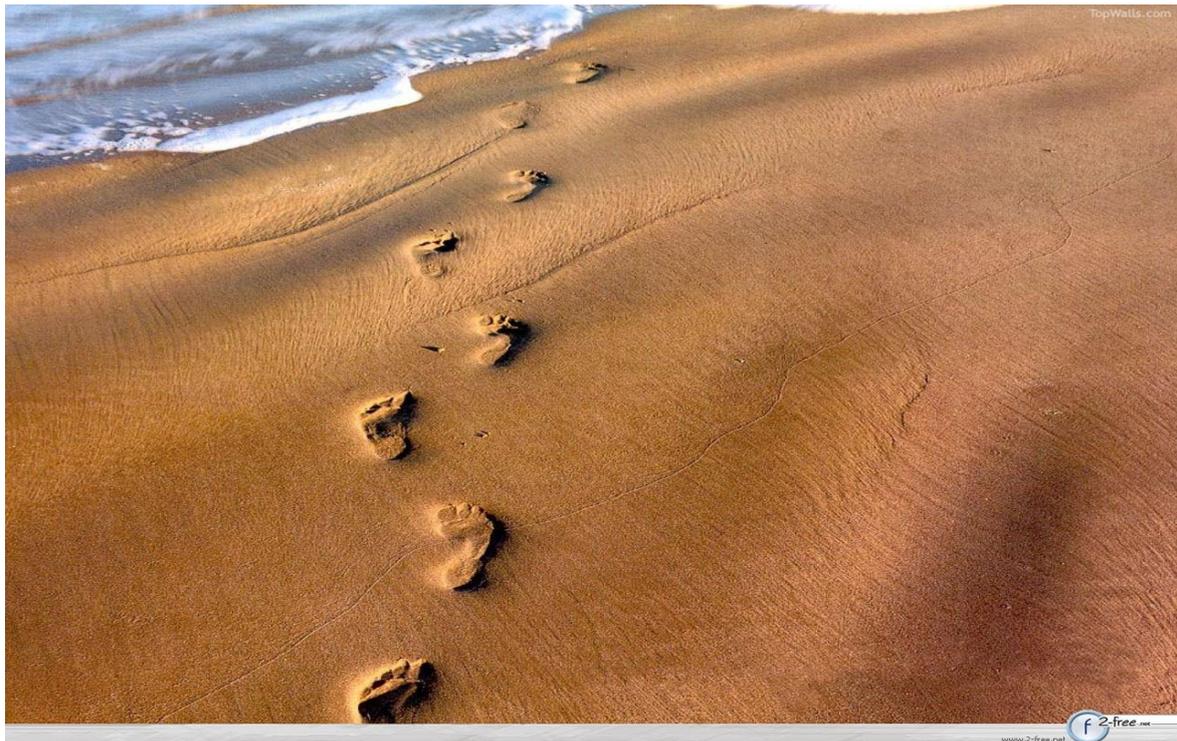


Headteacher Wellbeing Guidance For Church Schools Covid supplement



“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour;
Isaiah 43:2-3

Introduction



It has been said many times over the past few months that we are living in unprecedented times. It may sometimes seem like a cliché but it is true. No headteacher has ever had to lead a school in a global pandemic such as this and whether a headteacher for 6 months or one for 20 years no one will have experienced anything like it before.

Lockdown

Schools, their staff and leaders responded amazingly to the last minute closure of schools; arranging for home learning, providing lunches for families who struggled, keeping in touch with children and their families to ensure their wellbeing and at the same time providing places in school for children of frontline workers. All of this whilst dealing with the personal pressure of living in the time of a global pandemic, some falling ill, others having to shield and more tragically losing staff or family members to the virus.

To add to the pressure, daily updated and sometimes conflicting guidance was issued at different times of the day with school leaders having to keep on top of the changes; regularly updating plans and procedures to match this. High schools had to deal with cancelled GCSEs and A levels, causing great stress and anxiety for staff, leaders and students alike.

Department
for Education

Public Health
England

Guidance
**COVID-19: guidance for education
settings**

Updated 20 March 2020

Reopening



Finally came the announcement that schools would open for all pupils and students in September. With that came another round of updated guidance and changes to risk assessments, planning, cleaning regimes, staffing requirements and the impact to the budget of additional hygiene measures to be put in place, a budget that was already difficult to manage.

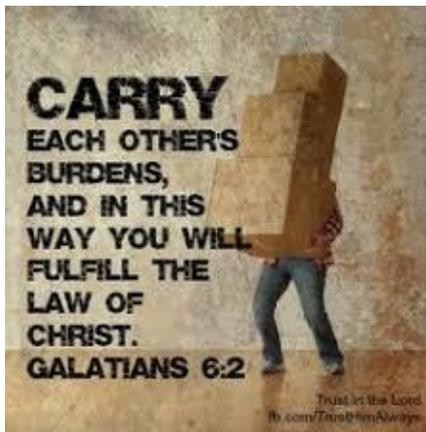
Again schools, their staff and leaders rose up to this challenge and were delighted to welcome pupils and students back.

