

The role of a Wellbeing Governor

Focus on Staff Wellbeing

Wellbeing

The state of
being
comfortable,
healthy or happy

Context

Stress remains high

Increase in symptoms of poor wellbeing

Mental health support varies between schools

Barriers to reaching out for help remain

Wellbeing of UK education professionals is lower than general population

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020

Why should
governors
be involved
in
wellbeing?

Ethos

Challenge

Finance

Ethos

We want our schools to be places where staff and pupils want to attend

Reputation amongst education peers

Reputation amongst families

Trusted and lasting relationships

Health, safety and security matter as well as exam results

Challenge

Good quality of learning is built on good quality of teaching

Happy staff

Happy pupils

High retention

Low absence

Consistency of delivery of provision

Finance

Wellbeing support measures can initially be seen as breaking the budget

BUT

Recruitment costs

Agency/subcontractor costs

Responsibilities as employers

Reduce management time spent on unproductive tasks

2020 Governance Handbook says all boards:

“... should have regard to the work-life balance of teachers and the executive leadership of the organisations.”

“... should have due regard for the wellbeing and mental health of the school leadership team and teaching staff more broadly. Boards may wish to consider designating a governor or trustee as a wellbeing champion to provide strategic support to the school leadership team as appropriate.”

Ofsted: Leadership and Management

Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage staff, including their workload.

Leaders protect their staff from bullying and harassment.

