff and pupils

Dedicated Headship Time should not be interrupted by

- Routine matters
- Phone calls, enquiries in person
- Requirements to cover
- Visitors – internal or external

It is not for the Governing Body to specify what the headteacher does during this time, but they should ensure the time is taken and may ask for feedback to ensure its effectiveness.

What could dedicated headship time look like?

It will vary from head to head, because of the nature of the specific role and the needs of the individual in that role. Governors will need to discuss this with the headteacher and this discussion may involve consideration of the following:

Individual Time

- Time to read, reflect upon, interpret and consider the implications of Government or LA documents, initiatives etc.
- Time to consider the broader strategic aims for the school and how these match up to national and local agendas
- Time for longer term strategic thinking, to consider what is on the horizon and how best to lead the school to meet these challenges

With a partner

- Head and Deputy to look at broad strategic issues
- Head and Chair of Governors to consider implications and role for the Governing Body

With other headteachers

- An opportunity to 'bounce' ideas off trusted and respected colleagues for planning, sharing ideas and challenge
- As a group sharing views on national/local issues, joint planning, partnership working
- Attending conferences to maintain a fresh 'bigger picture' view

With other professionals

- Time with other professionals to discuss and share strategic issues
- With a mentor/coach to develop key issues which may be problematic

See School Governing's blog on [Dedicated Headship Time – a framework for questions](#)

COVER

What the law says

The Teachers Pay & Conditions Document requires that:

- *“Schools should expect to implement the objective that teachers should only rarely cover from 1 September 2009. In the meantime schools should set their own interim targets...to ensure they are ready to meet this objective.....”*
- *“No teacher shall be required to provide cover for more than 38 hours in any school year”*
- *Headteachers should be “participating, to such an extent as may be appropriate having regard to his leadership and other functions and duties, in the teaching of pupils at the school, including the provision of cover for absent teachers...”*

Implications

While headteachers may wish to have some timetabled teaching time, to assist them with monitoring standards, maintain their own practice, support learning etc., it is not an effective use of their time to be pulled into ad hoc cover. This takes headteachers away from their leadership and management responsibilities. Teachers generally cite the requirement to provide cover as having an adverse impact on their workload and working hours.

Headteachers cannot be required to provide cover during their PPA time and should not be called upon to cover during their Dedicated Headship Time.

What should Governors Consider?

Governors should ensure strategies and resources are in place to limit the requirement on headteachers to provide cover for absent colleagues. Governors should challenge headteachers who continue to provide cover.

Cover strategies include use of cover supervisors, dedicated cover teachers, use of external tutors, coaches etc.

ADMIN/CLERICAL TASKS

What the law says

The Teachers Pay & Conditions Document requires that:

“...teachers cannot routinely be required to undertake administrative and clerical tasks.”

Implications

The contract for headteachers has never contained a duty to perform these tasks and they take time away from leadership and management activities. All routine administrative tasks should be appropriately allocated to members of the support staff team (in consultation and with corresponding reviews of job descriptions, grades etc. where appropriate)

What should Governors Consider?

Administrative tasks are often used as a distraction from other tasks. Some headteachers have difficulty in relinquishing control over certain tasks and others perceive it to be more efficient to perform tasks themselves.

Governing Bodies need to challenge their headteachers on these matters and ensure that sufficient resources (e.g. personnel, training etc) are available to free them from the burden of routine administration.

Governing Bodies should ensure sufficient cover across the school day and beyond to avoid the headteacher having to act as receptionist, cleaner, key holder, cover organiser and IT technician.

Exemplars of good practice:

Providing a mentor or professional support for new head or new to the LA: The GB can agree the need and support with the LA, need to consider benefits to school (less isolation, less stress and provides emotional buffer), as well as potential risk and costs to school

Private medical insurance for the Headteacher: The GB can research and implement, need to consider benefits (reduced sickness / absence, well being and quick response to serious illness) and the costs and any risk to the school.