All of this will undoubtedly have had at least some impact on headteachers' wellbeing. In our general headteacher wellbeing guidance, the daily pressures of leadership are highlighted, add to this the additional pressures from leading a school through the pandemic and it is clear that the role of a school leader for 2020/2021 has been, and is, particularly hard.



The importance of Headteacher wellbeing

Headteachers, and those who support them, should be aware that it is more important now than ever to focus on their mental wellbeing. We would urge headteachers to consider using some of the strategies outlined in the general document (eg managing work and home better, making time for exercise, turning off emails and many more).



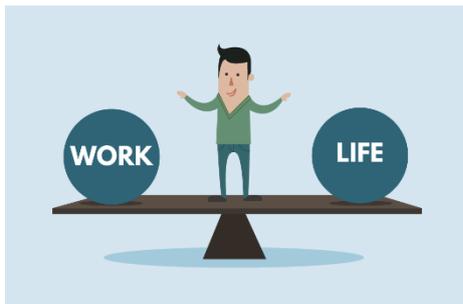
We know that headteachers will be supporting the mental wellbeing of their staff and pupils and so **it is for governors and Trustees to monitor the wellbeing of the headteacher and, as a DBE, we will support in any way we can.**

For the past few months, headteachers will have been mostly running on adrenaline, making plans, monitoring school, filling in risk assessments, sending in attendance data, re-planning the curriculum, looking at recovery whilst worrying about children in and out of school and shielding staff from the complaints and worries of parents. This continues as headteachers manage bubbles, deal with cases, decide who and when to send people home whilst trying to continue with learning and the possibility of a visit from Ofsted.

Through this time it is vitally important that headteachers make time for themselves and also share the burden of responsibility with other SLT members, governors and clergy to support their mental and spiritual wellbeing. Headteachers must feel supported by those around them with regular opportunities to talk through decision making but also simply asking the question **'how are you?'**.

HOW ARE YOU?

Changes for the better?



One aspect that has been highlighted for some headteachers is that because of lockdown and additional cleaning measures they have had to leave school early and have spent more time at home and /or with family. Others have worked hard to make a clearer separation between work and home life and have reported that the lockdown has encouraged them to stop checking emails at night and turn off

notifications.

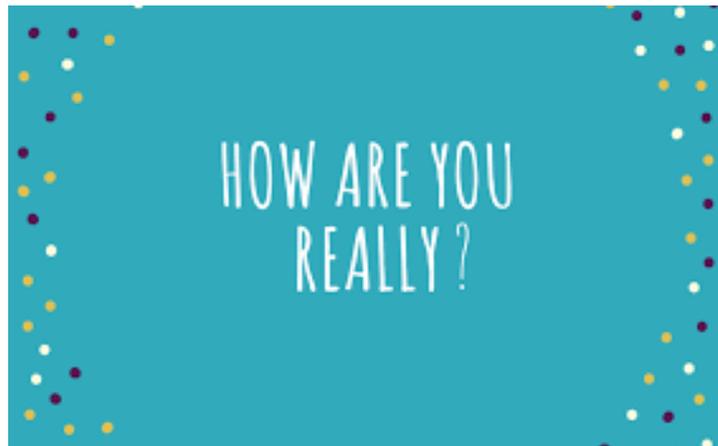
Less time at school has also meant more opportunities for physical exercise, a great source of wellbeing, both physically and mentally. We would encourage headteachers to continue to follow these positive actions in allowing more time for relaxation and a homelife that is not filled with work and make this a permanent change.



If this has not been the case then we would urge headteachers to make this change and ensure that their pace of life is sustainable for the long term especially as the situation changes rapidly and schools remain open.

Delayed reaction?

It is also important to understand that the impact of the continuous pressure and reaction to quickly changing circumstances may well be felt much further down the line. When things have settled and school is possibly running in a much more regular way, that may be when emotions and tiredness take their toll. It is therefore even more important that governors regularly check on headteacher wellbeing beyond the time of covid. Headteachers need to be prepared to admit if things have started to become difficult and governors need to ensure that they really explore their wellbeing, not simply accepting the first 'I'm okay' response.



It's okay not to be okay

The Church of England's Foundation for Educational Leadership (CEFEL) have sent out regular mailings based on their publication 'Called, Connected, Committed' (an exploration of leadership in education based on the Church of England's Vision for Education). One reflection is around accepting vulnerability as a leader and has a particular resonance at this time. The whole series is available on their website, with the reflection on vulnerability in particular here

<https://mailchi.mp/churchofengland.org/called-connected-committed-monday-message-accepting-vulnerability>