Why staff leave

Volume of workload

Not feeling valued

Seeking better work/life balance

Unnecessary paperwork

Target driven culture

Unreasonable demands from managers

Lack of resources

Lockdown lessons

Decline in mental health

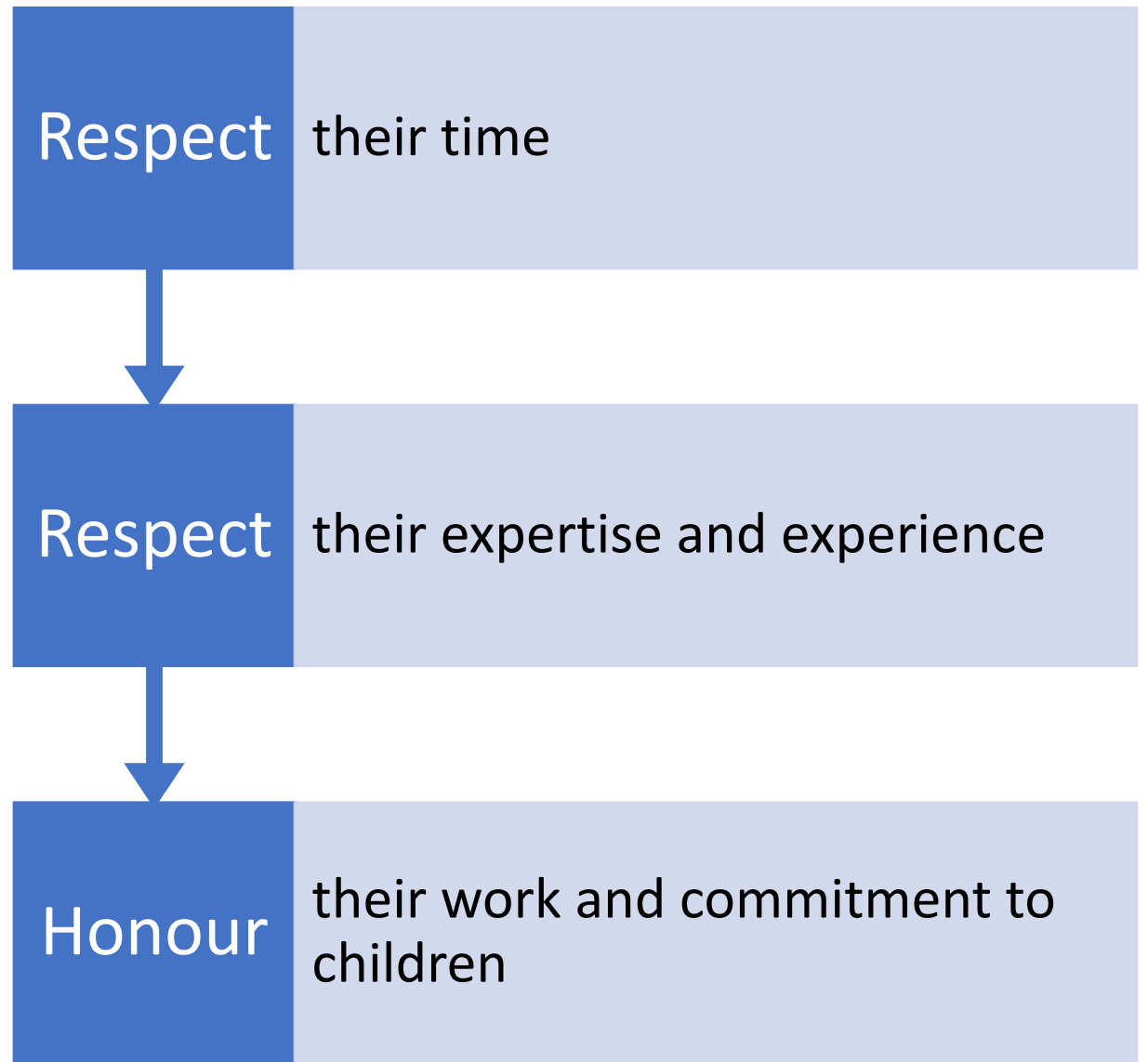
Appreciation

Work completion, government guidance, workload

Health & safety, learning priorities, assessment

Pupil mental health

How to support school leaders' wellbeing

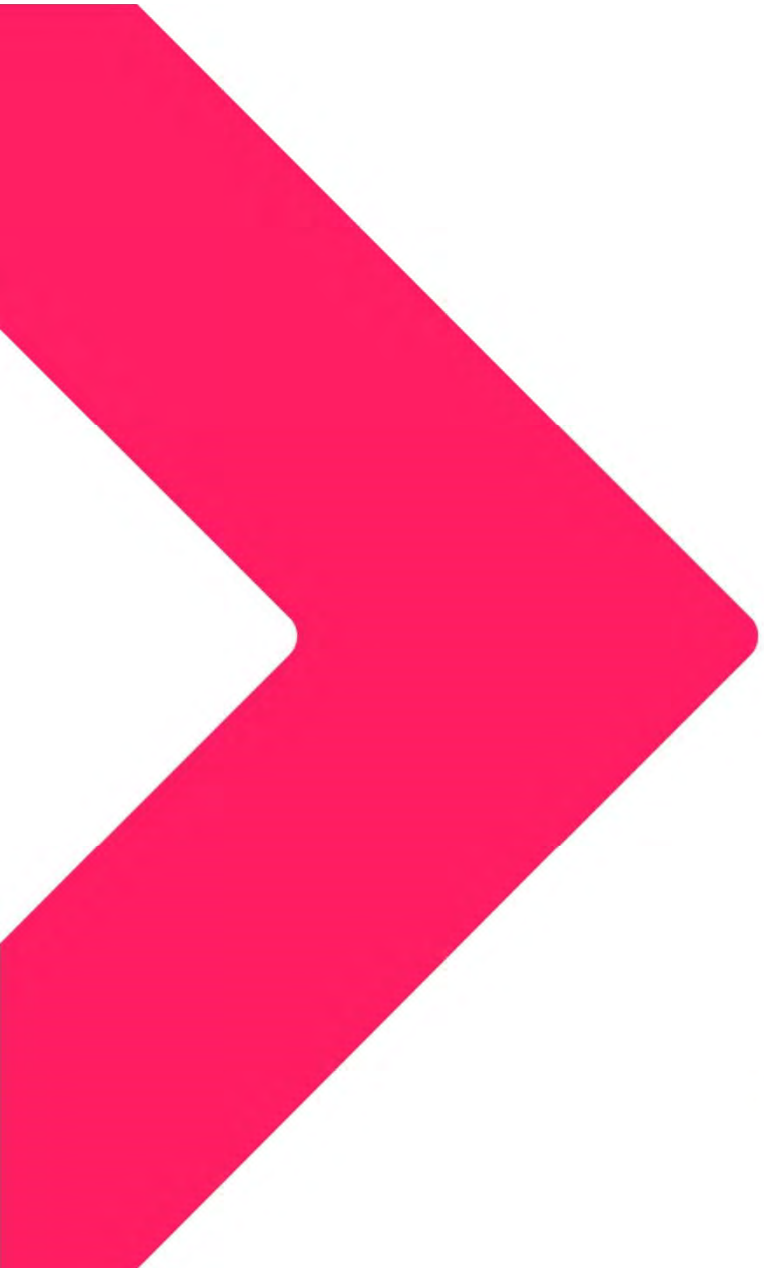


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The 3 key considerations for supporting wellbeing

