

# The PMB Management Report 1: May 2018

## Wellbeing and Work-life Balance for Schools/Academies

### Introduction

The issue of workplace stress in schools is well researched and documented. Studies suggest that as many as 67% teachers state that their job has had an adverse impact on their mental health with more than half having sought medical treatment. A recent NEU study indicates 80% teachers are thinking of leaving the profession with 40% working in excess of 21 hours above contracted time.

The work of Dr Emma Kell [2018] indicated that 82% of practising teachers have experienced anxiety directly related to the job and 54% have experienced depression. 29% would not see themselves remaining within the profession for another two years.

This situation, as school leaders fully understand is unsustainable. The subsequent costs of sickness absence and cover, staff turnover, low morale and impact on standards are obvious. In a recent survey of 775 teachers, 77% stated that poor teacher mental health is having a detrimental impact on pupils' progress [Professor Glazzard, Leeds Beckett University].

We also know well that the position is no different for support staff. The whole framework of staff well-being, mental health at work and the associated issues of work-life balance and happiness with self are industry-wide issues.

### Our Survey

In February/March this year [2018] we sent out a simple 4 question survey to 40 Headteachers and Academy CEOs from across the education spectrum with 35 returns. The return rate [87.5%] and some of the comments in the free text box, an example below, certainly reinforces the level of concern around this issue.

*"Quite simply this is THE most important issue facing our schools right now"*

The purpose of this report was not merely to add to the evidential weight demonstrating the validity of the above statement but to identify and share sound, practical solutions and ideas from a range of schools/academies as well as to contribute to the serious debate around this critical issue.

The four survey questions were:

1. What is the single thing you find most stressful/demanding in your role at the moment?
2. What is the most important thing you do for your own wellbeing/work-life balance?
3. What is the most important thing you do to support the wellbeing/work-life balance of your staff?
4. What is the one best thing your governors could do to help you further with your wellbeing/work-life balance?

We promised complete confidentiality so there are no names attached to either quotes or ideas in this report. You will also find further resources and articles on our website: [www.thepmb.co.uk](http://www.thepmb.co.uk)

# Q1: What is the single thing that you find most demanding/stressful in your role at the moment?

## 1. “Personnel issues – from performance concerns to recruitment/retention”

Many concerns were expressed around people management issues causing excessive demands/stress for Headteachers either as the primary factor or as a secondary issue. In essence it was the ‘hard’ HR issues that often featured most strongly in these responses.

Managing performance of staff was the most common theme here whether “sustaining consistently good practice from all staff” or “managing the negativity of those who only want to do ‘just enough’ and can’t see why we all have to aim higher.” This latter view was also reinforced by two Heads who each appeared to have a significantly draining issue with a member of their SLT.

Redundancy programme was also mentioned and this obviously has overlap with the second issue, see below. Teacher recruitment too was highlighted though the appropriate solutions here depends whether the problem is also finance related and thus an inability to compete in salary offers or if it is the historical reported problem of insufficient good graduates coming into the profession.

However, the most startling response came from this Headteacher:

*“Headteachers/Deputy Heads should be trained in Mental Health First Aid. I have had occasions whereby I felt out of my depth when staff had a breakdown in front of me regarding challenges that they were facing in their personal life. This includes a member of staff pulling out clumps of their hair in front of me, another member of staff with acute paranoia and someone informing me that they were a victim of child abuse.”*

There will be many Headteachers who have experienced something similar but it is absolutely essential that someone newly appointed to the Headteacher role is fully prepared for this possible event. Breakdowns such as describes above are not always easy to predict but when it happens it is crucial that the immediate responses are appropriate like any significant injury. The recommendation for Mental Health First Aid training is an excellent one.

**Recommended action:** Often the starting point for performance concerns, at whatever level of job, requires an unambiguous clarification of expectations supported with clear evidence of how and where the individual is falling short of those expectations. The next steps are simply worked through the school’s capability – obviously that is easy to state and often because of other factors, not nearly so easy to manage.

It is particularly difficult with concerns over the performance and/or commitment of more senior colleagues. The issues and impact are likely to be more in the field of management style

which is far less straightforward to evidence compared to, say pupil progress/attainment. But the process is still the same.

