

Small School Primary Headteachers' Working Hours Survey May '05

'A good worklife balance is central to teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction and pupil learning.'
George Lloyd, headteacher Bishop Rawstorne Secondary School

Background

Several heads are concerned about their long working hours and lack of life/work balance in the light of their increasing responsibilities and a significant teaching responsibility.

I decided to conduct a survey to find out just what were the working hours of small school primary headteachers in Norfolk and analyse the data for possible factors influencing the results. Anecdotal evidence suggests that as the percentage full time employee teaching commitment increases, the leadership and management time decreases and as a result the amount of schoolwork done outside of normal working hours (i.e. in the evenings and at weekends) increases, and adversely affects life/work balance.

My hypothesis was that the above, together with the year groups taught (the older the pupils the more marking they generate), would be significant factors.

To assist heads to 'work smarter not harder, respondents were asked if they'd be willing to have their name and school put alongside their school's data so that colleagues in similar schools who are working long hours could discuss 'successful' strategies for reducing excessive hours and thus share effective practice.

44 heads took part and logged their working hours for 4 weeks in May: 34 primary, 8 first and 2 partnership school heads.

No time of year is ever perfect for such a survey and this survey began on Tuesday 2 May (after Bank Holiday Monday) and ended on the last day before the May half term break (Friday 27 May). It therefore included 19 working days.

Data analysis

The hours worked for the 4 weeks were totalled and the average hours per week calculated. As some heads were absent for some of the time I also calculated the total hours divided by the number of days worked to give an 'average working hours per day' figure for easier comparison.

These were listed as shown and I looked for any pattern. Finding none, I then added additional factors: phase of school, number on roll, age group(s) taught, % fte teaching commitment and whether this headship was their first.

Findings

The average hours worked per week was 52.91, closely matching the School Teachers' Review Body's 2005* figure for all primary heads of 52.9 hours (down from 55.6 hours in 2004 due to Remodelling initiatives i.e. reducing teaching commitment by 2 hrs on average).

The survey range was however very wide at over 30 hours which perhaps can be explained in part by three heads taking part in residential visits during this time. That said, taking those 3 out of the study the average hours is only reduced to 52.81 hours.

The average 'working day' is 11.18 hours, or 10.89 excluding the 3 heads on residential trips. No patterns emerged which significantly seemed to affect the hours heads worked.

Conclusions

Each headship is unique: dependent upon the context of the school, stakeholder expectations and the skills and experiences which a head brings to their role. Likewise, life/work balance is a very personal thing.

'Work gives us joys and problems in equal measures, and finding right proportions must surely be a highly personalised choice. Perhaps, in many ways, that is the point – the idea of choice –with it a large measure of control.'

Twenty4-Seven Survey, Worklife Balance Centre

However, it is a requirement of the National Agreement that all headteachers and teachers enjoy a 'reasonable' worklife balance, enabling them to combine work with their personal interests outside work. Research has found that one of the major factors affecting working hours is workload. It is generally accepted that many heads in Norfolk work long hours and that their workload is increasing, and so unless some changes are made the problem will worsen.

MIND, the mental health charity, states:

'When working long hours, more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of employees feel depressed, $\frac{1}{3}$ feel anxious and more than $\frac{1}{2}$ feel irritable.

It goes on to state:

'In order to work long hours, people are neglecting activities that are most likely to protect them from mental health problems.' i.e. family, friends & outside interests

Ryrie I (2003) *Whose Life is it Anyway?: A report on the effects of poor work-life balance on mental health*, The Mental Health Foundation, London

In Norfolk in 2003-4 the 3rd most common cause of absence amongst heads was stress. And in the same year just over $\frac{1}{3}$ of heads who left headship took early or illhealth retirement.

What can we do next?

A few schools in Norfolk have achieved the Investors in People Worklife Balance Accreditation. Some local authorities are working successfully with their schools and governing bodies on this IIP module as part of Remodelling the Workforce. The Standard ensures that both governors and the head will be fulfilling their statutory responsibilities so that all the staff:

... 'have a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, school (sic) and society.'

The Work Foundation

A Norfolk head who has achieved this IIP standard says that 'Investing in employees' quality of life acts as a catalyst for greater efficiency, job satisfaction and workforce stability.'

Although 61% of Norfolk Governing Bodies have discussed the working hours and worklife balance of their head, only 11% have attempted to quantify what 'reasonable' working hours might be. (See my article for heads on this research on the Well-Being web site – headteacher well being and 'Agenda' article for governors in the Autumn edition.)

The Guide for Governors IV- Remodelling gives practical advice for governors in how to carry out their statutory responsibility for ensuring the head has a 'reasonable' worklife balance. Could staff worklife balance/well-being become a standing item on staff and governor meetings?

If one is not happy with one's worklife balance then something needs to change - 'If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got'.

Are you being a positive role model to your staff? Could you benefit from chatting through your working practices with a colleague who understands the demands of small school headship? I am very happy to work with colleagues so we can share not only strategies for survival but to maximise job satisfaction and enjoyment of the role.

Is there a head of a similar school in the survey whose hours are considerably less than yours? These heads are willing to talk through their working practices with colleagues so good ideas can be shared.

