



Wellbeing Charter for Surrey School Leaders

A guide designed to support conversations and actions that help
protect and promote the wellbeing of school leaders

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Introduction

Why the need for a Wellbeing Charter for Surrey School Leaders?

It is widely acknowledged that school leaders have a complex role as leaders of their respective communities. Their many responsibilities include promoting the wellbeing of staff and pupils. And yet many school leaders do not prioritise their own wellbeing or have sufficient opportunity to do so. This is despite the fact that there is inevitably a strong relationship between the wellbeing of school leaders and the wellbeing of those they lead. Simply put, the happier the head of a school, the happier members of the school community are likely to be (and vice versa).

How has the Charter been written?

Wellbeing surveys of school leaders across Surrey primary schools in 2024 and 2025 - and similar surveys of the heads of specialist schools across Surrey - identified a range of issues as having a negative impact (or high risk of a negative impact) on their wellbeing. This charter, written by two Surrey headteachers in 2024 and 2025, is a set of ten commitments designed to address these areas of tension by articulating more clearly many of the likely sources of stress and strain in a school leader's life alongside measures that may be taken to address these.

The charter is designed to support **strategic leaders** including **the council**, **diocesan leaders** (where applicable) **trust leaders** and **school governors** to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of **school leaders**. It is similar to the DfE's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter which refers to the need for education settings to have a wellbeing 'sub-strategy' that is specific to the school leader/s.

What does the Charter aim to achieve?

It is hoped that this document supports:

- trustees and governors develop a leadership wellbeing sub-strategy for their own schools;
- local authorities consider ways in which partnership working may be promoted;
- school leaders reviewing key issues impacting their own wellbeing and proactively addressing these.

The guidance outlines a range of measures that strategic leaders may wish to consider in relation to each of the ten commitments here. It is not exhaustive, but will hopefully aid the formation of a set of actions, policies or procedures that best fit a specific setting.

This charter does not seek to eliminate the strains and stresses of school leadership. This is unrealistic given the nature of the role and the responsibilities that school leaders carry. However, the charter does seek to make things better for school leaders. It aims to articulate aspects of the role that can lead to a sense of accumulating pressure and offer a guide to actions that might be considered to reduce or prevent pressure building to a level that has a significant negative impact.

It is important to note that:

- many of the suggested actions contained in this document would need to be reciprocated by school leaders. In many respects, this charter is about promoting conversations that bring about closer professional relationships including important partnership/collaborative working;
- much of the suggested actions in this document will already be part of the way strategic leaders work and will therefore be affirming;
- no measure designed to promote wellbeing erodes or supersedes in any way the statutory responsibility that all education leaders and partner agencies carry.

Finally, throughout the document, the term ‘school leader’ is used as a term for those who lead education settings. However, the charter can equally apply to other job roles such as CEOs, college principals, headteachers of early years settings and so on.

Acknowledgements

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- The School Leader Wellbeing Working Party who have met regularly since April 2024 to find ways to improve the wellbeing of Surrey headteachers and create a framework that supports conversations and actions;
- All those who have provided feedback on draft versions of the charter, including the Specialist Phase Council;
- All Surrey Phase Councils for supporting the work that has been undertaken to raise the profile of headteacher wellbeing.

Endorsements

This charter has been produced with the support of Surrey Primary Phase Council and is endorsed by Surrey County Council and Schools Alliance for Excellence.



Surrey Primary
Phase Council



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The Ten Commitments

Commitment 1 -
Leading with Purpose in Mind.

That everyone strives to provide the best possible outcomes for children and young adults, and engages in purposeful work that prioritises this goal.

Commitment 2 -
Meeting the Individual Needs of Children.

That everyone works effectively to promote the highest possible outcomes for children with additional needs and disabilities.

Commitment 3 -
Workload management

That workload for all leaders in education is reasonable and manageable, affording leaders sufficient time to focus on the most important aspects of their work, and experience sufficient time away from work to switch off and recharge.

Commitment 4 -
Balancing Accountability with Support

That any system of accountability should be sufficiently focused on the support school leaders need to do their jobs effectively.

Commitment 5 -
Strategic Improvement

That an ambitious drive for school improvement should be well-planned and well-paced.