The following is good mnemonic to guide you through a challenging conversation here:

**P:** State clearly the current **P**erformance or **P**osition, the evidence and why it is a concern

**E:** Next clarify the **E**xpectations for the individual and shape this into a SMART target

**G:** Then discuss and ideally agree the support and development including monitoring that should help bridge this **G**ap.

**I:** Set out clearly the possible **I**mplications in a fair and balanced conversation so explain both scenarios – if the individual meets expectations but also obviously the next steps in the procedure if the individual falls short

**E:** And finally always finish the conversation on a positive **E**ncouraging note. So state your hope that the individual will work with the agreed support plan and this should enable him/her to meet expectations

Always keep a good record of conversations, outcomes and evidence as part of a review process.

Understandably many Headteachers do find this process challenging. It can be laced with concerns around legal challenge possibly with involvement of unions but also most Headteachers, especially those newer to the post may not have had any formal training in this area.

So if it is support and/or expert guidance you need in this area then please do contact us:  
[admin@thepmb.co.uk](mailto:admin@thepmb.co.uk)

However, without a doubt the most important recommendation here is to ensure that every school has sufficient individuals fully trained in Mental Health First Aid.

## 2. “Budget, budget, budget!”

Probably no big surprise that finance, or rather the lack of it was cited by several respondents as a major problem causing Headteacher stress. Possibly more of a surprise was that it wasn't the highest issue given the high political profile education has received in the press. For some it was a general worry, for others it was even questioning the financial stability of their school. Several Heads cited Higher Needs Funding as a particular problem with one describing HNF as “appalling mismanagement.”

For one Executive Head the lack of funding is central to everything else:

“The funding issue really is crucial as everything hinges on it – standards, quality of teaching and learning, leadership capacity, the list just goes”

The Headteachers that gave this issue as the primary issue clearly saw it as a factor that was outside of their control or influence and it was really this feeling of being “powerless” that was at the heart of their perception of stress.

In this respect one response that would chime with many others was: “I know what I have to do to get my school where it needs to be but I simply do not have the funds to invest in the development of my staff or their wellbeing. My buildings are in a poor state and I am unable to pay for anything other than the most urgent of repairs ... and we no longer have sufficient carry-forward to manage this deficit”

In some cases it was less about the short term ‘balancing the books’ and more about future impact. “.. medium to long term projects are very bleak and balancing this with the needs of a school and ongoing school improvement is very difficult.”

Overall the budget issue was cited by 7 respondents as the main factor [20% sample]

**Recommended action:** More often than not it isn’t the factual position of the numbers, depressing though that sometimes can be, it is the feeling of not being in control of your own and the school’s destiny which is the root problem.

This is a particular issue for many Headteachers who have thrived and progressed in their career on the very basis of being able to influence strongly key factors and issues to achieve results.

If the funding issue is leaving some Heads to feel powerless then the way back here is to re-establish some, however limited control. Arguing and campaigning for a more acceptable funding formula may make a Head feel better but realistically it is not going to do much in the short term.

The only solutions here are around careful analysis of what is necessary to try to release some savings and an honest assessment of priorities aligned with some action on possible ways to generate additional income. But one big piece of advice – get others involved, school leaders, staff and governors. Not only will it ensure it doesn’t produce something unpopular and seemingly arbitrary but engagement of others will generate ‘buy-in’ to any changes and may also produce better ideas.

Perhaps, if the interest is there we will set this latter issue of income generation as the subject for a further survey? Please do let us know if this could be helpful, again: [admin@thepmb.co.uk](mailto:admin@thepmb.co.uk)

### **3. “The sheer volume of all the things I’m responsible for and never having proper time to deal with it as another urgent issue will always crop up, a parental complaint, a child protection issue, someone goes sick ... it is all just too much!”**

This is a different angle on the ‘being out of control’ sensation that many Headteachers described. This is more about being buffeted around in the maelstrom, never really sure where the next urgent issue is going to come from. “Having to respond to every crisis.”

“... each day brings different demands as one all-consuming demand dissipates it is replaced by the next. The issue for me is the flow of pressure as and when there is no headspace between the pressures, that’s when stress creeps in.”

