

Good Evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Wellbeing Guidelines document with you this evening.

During the autumn term last year a number of governors from across Bury responded to an open invitation to meet and work with the Local Authority to formulate a working document focusing on the Wellbeing of HT's, Staff in our schools.

The working group were tasked to look at four key areas which are in the structure of the guidelines document. These are:-

1. The Role of the Wellbeing governor
2. HT Wellbeing
3. Self Evaluation of wellbeing in our individual schools
4. Reviewing the existing support available from other organisations and services.

The results of their work is now incorporated within the content of the guidance document and is fully endorsed by the governors who were able to take part in the working group.

The completed document was formally launched with our Headteacher's at their conference held in March.

The Guidelines are not intended to be just another document, but a helpful direction for proactively taking joint action to protect the Wellbeing of staff within our schools across Bury.

As the working group was meeting, the results of two national surveys carried out among teachers were published.

The 'You Gov Teacher Track' survey found that One Third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of teachers were feeling anxious and stressed about their own health and that of their families. It also found that, some 50% of teachers were feeling much higher stress levels than usual.

These findings were supported by a TES survey, which found that at the start of this current academic year about Half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of teachers were feeling exhausted and drained. While about One Third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) said they are "Just about coping".

It is understood that part of working in school includes; Exams, Homework, Lesson Plans, Safeguarding etc.....

But the pandemic has also added a delegated responsibility for, Public Health protocols in schools, Year group Segregation into bubbles, Pupils self studying at home, Pupils Covid testing and monitoring, and for many of us Pupils having to self isolate etc.....

Whilst we may feel that we are powerless to reduce the stresses on our staff, it is important that we positively recognise the dynamic and fluctuating situations in our schools and actively try to do something to ease the additional burden in the school environment.

By way of an example, I would like to refer to recent reports in the news headlines about footballers suffering from dementia, in their not so later lives.

It is now accepted that a significant contributory element to this mental health condition is due to players repeatedly heading the ball. To help with my own understanding this problem, I thought about it in more technical terms.

The basic regulation football is made from a polyurethane bladder inflated to 10lbs psi. It is covered in animal hide (usually deer skin) and has a dry mass of approximately 16 ounces.

When crossed in a competitive game it can travel at an average velocity of 50 to 60 mph.

It then impacts with an unprotected human head, which on occasion can be moving in the opposite direction; with the intention of trying to increase the resultant force.

Now we may not be able to take heading the ball out of the game, but with increased awareness and knowledge of head injuries, referees now halt play immediately to allow an injured player to receive the required medical attention.

I share this example because, through the work done in the Working Group one of the main key learning points for governors involved was that;

Our HT's are contractually entitled to "Dedicated Headship time". Worryingly, it is clear that very few; if any of our HT's actually manage to take this time.  
(The guide suggests a minimum of two and a half hours per week.)

It is obvious, that our focus on Wellbeing must not just be a reaction to the current pandemic environment, because let's face it, as footballers will continue to head the ball, so will HT's experience ever changing demands on their time in school.

The unforeseen happenings of the past 18 months in our schools could never have been imagined or even be a part of teaching training for any of our staff.

Our staff will have had moments of feeling uncertain, frustrated, worried, and alone. (Something I call the “Robinson Crusoe” feeling of “Does anyone really know that I am here?”)

Caring about the overall wellbeing of all staff has to be a positive continuum and a definite standard within all our schools.

This undoubtedly has to result in changing how we manage.

In a recent email received before the half term holiday, high schools were asked to support the reintroduction of “in school Covid testing for pupils”, starting immediately on the Monday; as schools return.

What happened to the small chance of any rest for HT’s and school staff who had to react to reassemble the socially distanced testing bays which had only just been taken down so school halls etc. could be used for exams?

Was there any consultation with schools as to how this could be achieved?

A Public Health mandate having to be implemented around the exam assessments and gathering data for GCSE grading. Activities in themselves which are extra workload already delegated down to schools from the DfE.

When these concerns were raised with the LA the reaction has been one of positively responding in support of the intentions of the Wellbeing Guidelines.

I believe that any directives or indeed offers of help for schools must be Targeted, Realistic, Useful, Specific, Timely, Effective and Deliverable. For those who like acronyms, management instructions have to be **TRUSTED**.

From the DfE to OfSTED, the LA and Governing Boards; our awareness and management styles need to be reviewed and be a fundamental element of the Wellbeing environment within Bury’s schools.

The introduction of our ‘Wellbeing guide for Governors and Trustees’ has to be an unambiguous stepped change for the future, where every Governing Board will have at least one governor responsible for Wellbeing in their school.

That is someone to ensure that self-evaluation is completed and agreed actions within each school are effective and embedded.

Wellbeing is vital for us all.

It should not be overlooked that our pupils in schools today, are the influencers in a future society in which we will be living in the next 10 to 15 years.

Children and young adults can learn to understand what a caring society is. We just need to continue to show that we positively care about them today.

It is worth consideration that these young people will become our Health Care professionals, our Community Leaders and who knows it is just a thought, they might be the Engineers who have yet to work out how to recycle the lithium and other toxins used in the batteries of our new environmentally friendly electric cars.

The existing working relationships between yourselves and your Headteacher will allow you to keep wellbeing as a focused regular agenda item in our schools.

Wellbeing is a critical element within successful enterprises.  
Wellbeing is a fundamental part of good, robust management, and  
Wellbeing is the foundation for outstanding and productive organisations.

Just before I conclude, I would just like to share with you that I have been having repeated nightmares about an OfSTED visit.

These dreams start with me on holiday, swimming in a cool pool under a bright warming sun; when I am informed that I have to be in school to meet the inspectors.

Somewhat nervously and feeling vulnerable still in my dripping swimming shorts, I enter an intensely lit room. Standing there creating a small puddle of chlorinated water on the floor around my feet and feeling somewhat defenceless. For some reason I am looking down at my toes.

The dark silhouette of the inspector who is dazzling illuminated from behind, opens with the first few quick fire questions.

Tell me, what is the **Intent** of your schools Wellbeing policy?  
What data did you use when **Implementing** your school Wellbeing policy?  
And how do you know it is having a positive **Impact** for pupils and staff?

It is here I wake, clammy and gasping for air, feeling; uncertain, worried, and alone. In that total silence, somewhere deep inside, I become aware of that “Robinson Crusoe” feeling.

I believe that the guidelines document gives us a solid foundation for ourselves as governors to develop a very important conversation in our school meetings.

To help provide practical “**TRUSTED**” support for our HT’s, Staff who all give their best and work hard in our schools.

The **Wellbeing of our schools** is in our hands, **working together in partnership and sharing best practice**.

Thank You.

5