Commitment 6 -
Communication

That the nature of communication between education leaders and within partnerships helps to promote professional relationships and are effective, efficient and respectful.

Commitment 7 -
Supporting Home-School Relationships

That school leaders need to build and protect the trust of their community, and that all leaders and partners should support this endeavour.

Commitment 8 -
Career Development

That school leaders should have access to high quality CPD that motivates them and enables them to carry out their leadership role effectively.

Commitment 9 -
Voice of School Leaders

That school leaders should feel their views matter and that they help shape the outcomes of important decision-making.

Commitment 10 -
Ongoing Monitoring of Wellbeing

That the wellbeing of school leaders should be carefully monitored to ensure that any lessons learned are acted on quickly.

Using this document – a quick guide for strategic leaders

We would encourage strategic leaders such as trustees and governors to ‘sign up’ to the ten commitments that form this charter. In practice, this would mean these strategic leaders agreeing with the underlying principles of each commitment (**in blue, bold type**) contained in the charter. A good first step would then be an initial audit of practice to evaluate the extent to which these commitments are currently being met. Any identified weaknesses may then help the design of an improvement plan. Education settings may also see the benefit of translating each commitment to a set of principles and behaviours/actions that best fits their setting.

When reading this charter, it is important to note that guidance it contains may relate to areas of responsibility that are not shared by **all** strategic leaders, though it is recognised that many of these commitments are interwoven. The grid below is designed to help identify how strategic partners might engage with each commitment. This is intended as guidance that will hopefully promote discussion between strategic leaders so that their respective actions are complementary.

Strategic Leader Actions to Support School Leader Wellbeing Commitments

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Leading with Purpose	Consult on initiatives; streamline reporting; review system purpose	Ensure policy reflects school leader context and purpose	Engage school leaders in change; reduce redundant tasks	Support purpose-driven leadership; reduce low-impact workload
Meeting Individual Needs of Children	Efficient EHCP processes; support partnerships; ensure fair funding	Support best practice sharing; monitor statutory provision	Share expertise across schools; support inclusion strategies	Monitor SEN provision; uphold inclusive ethos
Workload Management	Assess workload of new demands; reduce duplication	Ensure expectations consider leader capacity	Coordinate workload expectations; enable efficiency via collaboration	Be mindful of workload; avoid excessive requests
Balancing Accountability with Support	Provide timely support and advice; promote relational practice	Balance challenge/support; celebrate leader contributions	Embed wellbeing in appraisal and accountability systems	Support wellbeing in governance; ensure realistic targets
Strategic Improvement	Support long-term planning; train on school development review	Promote achievable improvement focus	Align MAT strategy with leader capacity; review priorities	Challenge priorities constructively; ensure resourcing
Communication	Reduce jargon; use effective channels; prioritise clarity	Set respectful tone; facilitate timely responses	Respect protected time; avoid weekend emails	Clarify roles; maintain professional and respectful tone
Supporting Home-School Relationships	Support complaint resolution; ensure fair info access	Model respect for school-home links	Provide templates/policies; support parental comms	Support complaints handling; promote clarity in policy
Career Development	Sustain CPD funding; support aspiring leaders	Support faith leadership CPD	Offer coaching, mentoring, secondments	Use appraisal to support career growth
Voice of School Leaders	Consult on changes; provide forums	Engage via steering groups and reps	Invite feedback; act on leader concerns	Seek input during major decisions
Monitoring of Wellbeing	Use surveys/data; act on concerns quickly	Develop open relationships; promote early dialogue	Embed wellbeing in appraisal; monitor through check-ins	Conduct regular wellbeing checks; act on red flags

As well as using this charter for an initial audit, it is likely that a regular return to these commitments - to assess the progress of improvement work - would be beneficial. One opportunity for this might present itself through the appraisal process for school leaders. However, it is important that the charter is also discussed more widely and that strategic leaders can satisfy themselves that there is sufficient evidence to support evaluative judgements relating to each commitment.

Any evaluations or audits relating to the commitments should be conducted in collaboration with school leaders, though care will need to be taken that school leaders have a forum in which they can be open with their views.