“Just being responsible for 60 + staff and 430 children and all the issues that come with that takes its toll mentally after a while. Constantly juggling health and safety, teaching and learning, recruitment etc ... etc”

And this is especially an issue when the pressure is “servicing workloads that do not appear to support the progress of my pupils

Another critical area appears to be where a Headteacher is in transition towards Executive Head or Principle role. The strain in “letting go” of stuff that has been a strong and enjoyable part of the old role as well as being allowed to let go of stuff by other staff who still see the same person does feature in several responses.

#### **Recommended action for consideration: Coaching**

There are no text book solutions here, each scenario will be different according to individual and context but expert, externally provided coaching can assist and support you to make sense of your world and to develop good bespoke solutions to your unique problem, to get on top of the crisis situation.

Some schools do provide coaching for senior leaders though the evidence and feedback of our Coaching into Appraisal programme shows strongly that a whole school ethos is very effective and quickly becomes self-sustaining as staff realise the benefits and value.

#### **Some of the other issues stated:**

➤ **“Staff morale – maintaining staff wellbeing and workload balance as well as my own in such tough times”**

“There are elements of a Headteacher’s job that you can be trained in and there are bits that you can pick up as you go along. However, there is no training course that can tell you how to

cope with a member of your staff who tells you that their hair has started to fall out. I will admit I cried with her ... that's the kind of thing that keeps me awake at nights"

- **"Balancing the demands and expectations of various stakeholders, including the LA, governors and parents ... being an effective 'gatekeeper' whilst maintaining a positive, enthusiastic and holistic learning for all culture."**
- **"Poor governance!"** was cited by one respondent and two others specifically mentioned that their relationship with the Chair of Governors was not supportive.
- **"The imminent threat of Ofsted"**
- **"The tension between delivering on SATS and Pupil Premium performance v our school values of Creativity and Independence."**

Again with all the issues cited above there does seem to be a strong theme of control, or absence of it coming through – this is one of the six factors in the HSE management standards framework for Stress at work and something we will comment on further in this report.

If our Coaching into Appraisal programme sounds interesting to you then you can find further details at: [www.thepmb.co.uk/coaching/](http://www.thepmb.co.uk/coaching/) or contact us: [admin@thepmb.co.uk](mailto:admin@thepmb.co.uk)

## Q2: What is the most effective thing that you do for your own wellbeing/work-life balance?

### 1. “My weekends are sacrosanct”

By far the most common well-being/work-life balance ‘initiative’ cited was some form of maintaining a “work-free barrier” at weekends. This invariably involved a “curfew” from a set time on Friday to Sunday evening and the time set aside for personal/family/social activities.

Some mentioned that this was not easy and that they had to get family, partner or friends to help them keep the discipline as “it is all too easy just to slip into the bad old way again.” And “I put an ‘out of office’ message on my account every weekend and school holiday.”

Others went further and extended this kind of formal “switch off time” into the Monday to Friday timetable and again a set curfew time for any e-mails featured in this area as did spending important time with family. “I set a break between 6.30pm and 8.30pm each day to have dinner with wife and children and go through bath and bedtime procedures. I am getting better at zoning out during these periods.”

### 2. “I have a personal trainer to do boxing once a week!”

Not sure if this is particular response is a reflection of the area of the school or the management style of the Headteacher (!) but many stated that some form of physical activity was an important part of their wellbeing/work-life balance strategy for themselves.

Mostly it involved going to the gym. Some mentioned that once a week they made a point of leaving early for this. A couple of others mentioned that their physical activity, whether gym or five a side football was often followed by a social drink [or two!] and this was “non-negotiable.”

Almost a fifth of responses mentioned running regularly and some even managed this early morning before work.

Other activities mentioned:

- Walking the dog [x3]
- “Just taking myself off somewhere peaceful for a walk, local woods, beach, hills, wherever I can just be by myself”
- “Weekly ballroom dancing lessons”
- “Golf”

All the respected essays on health and well-being emphasise the principle of healthy body – healthy mind and yet it is usually the first thing that gets jettisoned when under pressure of time.

### **3. “I meet with a small group of other Heads for lunch from time to time. It is a great time to chat about things, share our frustrations and worries. We probably don’t do this enough.”**

This idea came up in several responses. It appears to vary from the kind of set up described above, informal and around an enjoyable social event but with the specific aim of ‘co-counselling’ each other to something a little more formal and forming something akin to a group coaching set up.

