

Governors' Information Bulletin

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WORK LIFE BALANCE GUIDANCE TOWARDS A SCHOOL POLICY

Implementing work/life balance initiatives is not only about improving the lives of school staff; it is also a highly effective way to raise school standards. Benefits often include:

- reduced stress and sickness, and lower supply requirement
- greater motivation, morale and physical and emotional wellbeing
- increased job satisfaction and improved recruitment and retention
- improved teaching and learning, better time management, and greater efficiency
- open and honest relationships and greater awareness of staff and pupil needs
- increased quality of leadership and management and more trust between management and other staff
- greater cohesion and communication between governors, senior management and all school staff, and
- additional capacity to improve communication between schools and with local communities.

Implementation of work/life balance initiatives will also support your school as it embraces the extended schools agenda. By embedding explicit work boundaries, extended services can be developed in ways that are consistent with the tenets of workforce reform and do not place additional workload pressures on staff.

A good work-life balance is central to staff effectiveness and satisfaction and pupil learning. It is about helping staff combine work with their personal interests and commitments.

The governing body has a responsibility to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees.

Schools operate in many different contexts and what constitutes reasonable work/life balance varies over time and from individual to individual. Schools need to develop and implement their own individual and sustainable work/life balance policies in consultation with staff and appropriate trade unions.



Developing a Whole School Policy

A whole School Work-life Balance Policy should set out how the governing body supports, encourages and enables all staff to maintain a healthy balance between their work and other interests and responsibilities in their life, so that they can achieve their best at work and manage other areas of their life effectively.

Within education, Workforce Remodelling has become a key strategy in delivering certain aspects of a work-life balance for both teaching and support staff. Work-Life Balance includes better communication within the workplace, clearer job roles and workplace support.

The key aims of a Work-Life Balance Policy should be:

- To benefit the school and its employees
- To acknowledge that the needs of both the school and employees are not static, but change over time
- To acknowledge the need for school leadership, governors, trade unions, professional association representatives and employees to work in partnership to identify realistic work-life balance solutions
- To operate in a fair and consistent manner
- To make employees feel valued for their contribution to the school
- To take into account the equality implications of any policies introduced
- To communicate work-life balance practices to all employees on a regular basis in the school
- To include monitoring, evaluation and review of work life balance initiatives and strategies, for example within the School Improvement Plan
- To develop a school culture that promotes equity for all staff
- To foster mutual respect
- To promote self esteem.

The governing body's commitment to the policy may be evidenced through:

- Clear identification (through routinely reviewed job descriptions) of the duties and responsibilities relating to the employees role to aid them in the delivery of their work and managing the expectations of the job
- Working and supporting staff through training and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) to enable them to manage their jobs effectively
- To have in place performance management processes for all staff with realistic and agreed targets for them and related to whole school targets
- Involving, encouraging and enabling staff to actively manage their own professional and personal development
- Provision of an induction programme for staff appropriate to their position (this should also include an induction programme for governors);

- Prioritise work-life balance requirements when preparing annual budgets
- Ensure statutory requirements are met eg National Remodelling Agreement, Health and Safety requirements
- Consider the demands on staff when planning meetings (this relates to school staff meetings and governing body/committee meetings).

What about the headteacher?

Two of the aims of the National Remodelling Agenda are to build leadership capacity in schools and to improve work-life balance for all staff, including the headteacher.

In developing a Work Life Balance policy for all staff, the governing body has a particular responsibility for the headteacher and any policy must take account of the statutory requirements relating to headship time.

In particular, headteachers need dedicated time to lead their schools, as well as manage them and from 01 September 2005, governing bodies were required to ensure that headteachers had dedicated headship time, having regard to resources in the school.

The entitlement to dedicated headship time is in addition to:

- Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPSA) time (based on any teaching commitment)
- Time for Leadership and Management
- A reasonable work-life balance.

The provision of dedicated headship time is part of the wider remodelling agenda and should be considered in this context and not in isolation.

What is Dedicated Headship Time?

The headteacher is responsible for formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school and developing policies for their implementation as defined by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. For this reason, specific time needs to be identified for the headteacher to meet this responsibility effectively.

Governing bodies can expect dedicated headship time to be used for a broad range of activities, which may include:

- developing strategic leadership and management issues
- reviewing school improvement, the quality of teaching and learning, and the progress of pupils
- reading and research
- professional reflection and dialogue.

During dedicated headship time the headteacher should not be:

- required to deal with routine matters
- asked to take telephone calls, or deal with enquiries in person
- expected to cover for absent colleagues

- required to meet parents, governors or other visitors to the school.

As stated above, dedicated headship time is separate from, and additional to, any guaranteed time for planning preparation and assessment to which the headteacher is entitled commensurate with his or her teaching timetable.

There is no national, statutory guidance on an appropriate amount of dedicated headship time. However, the time must be taken during the school sessions and should be identified on the school timetable.

Some questions for governors:

- Q What is the teaching commitment of your headteacher?
- Q Where the headteacher has a teaching commitment, does s/he take 10% PPA time over and above their teaching commitment?
- Q Does the headteacher take dedicated headship time which is separate from PPA time?
- Q What tasks does your headteacher delegate to the deputy and other members of the senior management/leadership team?
- Q Does your headteacher monitor and evaluate those tasks that are delegated ie outcomes of delegated tasks?
- Q Does your governing body work in an effective committee structure?
- Q Are your meetings timetabled for the year?
- Q Are they time restricted?
- Q Has your governing body established appropriate and effective administration arrangements for its governing body and committee meetings?
- Q Does this include minute taking for governing body and committee meetings?
- Q Does the governing body have a policy for governor visits / links? (Check out the Calderdale Governor Website for model guidance).
- Q Are governor meetings quorate?
- Q Are papers for governing body and committee meetings circulated with the agenda?
- Q Do you read your papers prior to the meeting?
- Q Do you forget to take your papers with you to the meeting?
- Q Communications between the headteacher and governors – are they firmly established and properly used?
- Q Has your governing body produced an Induction Pack for new governors?
- Q Completion of the School Profile is the governing body's responsibility. Has your governing body made arrangements for its completion, or left it to the headteacher?
- Q When a vacancy arises, does the governing body review its staffing structure with a view to securing appropriate work/life balance for all staff?