Commitment 1 - Leading with Purpose in Mind

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Leading with Purpose	Consult on initiatives; streamline reporting; review system purpose	Ensure policy reflects school leader context and purpose	Engage school leaders in change; reduce redundant tasks	Support purpose-driven leadership; reduce low-impact workload

Underlying principle: That everyone strives to provide the best possible outcomes for children and young adults, and engages in purposeful work that prioritises this goal.

Within the DfE's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, and within wellbeing research, it is widely recognised that people feel more positive about their role if they see the purpose of what they are asked to do. Where tasks have little or no perceived positive impact, they are more likely to have a negative effect on wellbeing. Strategic leaders should consider how they might support school leaders by:

- clearly articulate the reason for asking school leaders to carry out a task;
- consult with school leaders on changes to policy or strategy to ensure that the perspective of the school leader and the community they serve is fully understood and taken into account;
- ensure that, as much as possible, information is requested once and collected in the most efficient way possible - fitting the purpose for which it is gathered.

Possible steps to address this commitment:

Consult on new initiatives:

Whilst recognising that some key tasks that school leaders do are not negotiable, strategic leaders - local authorities, trustees and Diocese - should be mindful of the need to bring school leaders on board with proposals for change. Where possible, consultation around change should secure 'buy-in' from school leaders (see section on voice of school leaders p19).

Review Systems:

School-based or wider systems that require headteachers to report to strategic leaders should be regularly reviewed so that these systems provide an efficient and effective means of conveying information. Examples of tasks that may need reviewing include self-evaluation (or audit) and headteacher reporting. It is essential that such reviews consider the purpose of information gathering (eg school improvement) and the extent to which this purpose is met given any workload involved in collation, analysis and publication. Wherever possible, production and presentation of the same information in a variety of ways should be avoided.

Whenever headteachers are asked to produce information for strategic leaders, the question of whether 'the effort invested is worth the desired outcome' should always be considered carefully as part of such requests.

Commitment 2 - Meeting the Individual Needs of Children

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Meeting Individual Needs of Children	Efficient EHCP processes; support partnerships; ensure fair funding	Support best practice sharing; monitor statutory provision	Share expertise across schools; support inclusion strategies	Monitor SEN provision; uphold inclusive ethos

Underlying principle: That everyone works effectively to promote the highest possible outcomes for children with additional needs and disabilities.

The commitment to provide an education service that supports children with a variety of needs is both a statutory and moral responsibility. School leaders need to do all they can with the resources they have available to make appropriate provision for children with additional needs. They are committed to promoting an inclusive culture that promotes a sense of belonging for all children in their respective school communities.

As Surrey County Council also has significant statutory responsibility for special educational needs and disabilities, the commitment outlined above means that an effective collaborative relationship between the council and schools is critical. A strong culture of partnership working between schools and the council is key to making every possible effort to ensure that children have appropriate and timely support when they need this.

In light of this, it is important that school leaders:

- are well supported in accessing external services and training;
- have access to timely, relevant and evidence-based training that supports the design of the most effective provision for children with additional needs;
- are confident that they may use statutory tools as a last resort to safeguard and promote positive behaviour in their schools.

Strategic leaders should consider supporting school leaders by:

- committing to a close working relationship with schools, carrying out any of their statutory functions - including education and health needs assessments - as efficiently and effectively as possible, ensuring the opinion of all professionals is considered;
- supporting the development of relationships between (and within) the specialist and mainstream sectors for the purpose of sharing best practice;
- identifying and providing appropriate provision that meets a child's individual need and supporting schools and families in accessing this provision;
- ensuring that schools are funded promptly and fairly in accordance with the agreed funding framework for any provision identified as necessary within an education and health needs assessment;
- making every reasonable effort to secure placements in specialist settings in cases where statutory needs assessment recommends this as the most appropriate provision;

- where appropriate, providing parents with accessible information about the range of settings available and their likely suitability in terms of meeting a child's additional need so that parents can make informed decisions;
- working with school leaders to identify trends in terms of emerging needs that may need a strategic response.

Possible steps to address this commitment:

Close professional relationships

It is important that it is recognised that all professional partners have a responsibility for special educational needs and disabilities. Furthermore, as partners we collaboratively strive to build and sustain professional relationships built on trust and based on the shared aim of providing the best outcomes for young people with additional needs.

