Governors Monitoring Headteacher Well-being

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.

The Headteacher needs time to focus on the important priorities, rather than just the urgent, in order to develop the necessary vision and direction to improve the quality of education and raise standards. They need to work with governors as well as their staff.

What constitutes a reasonable work/life balance is different for different people and different for individuals at different times in their life and the context of the school. 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, being in school and working over long hours, managing their time, distributed leadership for the rest of the senior team, etc.

The relationships with the Headteacher,(and senior staff in larger schools) especially with the Chair, Chairs of Committees and with all governors must aim to be positive, be sensitively challenging yet create a culture which is transparent, open to shared sensitive challenge and in the best interests of the whole school community. Governors up to date knowledge of the school with regular visits will build on those relationships.

Governors (especially the Chair – at least a half termly check asking about feelings, frustrations, ideas for developments and possible remedies) regularly show an interest in the head’s work-life balance and report to the Chair if other governors feel things are ‘not right’ – offering possible solutions rather than comments and criticisms.

For schools in Federations and Multi Academy Trusts then these aspects should be the responsibility of those governors for each individual school, perhaps the Head’s appraisal committee. Some schools have a link governor for headteacher well-being.

.

**Some aspects to consider for headteacher well-being:**

**1.Governor formal meetings**

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. Can and does the governing body review its structures, organisation and processes regularly so that they are fit for current purpose?
3. What could the governing body do to reduce the number and length of meetings?
4. Could meetings be more focussed with efficient and effective chairing and clerking, especially with regard to communication, minutes and other reports / papers, reviewing policies, use of time, finance and business?
5. Are meetings timetabled for the year and are they time restricted?
6. Does the governing body have an efficient and effective committee structure?

Could more discussion and decisions be delegated to those committees?

1. Is it necessary for the Headteacher to attend all committee meetings? Could other members of the SLT attend with quality feedback to the headteacher as soon as possible afterwards?
2. Could some meetings take place during school time?
3. 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 by other members of staff (eg Subject leaders)?

1. 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 become part of the in-year revised action plans in the SDP or part of the SEF?

1. Does the governing body have appropriate and effective administration arrangements, including clerking, for all governing body and committee meetings?
2. How are the governors involved in setting school priorities for the next academic year?

Do they contribute to the writing of the School Self Evaluation Form (SEF)?

1. Does the school have clear protocols, expectations and routines for governance – are they written? (Is there a School specific Governors handbook with those routines and committee terms of reference included?)
2. Do all governors have access to the current DfE Governors’ Handbook and current Ofsted Inspection Handbooks?
3. When a staff vacancy arises, does the governing body review its staffing structure with a view to securing a better work/life balance for all the staff?

**2. Dedicated headship / leadership time**

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. 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.

Heads may want to focus on:

* School improvement
* Raising standards, strategies, distributed responsibilities and assessment record keeping
* School development/improvement
* Improved monitoring and evaluation
* Improved well-being of staff and pupils

Dedicated Headship Time off site should **not** be interrupted by:-

* Routine matters
* Phone calls, enquiries in person
* Requirements to cover

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.

**Headteachers working off site**

Encouragethe head to work away from school on particular projects that require solitude e.g. initial drafting of the School Development Plan, Headteacher’s termly formal report to governors, the drafting of the School Evaluation Form (SEF), drafting the school budget, drafting reviews of school statutory policies.

* Some schools have away half days / days with the Chair other Chairs of committee and Deputy or Senior Staff for planning strategic developments.
* Time with other headteachers for 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
* Time with other professionals to discuss and share strategic issuessuch as with amentor/coach to develop key issues which may be problematic
* Heads could 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.

**3. Headteacher Appraisal / Performance Management**

Governors should take the responsibility for heads’ performance management as seriously as the head does for the rest of the staff.

Is it currently carried out effectively and efficiently – well planned and fit for purpose - meeting the needs of the headteacher their role and the school?

* Governors might need to be flexible, realistic, knowledgeable and proactive in paying heads what they are worth.
* Consider including an appraisal objective for the head about personal well-being.
* Heads may be taking on many of the tasks Teachers / Classroom Assistants aren’t expected to do as a result of previous workforce reform.
* Ask if the head is having a lunchbreak – do people respect this? Can the head leave the building?

**4. Newly appointed Headteachers**

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.

* Governors/heads should know the 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.

**5. 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.

* Come into school more often – be proactive in the role as link governors with lead staff for the specific focus, (SDP key priorities, English, Maths, Early Years, Disadvantaged pupils – all aspects)
* Send apologies with reasons if not able to attend meetings – confirm attendance with the clerk
* Have a greater involvement in the life of the school whenever possible.
* Get a real insight into the school by, for example, shadowing the head /subject leader / pupil for a day. Taking a learning walk with senior staff or the Chair – write up observations.
* Be involved – but don’t interfere – Governors should have ‘Eyes on – Hands off’
* Ensure you know what words like ‘challenge’, ‘control’, ‘consult’, ‘responsibility’ mean as a governor.- read the meeting papers and be well prepared for meetings – know the school and especially the staff – value them and what they are doing! Ask pupils what they are learning, what they enjoy, things they find difficult and any ideas for having a better school.
* Attend Governor training and keep up to date with DfE, Ofsted and National / Local educational developments.
* Plan your visits – what might you see – what might you be expected to hear, - what might you wish to ask? What are you going to do with what you find?

Content in part adapted from Clerk to the Governors website and NUT work-life balance school model policy with suggestions from practicing Headteacher’s about their Work / Life balance

Complied by HEADS Consultancy Ltd. - John Hemmings Email: enquiries@heads2heads.co.uk