Useful information

www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/payandperformance/pay/teacherspaySTRB to download Teachers' Workloads Diary Survey March 2005

www.investorsinpeople.co.uk for Worklife Balance module info

www.remodelling.org see case studies –worklife balance

www.hants.gov.uk/pdf/governor/Headfirst.pdf - 'Headfirst – coping with the job: How Hampshire heads try to bring worklife balance to their lives' booklet

<http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org.uk/> download free guide

www.theworkfoundation.com

www.24-7survey.co.uk free download

www.workliferesearch.org

www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance

<http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/>

Smallschool headteachers' working hours survey -May '05 (2 pages)

School	Head	%fte	yr gps taught	nor	Hours worked weeks beginning				average hrs per wk	Total hrs wked	Notes	av.hrs per w'king day/19
					02-May i.e.4 days	09-May	16-May	23-May				
Primary School		0.6	3 to 6	69	83	43	66.5	109	75.38	301.5	Resids.wks1&4,+0.5 day off	16.30
Winfarthing, All Saints Pri.	Liz Rollin	0.4	0-3	100	58	70	70	108	76.50	306	School resid. wk4	16.11
Primary School		0.7	5,6	66	64	69.25	68.75	63.25	66.31	265.25	New build	13.96
Primary School		0.6	3,4	62	52	56.75	79.5	67.25	63.88	255.5	School resid. Wk3, act hd	13.45
Primary School		0.6	5,6	96	57.5	65.25	66.5	59.5	62.19	248.75	new head	13.09
Bunwell Primary	Michaela Rolph	0.6	5,6	88	53	65	63	67	62.00	248	new head	13.05
Tacolneston Primary	Margaret Barker	0.8	0,1,2	82	48.5	78	59	58	60.88	243.5		12.82
Primary School		0.7	3,4	90	54	68.75	62.5	56.5	60.44	241.75		12.72
GaytonFirst	Melanie Duggan	0.5	1,2,3	62	47.25	68	65	61	60.31	241.25		12.70
Infant school		0.6		90	50.5	63	59	56	57.13	228.5	new head	12.03
Ludham First	Sue Wright	0.6	2,3	49	52	58	56	57	55.75	223		11.74
Rudham	Sue Lunnun	0.6	5,6	62	43.75	63	63.25	52	55.50	222		11.68
Gt Hockham Primary	Doug Hartley	0.4	6	85	48.5	58.5	58.5	56.25	55.44	221.75	new head	11.67
Primary School			5,6	38	52	58	57	52	54.75	219		11.53
Norman Primary,Northwold	Marion Dawe			92	43	59	62	50	53.50	214		11.26
Kenninghall Primary	Georgina Livingstone	0.5	5,6	101	50	55.5	55	53	53.38	213.5		11.24
Tilney All Saints Primary	Jill Davis	0.4	3,4	81	49	48	56	60	53.25	213		11.21
Aslacton Primary	Janice Turner	0.4	0-6	93	48.5	55.5	56.5	50.5	52.75	211		11.11
East Winch Primary	Lee Stevens	0.7	0,1,2	36	43.5	59.25	60.25	46.5	52.38	209.5	CHS	11.03
Easton Primary	Christine Livings	0.2	1,2	92	42.5	53.5	52.25	60	52.06	208.25		10.96
Wm Marshall/Upwell P'ship	Fiona Rickard	*			43.5	54.5	56	53.5	51.88	207.5		10.92
Flitcham Primary	Roger Harman	0.25	3 to 6	95	44	58	50	55	51.75	207		10.89
Gt Massingham Primary	Martin Etheridge	0.8	2 to 6	56	47.5	57.25	50	51.5	51.56	206.25		10.86
Sutton First	Barbara Carter	0.6	2,3	81	44.5	48.5	58	54	51.25	205	new head	10.79
Ellingham & Woodton P'ship	Pauline McGowan	0.2		81	42.75	49.25	48	41.25	45.31	181.25	sick 2 days wk 4	10.66
St Michaels Primary,KL	Pat George	0.5	0-6	83	43	51	50.5	58	50.63	202.5		10.66
Reedham Primary	Jean Dorling	0.4	5,6	75	48	55.5	47	51	50.38	201.5		10.61
Primary School		0.6	3,4	53	43.25	48.5	53.5	53.75	49.75	199		10.47
Garboldisham Primary	Elizabeth Wilson	0.6	3,4	59	41.75	50	39	57.5	47.06	188.25	sick 1 day wk 3,new head	10.46
Primary School		0.7	3 to 6	35	35.5	58.5	50	49	48.25	193		10.16
First school		0.4	2,3	60	36.5	51.5	55.5	48.25	47.94	191.75	new head	10.09
First school		0.8	1,2	62	35	52	54.5	49.75	47.81	191.25		10.07
Brancaster Primary	Linda Hothersall	0.6	3 to 6	43	37.5	59	50	44	47.63	190.5	new head	10.03

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Worstead Primary	James Clayton	0.5 3,4	92	38.25	52.75	50.5	47.75	47.31	189.25	9.96
Duchy of Lancaster Pri.M'wold	Richard Houston	0.4 6	95	28	48	50.5	51.75	44.56	178.25	9.90
Garvestone	Michelle Farnan	0.7	43	39	49	49	51	47.00	188	9.89
Hunstanton First	Michaela Webb	0.6 1,2	62	34	57	52	45	47.00	188	9.89
First school		0.6 2,3	43	41.25	48	48	48	46.31	185.25	9.75
Hockwold Primary	Shelia Litherland	0.55 2,3	89	38	52.25	48.75	46	46.25	185	9.74
Dickleborough Primary	James Richards	0.4 5,6	97	41	48	46	49	46.00	184	9.68
Wreningham Primary	Lynne Wright	*	94	39	45.25	52	47	45.81	183.25	9.64
Primary School		0.6 0,1,2	41	39.5	47	45.5	47.5	44.88	179.5	9.45
St Mary's Roughton	June Bibby	0.45 3,4	80	35	47	49	46	44.25	177	9.32
Primary School		0.65 0,1,2,	26	42	45	45	43	43.75	175	9.21

Average

Av. 52.91

Av. 11.18

Key

Grey area denotes heads working more than the average hours

N.B. If data from 2 heads on residential trips is excluded the average working hour day is reduced to 10.91 hours

* no class teaching resp.