Strong communication (see also Commitment 7)

Linked to the above point, it is important that communication between partners is as effective as possible and this enables partner agencies, schools and families to receive consistent and timely information as well as meet statutory responsibilities.

The up-to-date contact details of those in the council with a responsibility for supporting children with additional needs should be readily available to school leaders alongside a description of their role. Where personnel changes are made, school leaders should be informed as soon as practicable.

Adaptation to need

Strategic leaders should be mindful of emerging trends in additional needs and support school leaders in considering appropriate changes they may need to make as a setting. MAT leadership teams could also consider effective ways in which provision may be shared across schools.

Consistency and fairness

Schools, health, social care and education professionals all play a vital role in contributing to Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments. The local authority is responsible for ensuring that the assessment and decision-making process is administered fairly, transparently, and in line with statutory guidance. Confidence in the process will be strengthened when school leaders and families know that their contributions have been meaningfully considered, and that decisions about support and resourcing are clearly linked to the child's level of need.

Understanding conflicting aims

In working with schools in whatever capacity, care should be taken to understand the complexity that accompanies decision-making that school leaders may face, recognising the needs of an individual and the legal constraints within which decisions must be made, whilst balancing the wellbeing of all staff and pupils.

Strategic leaders should be familiar with the underlying concerns that may become considerations when school leaders are faced with the difficult decision of whether or not they should suspend or exclude children. To this end, strategic leaders should have access to relevant training that enables them to conduct their statutory roles and responsibilities in a professional way.

Commitment 3 – Workload Management

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Workload Management	Assess workload of new demands; reduce duplication	Ensure expectations consider leader capacity	Coordinate workload expectations; enable efficiency via collaboration	Be mindful of workload; avoid excessive requests

Underlying principle: That workload for all leaders in education is reasonable and manageable, affording leaders sufficient time to focus on the most important aspects of their work, and experience sufficient time away from work to switch off and recharge.

The role of school leader is complex and involves a range of statutory duties and responsibilities. Strategic leaders should consider workload as a serious concern when introducing new initiatives or requiring school leaders to carry out an activity. Expectations placed on head teachers should:

- be risk-assessed to fully evaluate the workload implication and likely impact on school leaders - consulting leaders to understand the impact on them whenever possible;
- be manageable in terms of the time and resources required to complete an activity;
- recognise that significant activity may mean that other existing expectations are reduced to compensate.

Possible steps to address this commitment:

Risk assessment

It is of huge benefit if the workload implications of significant new initiatives are fully understood. Wherever possible, the additional time required by any new initiative should be evaluated as fully as possible. Some form of monitoring should take place to fully understand the impact of initiatives on overall workload over time.

Plan workload management:

Linked to above, those placing workload demands on school leaders should aim to plan strategically with overall workload in mind, understanding that developments and improvements must be manageable and not lead to significant increases in workload over time. There should be a determined effort to drive down workload as there is significant evidence that this is becoming a problem for school leaders.

Make the most of collaboration:

Strategic leaders should be mindful of the work efficiency savings that can be made through collaborative relationships with other schools. They should be taking a strategic view of such relationships, ensuring that opportunities are fully understood and nurtured.

Commitment 4 – Balancing Accountability with Support

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Balancing Accountability with Support	Provide timely support and advice; promote relational practice	Balance challenge/support; celebrate leader contributions	Embed wellbeing in appraisal and accountability systems	Support wellbeing in governance; ensure realistic targets

Underlying principle: That any system of accountability should be sufficiently focused on the support school leaders need to do their jobs effectively.

School leaders feel a great sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of their staff. It is important that strategic leaders support school leaders in this endeavour. It is likely that the better the wellbeing of school staff, the better the wellbeing of school leaders and vice versa. A strategy for supporting and promoting staff wellbeing is essential. Within this strategy, there should be explicit focus on school leaders. This focus should aim to:

- support school leaders in managing their workload, through CPD (such as time management training) and dedicated time;
- ensure school leaders have access to advice and support, such as coaching or strong links with wider networks;
- support school leaders in developing a whole-school culture that focuses on relationships (relational practice) and promotes wellbeing;
- provide direct access to professionals able to give a prompt response.

