

# **Director Update- Chairs and Vice Chairs Senior Leader Workload and Welfare**

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# Time Management Strategies- planning the work schedule

- Consider a comprehensive list of the activities/actions you need to lead on, split them into 'day to day' and 'development' activities.
- Prioritise the development activities, delegate the leadership of as many of them as possible to other team members or governors where possible. Use some of the suggestions here to support the team members with managing their own workload and welfare.
- Of the development activities left, set a timeline for completion over the year. Be realistic with how much can be prioritised at one time and the length of time needed. Allow yourself to put some priorities off until you have capacity to deal with them properly.
- Set a weekly timetable that contains the fixed events you must attend with gaps to slot your development priorities into. You need to set dedicated time to complete both day to day and development activities and zealously stick to them.
- Allow yourself to timetable working from home if that suits the task. The school needs to be able to cope without you for short periods of time and you need to work without distractions.

# Time Management Strategies- planning the work schedule

- Consider your work and non-work balance. Everyone is different in terms of preferred working times but is it possible to set some parameters such as not routinely working after a set time each night or not working at the weekends. These parameters may initially feel unachievable however through use of the strategies listed above a growing group of leaders are now not regularly working in the evenings or at weekends.
- Share your time management strategies with trusted support such as your SIP and Chair of Governors. Gain their input and support for the strategies. Gain the support from other governors. Ask for their support in working on any barriers to applying the strategies.
- Share the strategies with your staff. This helps develop a transparent culture for what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. The transparency brings understanding, trust and support. It further develops your important modelling role.

# Managing Pressure Points- Policy/training

- Safeguarding issues often require an immediate response. Safeguarding policy and practice should include how to safeguard the staff involved in dealing with the challenges. The best policies include in-depth training for all on safeguarding responsibilities and procedures, sharing the responsibilities/workload across several staff, building in back fill to free up the staff involved to manage the situation and appropriate supervision for the staff involved. Smaller schools may need to work in supportive partnership with others to enable the capacity to do this effectively.
- Parental complaints are a growing pressure on leaders. Schools doing well in managing this aspect include those who routinely keep parents well informed of school expectations and individual issues. They respond to enquiries quickly and investigate and explain situations in a transparent manner. These steps are effective in reducing the number of formal complaints. For those issues which move into formal complaints having and following a tight policy is vital. Sticking to and communicating the set timescales and using other staff and governors where possible helps considerably. Where complaints are becoming persistent or vexatious seeking external support is usually needed. Supervision by trusted governors or other partners really helps to put the issues into context.

# Managing Pressure Points- create space/email

- When your plans are interrupted by 'firefighting' activity move deadlines back and/or build in more time to complete the 'missed' activity. Allow yourself to use backfill from your staff or supply to cover your 'day to day' for a short period so you can catch up. Avoid late night and weekend working to get back on track as this can be counterproductive to quality as well as your welfare.
- External demands such as Governor meetings/reports, school improvement visits, budget setting etc can all come at the wrong time or sometimes all at the same time. A careful annual plan will be useful in managing the frequency and timing but also allow yourself to reschedule when needed. Moving these events back a couple of weeks is unlikely to have any long-term impact but could give much needed short-term relief.
- Email and other messaging can, if left unchecked, pervade into a 24-hour, 7 day a week continual pressure. Set a simple policy for use including not reading, writing or sending messages during message free hours (possibly after 5 pm or earlier on a Friday and anytime at weekends?). If having to write draft messages outside of the agreed times set 'schedule send' for a time inside the hours. Sending any emails outside of working hours invades the receivers non-working time and may encourage them to work. Ask what will be lost (other than the receivers rest and sleep) if the message is read it at 8am tomorrow rather than at 6pm tonight? In addition, turning off all notifications at any time means we control our activity choices not the machine in your pocket.

# Partnership Working and Support

- One other generic strategy which all headteachers valued for its overall impact on their workload and welfare was 'partnership working'. Either formally across a geographical partnership or an academy trust or informally between fellow headteachers and the local authority the sharing of policy, documents and best practice for all areas of leadership responsibility is a great help. As a result, any development to increase and sustain partnership working in all its guises should be actioned.
- Everyone needs support, this includes school leaders. Support can come from fellow school leaders, governors, LA officers, self-help strategies and external organisations like 'Headsup4HT's'. Build this support into your work programme on a planned regular basis. Do not hesitate to reach out for support at any time it is needed.