This kind of activity is so important. Not only is it a great way to offload in a cathartic kind of way but the connections helps reassure you that you are not alone, that it is not just you dealing with this ‘monster’ whether it a funding demon or a nightmare member of staff and it gives you access to supportive ideas to move forward.

Interestingly two respondents said that they used to have something like this in the past and they wished there was something now. We will send out an email question to see if there is more interest in developing something around this idea, possibly with a Leadership CPD theme and if this is something you would be interested in then please do let us know.

### **4. Other examples mentioned**

- **“I speak to my coach about the challenges I’m facing and discuss solutions.”**
- **“I am a prolific list maker. I set out what I want to achieve each day and when I do it I go home. If something new comes in, I adjust the list and move things around.”**
- **“I meditate most mornings for about 20/30 minutes”**
- **“I’m using some mindfulness techniques that I find really helpful”**
- **“I encourage my governors to spread out their visits through the year and also not to save up their questions to the weekend before the full governing body meeting!”**

Several examples were cited around **“being kind to myself”**

- **“My wife and I try to have a weekly ‘date night’ when we go out for dinner and talk.”**
- **“A gym and wine night once a week with best friend is non-negotiable”**

However, there were two responses that certainly suggest something of a concern:

**“In all honesty, I don’t do anything for my own well-being or work-life balance. I work full time and have two young children at home. There is no time for anything else!”**

**“I don’t have the time!”**



### Q3: What is the most important thing that you do to support the well-being/work-life balance of your staff?

#### 1. **“Staff tell me that the regular, termly coaching sessions we have introduced recently have had a big, positive impact on workload and their feelings of being supported.”**

Encouragingly almost a third of respondents stated that coaching or formal supervision was generally available and this was one of the most important initiatives supporting staff well-being.

For some schools this was only for leadership posts: “I offer my senior leaders weekly coaching sessions in order for them to explore issues and consider their responses to the challenges they face.

Most other schools though that provide coaching appear to do so to a wider group. “Coaching into Appraisal for all teachers and leaders is now firmly linked to well-being through our Coaching Champion” and “The introduction of our new coaching system has had a hugely positive impact on staff well-being. Staff report back that they can use coaching strategies to help them focus professionally and park work issues at work rather than take them home.”

Some schools have not opted for the coaching route but are instead providing access to in school supervision and this has received positive feedback. Others at least appear to have developed an ethos of it being OK to talk about workload or pressure and if you do then you will find an understanding listener: “As a leadership team we often discuss how we make sure that staff feel listened to and valued.” “At this point in time it is about showing my staff that I trust them and that we are willing to listen to them.”

#### 2. **“We give them time and money to research fresh ideas with the space and forum to share their findings. For teachers this includes ‘gifting’ back 2 to 3 Inset days to recognise the hours they spend on evidence informed practice.”**

There were several responses that indicated the provision of dedicated time or giving time back was an important part of their well-being strategy but the above example is probably the most innovative one we came across. This particular school provides a personal CPD allowance that a member of staff can use for anything provided that it can demonstrate a research element and that they will share the learning with their colleagues.

Another great example is a school that provides two Well-being Days for each member of staff [pro rata for part time staff]. This can be used flexibly through the year to enable time off for personal interests, subject of course, to staff cover arrangements. This has had a big boost for morale and it is also likely to have a positive impact on sickness absence.

Other schools appear to have a more flexible ad hoc approach to time off for school plays/sports days for children or other events. “ .. the best strategy for the well-being of staff is being extremely flexible and giving out a clear message that family and health are important and this is just a ‘job.’” More succinctly one Head put it, “we have a family first policy.” Another Head said, “I send them home when I feel they are over doing it and tell them to stop worrying about things.” What one Head described as developing a “Goodwill culture” so that it is OK for staff to take a day off as I know they will give back to the school in other ways.

Other examples included taking PPA time at home, “people don’t abuse this, they always make up the time without me checking up on it.” Offering extra non-contact time, further leadership time and also one school that has introduced ‘Reflection Time’ where teachers have dedicated school day time “to go off site and reflect on their role, their workload and their well-being.” One school provides all staff with a Christmas shopping day another offers support staff the opportunity to ‘bank’ extra time worked to be taken back during the year.

### **3. “We regularly say “thank you” through our Well-being Wall**

A small number of our respondents stated that they have set up some kind of message board where all staff including school leaders and governors can put up a ‘thank you’ message to acknowledge and appreciate the help, support and efforts of others.

