

## **Headteacher Well-Being Support Officer Autumn Newsletter**

Happy New School Year colleagues and a warm welcome to all our new and acting Norfolk heads. I am sure that you will be warmly welcomed by your Cluster Chairs and find, very soon, that you have a network of friendly support available to you.

It's been good to read in the press how well schools have performed in national tests this summer, so pats on the back all around are well deserved!

It promises to be a very busy year, AGAIN, with more new challenges and tight deadlines i.e. revised staffing structure plan. I know of many heads who have worked long hours during the summer on both this and the new Ofsted SEF form. The NAHT and SHA Joint Council Conference 11/04 said of the nature of school leadership:

‘School leaders of the future will need to show even more flexibility of thought and action than the current cohort of heads, who have already faced more challenges than the previous generation of leaders.’

They list some of the initiatives in the pipeline whilst warning that ‘all developments in the role of the school have to take into account Workforce Reform’. Managing the tension between an increasing workload and maintaining a reasonable work-life balance isn't easy.

### **Why is well being important?**

‘The primary purpose of a school is about the wellbeing and achievement of our children and young people. Staff are the key means by which that purpose is achieved. Not only through their particular and individual skills, knowledge, attributes – but through their modelling of the values and culture of the school. Schools are organisations not just a collection of individuals and you are the leaders – the chief role models. It is the complex connections between the individuals, the relationships, the attitudes, the culture that it creates that helps or hinders the organisation in the achievement of its purpose.’

**Margaret Leverett – Worklife Support, London Well Being Conference '05**

### **1. Work-life balance**

#### **Small School Norfolk Heads' Working Hours Survey May '05**

The average hours worked per week was 52.91, almost exactly the same as primary heads' in the STRB '05 figure, although the range in our survey was over 30 hours. Heads who want to find out how colleagues in similar schools manage their hours can contact them to discuss their strategies. The report is available at

<http://www.norfolkesinet.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=2099>

### **Governing Body's responsibility for heads' reasonable' work-life balance**

Over 60% of Chairs of Governors responded to my questionnaire, which is a very good response rate. The purpose of the survey was to find out the picture in Norfolk and to share what's working well with both you and governing bodies.

61% of governing bodies have discussed headteacher working hours and work-life balance whilst 39% have not. Only 11% have either discussed or agreed what 'reasonable' working hours might be. They thought between 45 and 50 hrs per week, which is less than the STRB's 2005 figures of 52.9 hours for primary and 62.6 hours for secondary colleagues.

Whilst some governing bodies have discussed and acted to both reduce heads' working hours and promote their well being others have yet to begin. From the successful strategies suggested by both heads and Chairs, we now have a useful bank of ideas, which hopefully will be of use to other governing bodies.

50% of Chairs would welcome some governor training on work-life balance, which the Governor Support Service will try to provide this later this year.

There will be an article in the Autumn Term's 'Agenda' magazine for governors based on the survey which is also available on

<http://www.norfolkesinet.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=2099>

### **2. Revised Ofsted Inspection arrangements**

One primary school head has been through the process and is willing to share her experiences.

<http://www.norfolkesinet.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=2099>

### **3. A reminder of my role:**

**Support-** to provide personal and professional support to heads and acting heads e.g. illness, family crises, suspension, difficult issues in school, reducing professional isolation by having a fellow professional with whom to talk through issues e.g. staffing structure, work-life balance.

'Heads 4 heads' – there are colleagues who have dealt with difficult issues and are willing to support others experiencing similar circumstances e.g. acting heads, suspension, caring for aged relatives & finding your school has been judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate' or worse.

**Information-** the problem is you don't know what you don't know!

-Pressed for time, got a question and don't know who to ask?

-Want to find out if another head has dealt with an issue?

-Sharing good practice & research e.g. small school heads' working hours questionnaire, Chairs of Govs supporting heads' well being questionnaire

-Liaising with other LAs, national groups etc to learn how they are supporting heads

**Promoting Well Being** –creating a culture of care and concern amongst 452 Norfolk heads. Sharing effective practices and identifying and working to decrease negative aspects of work so . . ‘heads can face change and the challenges with optimism, resilience, motivation and engagement.’ *Work-life Support*

I am ready, willing and FREE to help you in any way –just ask. I love a challenge! Or if you’ve got suggestions for heads’ well-being which you’d like me to explore do contact me.

**Julia Hurlbut: 01263 713832, 07990 952813 or**  
[julia.hurlbut@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:julia.hurlbut@norfolk.gov.uk)