Steps to address this commitment:

Balancing challenge with support:

School leaders are rightly accountable for the quality of leadership they give to their school community. Those with strategic decision-making work should recognise, however, that a balance needs to be struck between holding school leaders to account and protecting a school leader's wellbeing. Strategic leaders should consider the best way of achieving this - ie how is an adequate focus on wellbeing best sustained. For instance, alongside a conversation about appraisal targets, meaningful and realistic discussion should take place about the resources available to support the school leader meeting those targets.

Strategic leaders need to understand the complexity of school improvement and that a good school leader may need to adapt aspects of the school development plan as time goes by.

High profile for school leader wellbeing:

Important conversations about whole staff wellbeing should not overlook the wellbeing of school leaders. This charter should help with this. Trust leaders, diocese leaders and school governors should assure themselves that adequate measures are in place to protect and promote the wellbeing of school leaders and that these measures reflect identified wellbeing risk factors,

including those outlined in this document. For instance, protecting the wellbeing of headteachers could include minimising the overall impact of out of hours work (such as evening meetings) by reducing the number of meetings overall or compensating headteachers in some other way.

The wellbeing of school leaders should be a key aspect of headteacher appraisal with adequate importance attached to any issues identified in appraisal meetings. If improvements are needed, it is important that there headteachers feel that they are supported to achieve these.

Recognition:

Finally, many school leaders, like all school staff, like to be recognised for the contribution they make. Whilst it is unlikely that school leaders rely on such recognition to motivate them, a focus on successes and achievements is highly likely to promote a school leader's wellbeing. Strategic leaders should consider how this recognition is best communicated in a pertinent and authentic way.

Commitment 5 - Strategic Improvement

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Strategic Improvement	Support long-term planning; train on school development review	Promote achievable improvement focus	Align MAT strategy with leader capacity; review priorities	Challenge priorities constructively; ensure resourcing

Underlying principle: That an ambitious drive for school improvement should be well-planned and well-paced.

Strategic leaders will wish to ensure schools are ambitious in their desire to continue to develop and improve. Ambitious development plans should:

- be 'reasonable' in terms of time frame and volume, and reflecting a school leader's views on what is achievable;
- be suitably resourced to ensure sustained effectiveness;
- contain key improvement drivers that are prioritised and regularly reviewed in terms of both their effectiveness and their impact on workload;
- recognise that at times school priorities may change and, as a consequence, consideration should be given to whether development foci should be removed or re-prioritised;
- reflect the school's vision and values.

Steps to address this commitment:

Effective school improvement by design

School improvement planning should reflect the philosophy that it is better to engage in fewer improvement initiatives and implement these well than try to change too much in any one year. Strategic Leaders have a role to play in supporting school leaders in choosing the right priorities and satisfy themselves that, where appropriate, a year's improvement work is part of a longer-term strategy for overall improvement that reflects a strong vision.

School development training for strategic leaders

Strategic leaders should be supported and receive appropriate training that helps them evaluate the effectiveness of school development planning and work. This training should support school leaders in ensuring that school development work is ambitious, manageable and appropriately impactful.

Commitment 6 - Communication

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Communication	Reduce jargon; use effective channels; prioritise clarity	Set respectful tone; facilitate timely responses	Respect protected time; avoid weekend emails	Clarify roles; maintain professional and respectful tone

Underlying principle: That the nature of communication between education leaders and within partnerships helps to promote professional relationships and are effective, efficient and respectful.

All those with strategic decision-making should aim to develop communication protocols with wellbeing in mind. Protocols may include:

- times when a school leader's time is protected and the only communication expected is for emergencies (with reasonable measures in place to contact school leaders in emergency during weekends and holidays);
- rules about emailing in particular, with the use of the 'send scheduling' feature to avoid emails arriving over weekends and holiday periods unless absolutely necessary.
- responding to a school leader's reasonable requests for information, guidance and support in a timely way;
- using a means of communication that is appropriate and effective for different circumstances or purposes;
- deciding general principles that influence whether or not meetings are held remotely, hybrid or face-to-face;
- clarity on who to contact about particular issues/support (eg clerk, chair, LA advisor etc);
- how parent governors should respond when other parents approach them about issues;
- the need to remain professional and respectful even when considering emotive issues.