In the example above the Well-being Wall was just outside the staff room and at a recent visit two members of staff, both TAs, were proudly reading what other colleagues had written about them. It was the public recognition that seemed to have the impact here.

Recognition does appear to be an essential part of the right leadership culture. “Recognise that their job is often very hard, that they genuinely do a good job here ... I make a point to catch everyone doing something well and tell them that!”

One Head takes this a step further. “An everyday “morning and hello” to everyone from myself and the SLT ... with random acts of kindness (normally chocolate or post-it/motivational poster) left on desks, small ways like that to say thank you”

Another excellent initiative here is the idea of “Well-being Wednesday – a brief meet before school to look at an aspect of well-being/being together with a breakfast snack provided.” And another school where the Well-being team have a ‘Brighten your day’ event with termly nominations and prizes [wine or chocolate!] for staff who have “brightened” someone’s day.

#### **4. “I try to filter the government directives so only do what is appropriate for *our* children in *our* time. We don’t jump on any bandwagon.”**

The idea of the Headteacher being the guardian of staff well-being and a “stress gatekeeper” came through in a number of responses. “We protect our staff as much as possible from external expectations and demands. And we provide time and opportunities to talk.”

This area included providing regular opportunities or simply an “open door” to discuss [or as one Head put it, to provide a “true listening ear”] issues around workload, planning new initiatives through the year so that they don’t come all at once. And inevitably Ofsted fell into this category, “we try not to be Ofsted focussed because our improvement focus is very good – celebrating these successes really helps.”

One interesting and thought provoking comment from one Head took this area a bit further with “It is a job where you want the best but there is a danger of creating a culture where nothing is then good enough.” That also suggests there is a role for school leadership to manage the external expectations so that staff are not continually being pushed to achieve impossibly ever higher standards and that sometimes ‘good enough’ is exactly that!

#### **Other great examples:**

- **“We start all our meetings with a short meditation and it really helps put people in the right frame of mind.”**
- **“Sometimes it as simple as having a cup of tea together and allowing them to talk through their stresses”**
- **“We have dedicated staff meetings for staff wellbeing.”**
- **“Coaching, speaking to staff regularly to know what they’ve got going on outside of school, don’t pass on *my* stress!”**
- **“We are always looking for ways to genuinely reduce workload, for example reducing marking.”**
- **“We ensure pinch points where assessment, data, pupil progress meetings, provision mapping, reports etc are all well managed to avoid times when everything has to be done at once.”**
- **“I think that above everything else my staff know I care and that I listen, maybe a bit too much at times! They know we are a team.”**

#### **5. “We keep all our staff and SLT meetings to an hour maximum and it works!”**

Several Heads mentioned the opportunity of time limiting or reducing the number of meetings to free up time and space for staff or simply ensuring the meetings are an effective use of time. Certainly this was also an area where many Heads brought in a bit of TLC with treats provided, usually chocolate, cake and fruit as a way of maintaining morale.

## Q4: What is the one best thing your Governors could do that would help you further with your own well-being/work life balance?

Surprisingly in some ways this was a question that gained the broadest range of responses as well as the broadest content.

Many responses [almost 40%] were encouragingly positive and specific about the support they currently receive from their Governors. “My Chair of Governors is amazing. She is so appreciative of what I do in school and is always available if I need to talk to her. She encourages me to take strategic days and she understands the demands of the role.”

“I have a very supportive JLGB who regularly ask about my work – life balance.”

“My governors are very helpful in assisting my well-being and work-life balance. Although they challenge me they are very supportive. The Vice-chair is always happy to listen and she has a good understanding of the level of stress that can be part of my role.”

Certainly there is a clear theme here and also it seems that Headteachers really do value the support they receive if they are in the extremely fortunate position of having a former Head as Chair/Vice Chair. We will suggest to the LA this might be something they could pursue and support further.

However, a worrying 50% of responses clearly did not share this fortunate position with many being quite critical, some times of a micro-management style of governance.

“Stop thinking they need to operate the school and being afraid of Ofsted.”

“Much of my time, and therefore an increased workload is spent supporting the Board. They do not have the knowledge and understanding to fully perform their role without support.”

“Governors are another area of significant stress and create additional work.”