 The Key

Respecting their time



- **Watch the workload** - constantly challenge whether every task is an absolute requirement
 - Distribute meeting paperwork with plenty of time for governors to read through it in advance
 - Don't ask school leaders to create new reports or documents unless absolutely necessary
 - Make sure staff aren't doing governing board work (like setting agendas or writing minutes)
- **In meetings** - plan your agenda ahead of time. Make sure you:
 - Only put items on the agenda that further your objectives and can be actioned immediately
 - Don't ask for things you can find out yourself (like on the website)
 - Only ask those questions that lead to meaningful answers
- **In communicating** - have a clear communication tree, especially now
 - Answering emails from all 10 governors can be a significant amount of stress. Make sure that you're only communicating when necessary and streamline where you can

Respecting their expertise and experience



- **Stay in your lane** - remember that your role is *strategic* and not *operational*
- **Offer the right balance of challenge and support:**
 - Challenge school leaders by asking the hard questions, and hold them to account by making them think deeply and critically about the decisions they make; and
 - Support them by making sure they have what they need to succeed. This could be resources, training or even just a listening ear

Honoring their work and commitment



- **Recognise the work that they're doing and be genuinely appreciative** - write a note, send a card or bring some nice biscuits to the next meeting
- **Keep track of their accomplishments** - don't wait until December to think about your headteacher's performance. Keep track of things through the year, so nothing's forgotten during the performance review. Even if you can't give more time off or a more generous payrise, just knowing that the work was noted can make it feel more worthwhile
- **Attend school events and make periodic visits** - show that you value their work
- **Acknowledge their sacrifices** - even if you can't do anything about it right now



Strategic wellbeing

 The Key

So what is strategic wellbeing?



Unlike how the chair supports headteacher wellbeing, the way you support staff wellbeing is more hands-off.

As a board, you need to make sure that:

- Relevant policies and processes are in place which:
 - Facilitate a healthy work-life balance among your staff
 - Don't put undue pressure on workload
- The school adheres to the working time limits set out in the Working Time Regulations 1998
- You don't make unreasonable demands on the time of school staff, including the headteacher
- You support your headteacher and teachers to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance. This is a requirement for maintained schools, but good practice for all school types
- You provide appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher, including:
 - Asking probing questions
 - Setting targets for improvement where feedback shows there are staff wellbeing issues

What can we do to keep the focus on wellbeing?



You can:

- Appoint a sub-committee (usually the staffing committee) to take responsibility for overseeing staff health and wellbeing
- Appoint a link governor for wellbeing
- Make wellbeing a standing agenda item - not just for governing board meetings, but also during school visits
- Consider allocating a small budget for short-term counselling support or other wellbeing initiatives
- Take a look at the DfE's resources to [help governors and trustees reduce teacher workload in their school](#)



Wellbeing Governor

Discussion points

The relationship between school leaders and governors

See additional document for detail

- Staff wellbeing cannot be another burden
- Any action requested should be agreed upon and reasonable
- The needs of SLT must be incorporated at all times
- The impact of COVID-19 on schools will be long-lasting
- Retention of SLT is critical to the long-term success of the school

NAHT

Questions for Governors to introduce wellbeing and mental health

See additional document for detail

- Recognise that your school's requirements may differ from others and will change
- Strategic not operational
- Policy and structure
- Culture and practice
- SLT
- COVID-19
- Don't exacerbate matters by being too eager to improve staff wellbeing – be sympathetic
- Ensure SLT don't ignore their own wellbeing for the sake of their staff

Staff surveys

See CWMT example for comparison with your school's

They're not your responsibility, but how do you know they're effective?

Do you see the questions? Are they the right ones?

Comprehensive example from Charlie Waller Memorial Trust (includes staff and pupils)

So What?

Have you ever looked at the relationship between the staff survey data and the subsequent staff leavers?

Exit interviews?

Wellbeing Governor Questions

See additional document for detail

- Detailed range of questions for pupils, staff, families
- Suit Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Sixth Form, Special and PRU
- Special COVID section included
- Only choose a small number!

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