Steps to address this commitment:

Protocols with wellbeing designed in

Wellbeing should be at the heart of communication protocols. Protocols should take account of an understanding of the general workload faced by school leaders, their 'short notice' availability and the importance of human contact to support relational practice in more challenging circumstances. Strategic leaders should be mindful that school leaders may have personal preferences in terms of communication methods and should aim to devise a protocol that works best for all.

Regular reviews

Methods of communication should be reviewed regularly to ensure that their advantage in terms of efficacy does not come at the price of a negative impact on wellbeing.

Effectiveness

Local authorities, diocesan leaders and trust leaders should aim to communicate in a succinct and effective way that recognises the audience of such communication. Councils should avoid specialist terminology that is only used within the authority itself and not widely understood in the education sector.

Prioritisation

Messaging from all strategic leaders should be prioritised to reduce the risk that information school leaders **MUST KNOW** is not overlooked. For instance, information could be clearly differentiated to clarify those that require **action**.

Key information should be communicated in a such a way that important messages are clearly conveyed to school leaders with the intention that there is minimal risk that the working patterns, capacity variance and working styles of different school leaders result in some being informed whilst others are not.

If school leaders are expected to use key websites operated by strategic leaders, care should be taken to consider the design of such sites in order to minimise the time spent sourcing key information. Shortcuts and hyperlinks to information needed regularly should have a high profile. Strategic leaders should consider whether the design of their websites and cloud-based resources meet the needs of school leaders and could seek feedback that this is the case. School leaders should be offered support so they know how to access information they need.

Commitment 7 - Supporting Home-School Relationships

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Supporting Home-School Relationships	Support complaint resolution; ensure fair info access	Model respect for school-home links	Provide templates/policies; support parental comms	Support complaints handling; promote clarity in policy

Underlying principle: That education leaders need to build and protect the trust of their community, and that all leaders and partners should support this endeavour.

The relationship between school and home is paramount for successful dialogue and engagement. All those who communicate with parents should make every effort to do so in an appropriate, professional, accurate and timely way.

The efforts that school leaders make to build and maintain strong relationships with parents should be fully supported and promoted by trusts and Surrey County Council. Strategic leaders should consider:

- helping school leaders with communication by providing information, templates and models to share strategic initiatives with parents and other stakeholders;
- providing template policies and letters that are clear and written in accessible language;
- sharing good practice amongst schools in relation to building positive partnerships;
- well-communicated expectations of the way in which parents and carers should approach a school with concerns, including behaviour and actions expected of all parties;
- providing timely and robust advice, guidance and support when leaders and governors are managing parental complaints;
- making every effort to ensure that information for parents about services offered by agencies outside school is readily available and accessible;

Steps to address this commitment:

Communication support

Where new strategies, policies or issues affect many schools (ie a majority of schools in a trust or the council), support should be given to schools to add clarity and promote consistency of communication. This helps parents understand the source and rationale behind decision-making in these instances.

Prioritising partnerships

Schools develop systems, structures and cultures over many years and many will be highly successful at developing strong home-school relationships. It is important that strategic leaders support schools in sharing good practice, promoting discussion around systemic or cultural issues that impact relationships with parents.

Advice and support

Strategic Leaders should ensure that school leaders have adequate access to advice and support when dealing with complaints. It is essential that they do not feel isolated in dealing with an aspect of school leadership that can have a negative effect on wellbeing. Strategic leaders should respond robustly and promptly where there is clear evidence that a complaint is vexatious and causing a school leader unnecessary workload and negatively impacting their wellbeing.

Respecting the home-school relationship

A number of agencies may come into contact with parents at certain times. All agencies will act in a professional way and respect the close relationship that schools have with parents. Where there are concerns about the work of a partner agency or the school, these should be addressed and responded to in an appropriate and professional manner.

Commitment 8 - Career Development

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Career Development	Sustain CPD funding; support aspiring leaders	Support faith leadership CPD and other leadership CPD offers	Offer coaching, mentoring, secondments	Use appraisal to support career growth

Underlying principle: **That school leaders should have access to high quality CPD that motivates them and enables them to carry out their leadership role effectively.**

Strategic leaders should recognise that training and protected time are essential to enable school leaders to remain in touch with current research and thinking. They should carefully consider:

- ensuring professional training and career development opportunities are explored within the headteacher appraisal process;
- seeking to maintain funding to provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of headteachers;
- encourage headteachers to seek enrichment opportunities through a range of CPD avenues, such as coaching, peer mentoring and partnership work.
- making sure school leaders who are new to role have effective support.