“Stop trying to micro manage me and sending e-mails that feel as if I’m being checked up on all the time.”

And, as mentioned earlier in this report two Heads specifically mentioned that their relationship with their Chair of Governors was a dysfunctional one.

We will share these general findings with KCC’s Leadership and Governance team to see if the LA wishes to provide further training or other support in this area. However, if this is something you would like support with then The People Management Business can offer leadership coaching for either/both Chair of Governors and Headteacher to develop stronger team-working and also facilitation and feedback to improve the effectiveness of Governing Body meetings.

## Other useful ideas for Governors to improve Headteacher Well-being

- **“Check in with me more often. My weekly meeting with the Chair is very business focused. We are not good at finding time for the informal; how are you, how can we help type of conversation?”**
- **“Sometimes the number of questions and emails the weekend and evenings before the GB meeting can feel a burden.”**
- **“Come well prepared for meetings, stay on agenda and avoid bringing additional issues which interesting are not always relevant to current school improvement.”**
- **“Meetings during the day would be better.”**
- **“Agree to LGB meetings earlier in the day so that we are not at school late into the evening after a long day.”**
- **“Ask how I am and if check that I am taking dedicated Headship time out of school.”**
- **“Being brave, providing a term’s secondment for research [I would need to be brave too!]**
- **“Actively promote well-being, presence and thanks to staff.”**
- **“Offer a sabbatical every 3 years of 2 to 3 weeks to allow for some thinking time.”**
- **“Flexible working. I would really like to be able to work from home one day a week to focus on the strategic direction of the school.”**

There are some really good ideas coming through here, many that follow similar themes identified in the responses to question 3 above which were around: space and time to think and reflect, checking in regularly and asking how to support but also provide time and resource for professional development and research. The idea of part-time Headship was also mentioned as a means to avoid ‘burnout’ as well as an excellent recruitment strategy.

One other theme that comes through though is that many of the suggestions above are the kind of thing that we might expect to part of a professional, supportive dialogue between a Headteacher and Chair of Governors. The fact that it doesn’t could suggest that the Head, for whatever reason does not feel empowered to raise this as a topic for discussion.

We have shared this issue with Tricia Taylor of Tailored Practice. Tricia is a former school leader and does some excellent work around developing Growth Mindset. We are exploring some partnership ideas about how to develop a growth mindset in the Head – Chair of Governor working relationships.

Again let us know if this might be of interest to you but do watch this space!

## Some final thoughts and summary

As a means to contributing to the debate on this critical issue we have linked up with Steve Waters and the Teach Well Alliance he has established. His website is highly recommended [[www.teachwellalliance.com](http://www.teachwellalliance.com)] and at a recent conference Steve shared the findings from a study by Christina Maslach of University of California into teacher burnout.

The DfE recently have focused on the area of workload and have published some research findings from a number of school/academies to assist improvements in this area. However, for Maslach this is really missing the critical point as she identifies burnout being attributable to a complex mix of six factors:

- Control: the inability to be in control of own destiny including career and workload
- Rewards: inadequate material rewards but also personal recognition
- Community: a school environment that doesn't reach out, include and support everyone
- Fairness: perceptions of unfair treatment and disadvantage
- Conflict between personal and organisation values, stated and espoused.

The responses to our questionnaire would seem to strongly support the findings of Maslach's study rather than the current one dimensional approach from the DfE. And probably the loudest of the messages coming through is the issue of control, or lack of it and how that impacts on stress and absence of wellbeing.

This factor manifests in many ways from our research. Headteachers who feel unable to stem the apparent 'tsunami' of national and LA initiatives, teachers feeling powerless to meet the rising expectations of government and parents especially with so many complex 'external' factors that impact on learning and certainly those Heads who do not enjoy a fully supportive and sometimes dysfunctional relationship with their Chair and/or governing body.

Much of what has been reported by our respondents appears to be centre on effective strategies to enable the individual to feel more in control. The responses ranged from meditation through to coaching.

Certainly the reward issue came up in many responses though not in pay terms. Often it was around simply recognising contribution in a way that really impacted positively on individuals and teams.

In terms of community and fairness there were many examples cited of ways in which schools/academies can ensure all staff feel included in the life of their school and in a way that feels fair to all.

