

Teach Well News The Newsletter of the Teach Well Alliance Issue No 7: 10th July 2019

Bullying: The Unspoken Shame of the Teaching Profession



Hello everyone. Welcome to Issue No 7 of Teach Well News and to all our new subscribers who joined us this week. Thank you for your patience following the delay in sending you this issue of the Teach Well News.

In Issue No 6, I wrote that I would take a look at one of Christina Maslach's 6 factors that lead to Burnout.

The issue of teachers being bullied has, however, arisen in the education community on Twitter recently. So serious are some of the posts that I felt compelled to write about Bullying instead.

Bullying: Hiding in plain sight

The summer break is nearly here! I remember how difficult the final two weeks were leading up to 'breaking up' for the holiday. The children seemed to increase their energy levels and excitement while my own energy was in short supply. I often wondered how I managed to keep going until the last day finally arrived.

There are some teachers for whom the summer holiday will be a sanctuary, rather than a holiday. They are defeated, depressed, anxious and fearful. They are desperate for July to end - to escape from their schools. In some cases, they are afraid that they will not make it to the final lesson. Some are suicidal and in need of professional help.

They are the victims of bullying. Not from children. Nor from parents. But from their fellow teachers. Most of the bullies are school leaders.

The bullies hide in plain sight. Everyone knows who they are. Everyone knows how they behave to exert power and control. But the consequences of 'whistleblowing' are often unthinkable. Teachers keep their heads down, get on with their jobs and hope that they will avoid being the next victim. The bully has the staff where they want them but in a place where the staff do not want to be.



What the bullying and harassment survey tells us

On 6th June I created a confidential and anonymised survey on Bullying and Harassment. The survey was announced on Twitter and LinkedIn. It has 88 responses so far. This is remarkable. The response rate to online surveys is notoriously low. For comparison, my survey on Teacher Wellbeing attracted 202 responses in two years.

It is also sad. What it seems to indicate is that, while wellbeing is an important issue for teachers, bullying as a sub-section of wellbeing is of greater concern. Hence the higher rate of replies to the survey.

Some of the accounts are truly harrowing. If children were behaving as some of the adult bullies are doing, they would be excluded. Physical and emotional abuse has caused some teachers to leave their schools. Others have left the profession for good.

If you are being bullied and would like to complete our Bullying and Harassment survey, go to <https://www.teachwellalliance.com/#bullying-and-harassment>

The majority of teachers who have completed the survey are women. This may be because there are a higher proportion of women in the profession. Or that women are more often the victims of bullying. Or that men are reluctant to admit to being bullied and are not volunteering to complete the survey. More investigation needs to be done to identify the reasons for the gender disparity.

There are two questions which victims of bullying ask themselves: 'Why does the bully behave like this?' And 'What can I do to stop it?'

There are many reasons why people bully others. For power. Because they have been bullied themselves. Because they are insecure. Because they have little or no empathy for others. The factors are too many and too complex to discuss here. What I can do is to offer suggestions on how to stop the bullying. I am in the process of writing a guide on this topic for teachers who are being bullied. I will announce its launch on social media. Here are several strategies from the guide that I recommend. If one doesn't work, another might.



Take control

One of Christina Maslach's 6 factors leading to Burnout is a lack of control. This is especially true of victims of bullying. A bully seeks to gain control through creating a feeling of powerlessness in the victim. No matter how small you feel your control is, take it for yourself. It could be control over what and how you teach; where you eat your

lunch; who you speak to; when you leave school; when you arrive in school; what you do in the evening; how you relax at home...

Someone who is being bullied is so emotionally drained that they feel that the bully controls every aspect of their lives. This is never the case. There will always be areas of a person's life over which the bully has no control.

Write a response

You will know how the bully behaves. Every bully has their own pattern of behaviour. Prepare replies you could use for the next time the bully singles you out: 'When you make statements like this, you are demotivating me'; 'When you say that, I feel that you are devaluing my work'; 'I am not prepared to accept this kind of behaviour. Can we pick up the conversation again when you are not as aggressive?'

You can also write a response to an issue that the bully has raised and send it to the bully, asking for a meeting to discuss it. This makes it easier to stay on message as you have something to support you and refer to during the meeting.

It is almost a truism to say that bullies don't like to be confronted - it reduces their power. You will, of course, need to consider how the bully will respond to you standing up to them and to weigh up the benefits and disadvantages of opposing them, particularly what the reprisals are likely to be.



Follow procedure

If the school has a complaints procedure, follow it to report bullying. You can also ask your school union rep or regional office to help you. The Education Support Partnership is a charity with 24/7 support for teachers and access to trained counsellors. They are an excellent source of help, including teachers who are being bullied.