Steps to address this commitment:

Nourishing School Leaders

In order for the school leader to flourish, they need opportunities for ongoing CPD outside of the school's priorities. Strategic leaders might consider protected time for personal or professional development if these will positively impact a leader's sense of confidence, purpose and wellbeing.

Career Development

Strategic leaders should support the career aspirations of school leaders. This should be part of appraisal conversations. It is highly likely that activities that broaden a school leader's experience will not only support their professional skill set, but will benefit the school they lead.

Commitment 9 - Voice of School Leaders

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Voice of School Leaders	Consult on changes; provide forums	Engage via steering groups and reps	Invite feedback; act on leader concerns	Seek input during major decisions

Underlying principle: That school leaders should feel their views matter and that they help shape the outcomes of important decision-making.

Strategic leaders need to create avenues for highly effective, honest communication so that school leaders can feel heard. The importance of capturing the voice of school leaders has been mentioned several times in commitments one to nine. However, this is such an important factor influencing the wellbeing of leaders; it needs a commitment in its own right.

Strategic leaders should consider:

- creating suitable forums and systems to ensure that when national/countywide changes are implemented that leaders are consulted in a timely fashion and given opportunities to voice concerns and offer alternative solutions;
- facilitating steering groups and other forums for solution-focussed conversations;
- providing honest dialogue acknowledging when there will be a marked increase in leaders workload and how this can be addressed;
- being inclusive wherever practically possible in terms of the opportunities school leaders have to participate in partnership work.

Steps to address this commitment:

Understanding the 'capacity issue'

A systemic change may require an increase in workload and this should only be temporary. Strategic leaders should be honest and open about the impact this will have on school leaders, and actively listen when school leaders identify impact, which could happen at any time through a change process. Where appropriate - especially where initiatives may be beyond the capacity of school leaders to implement - a review of workload should take place so that priorities are identified and leaders feel supported in managing overall workload. Such a review should involve school leaders at all stages.

Professional partnership

Seeking the opinions and lived experience of school leaders in different contexts fosters professional respect and enables a sense of ownership and buy-in. School Leaders need to know that they have a voice and that open engagement and dialogue will foster positive relationships and effective working practices.

Where issues are explored with representative groups, it is important that the opinion of school leaders is sought within this work. It is critical that there is effective communication to the wider community of school leaders in relation to the work of such groups and that, equally, school leaders respond to requests to contribute their views.

Commitment 10 - Ongoing Monitoring of Wellbeing

Wellbeing Commitment	Council	Dioceses	Trust Leaders	Governors/ Local Board Members
Monitoring of Wellbeing	Use surveys/data; act on concerns quickly	Develop open relationships; promote early dialogue	Embed wellbeing in appraisal; monitor through check-ins	Conduct regular wellbeing checks; act on red flags

Underlying principle: That the wellbeing of school leaders should be carefully monitored to ensure that any lessons learned are acted on quickly.

Strategic leaders should be diligent in monitoring the wellbeing of school leaders. They should ensure that they receive adequate training in relation to wellbeing and use this knowledge to implement both formal and informal means to evaluate the wellbeing of school leaders. They should consider:

- evaluating a range of factors that are known to influence wellbeing;
- evaluating benchmark data where possible to compare with a wider data set;
- responding with supportive action where concerns are identified.

Steps to address this commitment:

Strong relationships:

The stronger the relationship between strategic partners and school leaders, the more likely school leaders will share any challenges they face; wellbeing risks can be identified early and managed effectively. Council officers, diocesan leaders, governors and trust leaders should aim to develop this close, open relationship with school leaders.

Diverse monitoring tools:

Strategic leaders should consider using various methods to gain an understanding of the wellbeing of headteachers across all schools for whom they are responsible, including informal 'catch ups', discussions with representative groups and surveys of all school leaders. The results of surveys should be shared and used to support planning with the aim of bringing about wellbeing improvements where issues detrimental to wellbeing are identified.

Written for all Surrey school and
education leaders
with the support of:



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