But if the control issue is the top factor in effective wellbeing and work-life balance then how a school/academy ensures that the experience of all staff at work is aligned with **and** clearly supports the organisation's values is a close second. Virtually all schools/academies have a clear statement of their values and these invariably include themes such as Respect, Trust, Perseverance, Responsibility etc. But these are not just for pupils, it is essential that all staff can see how their school values relate to the way they are treated as employees as well as how they are expected to behave towards others, including other staff.

All of this is further supported by the excellent research by Dr Kell described in her highly recommended book, *How to Survive in Teaching without Imploding, Exploding or Walking Away* [2018] which we have reviewed on our website: [www.thepmb.co.uk](http://www.thepmb.co.uk)

Dr Kell identifies 3 factors for teachers to survive and flourish:

- Realism and resilience to rigorously prepare teacher for the realities of the profession
- Relationships to provide the crucial networks of support
- Work-life balance to keep sense of priorities and perspective to avoid losing to the 'martyr syndrome' that affects so many teachers at all levels

It is hoped this report has helped open up the debate around such a critical issue and has shared some really good practice that should give others ideas on which to build. However, if there are just 3 quick things a school should do now, learning from all of this, we would advise

- 1) Make a clear statement of intent
- 2) Appoint a Staff Wellbeing Champion or SLT Lead with a clear mandate for action, and
- 3) Keep the issue on the agenda of every meeting, especially the full governing body meetings.

We would also highly recommend that key actions are included in the school improvement plan and this really must include training in Mental Health First Aid to ensure school leaders are equipped to deal with the kind of experienced referenced on page 2 of this report.

But if there is just one thing many Heads must be doing as an absolute essential action, and that is to role model the very behaviours and attitudes they wish to see for their staff. That includes setting a cap to their working hours. It also means putting family and health first and it certainly includes opening up and talking about the issue as well as all other positive, healthy initiatives and lifestyle choices that go with wellbeing.

And, if there is just one thing that a Chair of Governors should be doing then that is to regularly check in with their Head and inquire honestly about wellbeing and workload.

But, if anyone is still in any doubt that this is a critical issue that needs wider and urgent action:

*"I am coming to the view that it is impossible for Headteachers to have any semblance of work-life balance as the role gets increasingly difficult with less and less resources. I know of various Heads that have had breakdowns ... I would not recommend being a Head now. Despite this I love my job and I know the difference I am making"*

So, in conclusion we hope this research has contributed to the debate as well as providing some practical ideas and strategies for schools/academies to consider. In addition you will find many resources and articles on our website, all free to download: [www.thepmb.co.uk/resources](http://www.thepmb.co.uk/resources)

And if you would like help in any way with developing a wellbeing strategy or you would like further information about some of the ideas reported here then do contact us at: [admin@thepmb.co.uk](mailto:admin@thepmb.co.uk) or Gary Edwards on 07933 220 183

## Further reading and recommended websites

ACAS Advisory booklet (2012): Health, Work and Wellbeing

ACAS Guidance (2017): Promoting positive mental health in the workplace.

HSE (2017): Tackling work-related stress using the management standards

Glazzard, Jonathan (2018): Children's education is suffering because of poor teacher mental health, Leeds Beckett University. Available at: <https://www.teachwire.net/news/i-have-cried-before-work-at-my-breaks-and-got-into-bed-as-soon-as-ive-got-home>

Grant, V (2018): How can Headteachers support the wellbeing of their staff? Available at: [www.integritycoaching.co.uk/blog/support-wellbeing](http://www.integritycoaching.co.uk/blog/support-wellbeing)

Kell, E (2018): How to survive in teaching without imploding, exploding or walking away. London, Bloomsbury

Rogers, B (2011): The essential guide to managing teacher stress: Practical skills for teachers. London, Longman

Wax, R (2016): A mindfulness guide for the frazzled. New York, Penguin

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

<https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>

[www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/whattodo.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/whattodo.htm)

[www.teachwellalliance.com](http://www.teachwellalliance.com)

And Steve Waters of Teach Well Alliance has produced a series of excellent, moving and thought provoking videos on the issue of teacher burnout using the work of Christina Maslach. The first in the series is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0RCJbjdpH4>

[www.teachwire.net/](http://www.teachwire.net/)

[www.the-stress-site.net](http://www.the-stress-site.net)

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