Blow the whistle - as a group

Bullies rely on their victims's silence, isolating them from their community. Try to find out who else has been bullied and form a support group. Ask other members of staff to help you. Write a letter outlining the bullying to your headteacher and the governing body. If your school is part of a trust, write to the CEO and/or Executive Headteacher. To avoid individual teachers being singled out, write it from the 'Anti-Bullying Support Group' or similar. Refuse to go to meetings as an individual to discuss the bullying. Insist that the headteacher or chair of governors meeting with the whole staff.

Report your concerns to Ofsted

I am not in favour of teachers reporting concerns through the Ofsted staff survey - they should be resolved through day-to-day communication. However, if this has been tried and bullying cannot be stopped, this may be the only and last resort you can take.

The new Ofsted Inspection Framework (EIF) handbook includes a statement on bullying and harassment under Leadership and Management, Section 275. In order to receive a 'Good' in this category, 'Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment'.

If a school fails to protect staff from bullying and harassment, then they cannot be classed as 'Good' in Leadership and Management. If they are deemed to require improvement in Leadership and Management, they may fail to achieve 'Good' or 'Outstanding' overall.



Time to say 'Enough'

The overwhelming majority of schools are led by headteachers and middle leaders who are doing everything they can in difficult circumstances to look after their staff. The behaviour of the bullies in toxic schools is one of the reasons that teachers are leaving the profession.

Enough is enough.

I have created a logo for schools who would like to announce themselves as a Safe Space School. This tells prospective applicants, pupils and parents that the school does not tolerate staff bullying of any kind and therefore, by implication will act firmly and swiftly to tackle child-on-child bullying too.

I hope you will join the Safe Space School network and help us to drive bullying by leaders out of the profession: Sign up to be a Safe Space School: <https://www.teachwellalliance.com/#safe-space-school>



Webinar: 'Meeting the new Ofsted Criteria for Leadership and Management: Staff Workload and Wellbeing'

As you know, the Teach Well Alliance is now a partner of the **School Mental Health Group**. We have been working on a new webinar which will be streamed on **Monday 17th July: 'Meeting the New Ofsted Criteria for Leadership and Management: Staff Workload and Wellbeing'**. As we covered earlier in this newsletter, there are significant additions to Leadership and Management which now includes criteria related to workload, wellbeing, bullying and harassment. Our webinar explores how to achieve at least a 'Good' in this respect. While the Teach Well Alliance does not normally relate its work to Ofsted criteria, we believe that it is essential for staff wellbeing that the criteria are met and we therefore support its inclusion in the Ofsted Inspection Handbook.

If you would like more information or to book the webinar, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/y6hrkj3t>

The New Ofsted Inspection Framework (EIF): Meeting the Leadership and Management Criteria for Staff Workload and Wellbeing (September 2019)

This webinar for SLT reviews the criteria, defines what is expected of schools and provides strategies your school can implement to meet the new Ofsted requirements.



With Steve Waters - 40 Years In Education
Former Assistant Head | NPQH | Counsellor | MHFA | MA

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We now have a free subscription-only service to **Teach Well News** which guarantees that your weekly newsletter arrives in your inbox after 3pm each Sunday. This ensures that only teachers who are interested in the Teach Well Alliance receive it.

If you are not on our mailing list and would like to have the **Teach Well News** sent directly to your inbox, please complete the request form at <https://www.teachwellalliance.com/#teach-well-news>

Teach Well News: Coming soon

There will be no Teach Well News for the next two Sundays, 14th July and 21st July as we are on holiday.

In Issue no 8 of Teach Well News, out on 28th July, we will be looking in detail at the work of Christina Maslach. Christina Maslach has been a world authority on Occupational Burnout since the 1970's. Christina Maslach's 6 factors leading to Burnout are universally recognised in all workplaces including schools. The factor most often cited by teachers is workload. We will be taking a look at how your school can decrease workload. We also explain why tackling workload, while essential, will not solve Burnout.

The Teach Well Toolkit: Equipping You to Implement a Culture of Whole-School Staff Wellbeing



TEACH WELL TOOLKIT

What is the Teach Well Toolkit?

The **Teach Well Toolkit** is the Teach Well Alliance's **flagship off-the-shelf programme** for implementing a culture of staff wellbeing and mental health in your school. Costing less than 3 days of supply cover for one teacher, it is a **step-by-step guide to successful implementation**. It includes a licence to the School Wellbeing iAbacus, a self-evaluation and planning tool which is as easy as sliding beads across a screen. It is also customisable - **use what you need, modify documents, streamline strategies to meet your school's needs**.

Go to the Teach Well Alliance website at
<https://www.teachwellalliance.com/#teach-well-toolkit>
to find out more.



**Steve Waters: Founder/CEO
Teach Well Alliance**

**I look forward to seeing you
again
next week!**

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