**Headteacher Well-being and Work/Life Balance**

**Strategies for achieving a reasonable work/life balance collated from the contributions of serving Headteachers within Shropshire.**

Inevitably a school community needs their Headteacher to have a healthy mind to be able to cope with the challenges faced in their school (or schools) and have the energy to motivate and support others, lead by example, think strategically and therefore achieve the very best for their children.

A Headteacher must take ownership of a solution to the question *‘how do I achieve a reasonable work/life balance?’,* but in doing so Headteachers need their governing body to support them to explore strategies and ultimately legitimise these strategies by agreeing a way forward that will support the headteacher’s work/life balance.

Through the Primary Central Policy Group we approached representatives to ask Headteachers in their respective School Development Groups for tried and tested strategies that go some way to supporting a healthy work/life balance. I have collated the responses I received and offer the following suggestions for consideration;

* **Appoint a Headteacher well-being link governor** – someone to show an interest in the head’s work/life balance. Governing Bodies need to be proactive in exploring this issue with their Headteacher, to challenge them to watch out for contra-indications such as health issues, tress, reduced attendance etc.
* **Governor commitment to monthly supervision**/counselling session for the Headteacher / costed into budget as an essential expenditure (this is available through the LA Educational Psychology Service)
* **Heads identify one evening a week free** from governors’ meetings, concerts, consultation etc. and preserve as a going home early night. Inform and involve staff and governors to support the head in having this break from school.
* **Hold committee meetings during normal working hours** wherever possible (recognising there are competing demands on governors’ time too) / keep to a timed agenda.
* **Include an appraisal target for the Headteacher** which is directly related to personal well-being – establishing distributive leadership for example.
* **Reduce the number of committees or run meetings back-to-back** during a dedicated day for these meetings.
* When meetings are held in the evening, **allow the Headteacher to gain the time back** either by coming in later the following morning (respect the 11 hour gap before returning to work) or allow the Headteacher to ‘bank’ the hours for a time when he/she really needs to redress the balance between work and personal matters.
* **Ensure meetings have a deadline to finish by and stick to it**. Do not keep the Headteacher talking after the meeting unless it is by prior mutual agreement. (Don’t expect Headteachers to socialise after governor’s meetings).
* Ensure heads, particularly in small schools, have **protected leadership and management time.**
* Ensure that the headteacher is **well supported with admin tasks.**
* **Encourage the Headteacher to work off-site** for key tasks where uninterrupted time is essential.
* **Allow the Headteacher to buy-in an external coach/mentor** (as budget would allow) as part of their CPD support.
* **Have a bespoke ‘Governor Handbook’** for your school/federation which sets out the expectations of the Headteacher and the **expectations of Governors very clearly**.
* **Ensure regular governor training** both externally for individuals and in-house as a corporate body and **keep Headteacher wellbeing on the agenda**. Ensure governors are clear about their role of challenge and support.
* **Establish an annual calendar of all meetings** for the academic year ahead so that the Headteacher may plan ahead and manage their workload in such a way as to help maintain a satisfactory work/life balance.

This list is by no means exhaustive but it is reflective of some of the strategies currently in operation across Shropshire schools. What constitutes a reasonable work/life balance is different for different people and different for individuals at different times in their life. **Governing Bodies need to be proactive in exploring this issue with their Headteacher, to challenge them to watch out for contra-indications such as health issues, stress, reduced attendance etc.**

Claire Gaskin - Executive Headteacher -The Trinity Federation

On behalf of Primary CPG representatives.