Dealing with loss

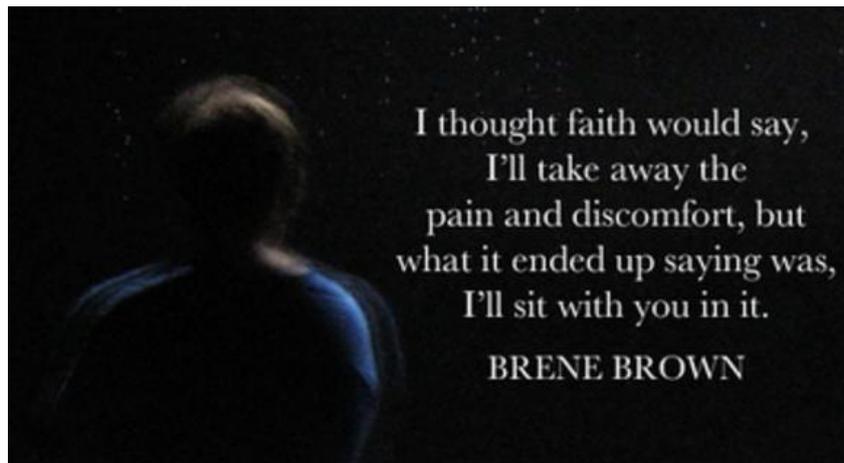
Unfortunately schools may have suffered bereavements during this time; staff, parents/grandparents or others in the school community. The normal way a school would support staff, children and their families will not have been available and the emotions may make themselves felt on return.



We have a number of resources for leaders to support those who may be bereaved <https://chesterdbe.co.uk/bereavement-support-resources> along with the central education team <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-home/i-am-school-leader/never-same-resources-school-leaders> but again headteachers will carry the emotional burden of support as well as possibly feeling a sense of loss themselves. It is

important to acknowledge this and for headteachers to take time for their own grief and talk this through with clergy, governors or other friends and colleagues.

Such loss may also prompt children or staff to question the Christian faith and thus the values and foundation of the school. This may mean some difficult conversations and we would urge headteachers to use their church family and clergy to support this and to help them explore this themselves if they are finding it hard to deal with the situation from a personal point of view. The Board of Education also has some resources that may be helpful, with officers always on the end of the phone to give advice and guidance as well as a listening ear.



Websites for support

Obviously the government regularly publish updates for schools on their website www.gov.uk but the following links may be helpful with regards to mental wellbeing and coronavirus.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/supporting-your-pupils-through-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

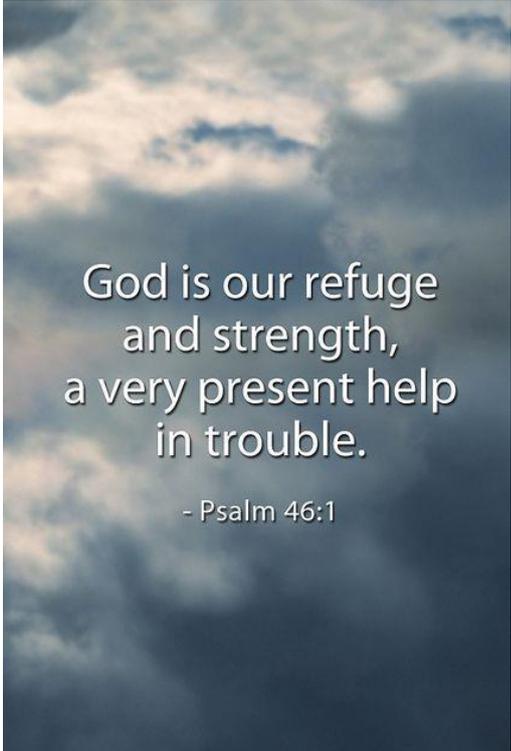
<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/services-for-schools/mental-health-resources-for-schools/coronavirus-wellbeing-activity-ideas-for-schools/>

Thank you Headteachers

We do not know how long we will be experiencing the 'new normal' but it is clear that this experience will have changed lives and how we work for the future. The wellbeing handbook will, we hope, be helpful throughout this time and beyond, but we wanted, through this paper, to reflect on this particular situation and the additional strain it will have inevitably caused.

We hope that headteachers will know that God is always with them and that throughout this time, and always, He will carry the burden if it becomes too much.

Finally we want to acknowledge the amazing commitment and care shown by leaders and staff throughout our schools and to make it clear that they are cared for and very much appreciated by the Diocesan Board of Education.



God is our refuge
and strength,
a very present help
in trouble.

- Psalm 46:1

A Prayer for School Leaders from CEFEL

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You know what it is to be denied, betrayed and abandoned,
As we encounter hardship and pain in our roles and in our lives,
May we know you walking beside us.

Help us to see your handiwork all around us

That glimmers of the Kingdom of Heaven might break through.

Bless us, your children, we pray.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You know what it is to lose someone that you loved.

As we encounter grief and loss in our roles and in our lives,
May we know you weeping together with us.

Help us to feel your comfort enveloping us

That reservoirs of deep and never-ending grace might flow.

Bless us, your children, we pray.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You know what it is to be misunderstood, humiliated and vulnerable.

As we encounter the weight of others' expectations in our roles and in our lives,
May we know you standing beside us.

Help us to believe you advocate for us

That truth, justice and mercy might abound in equal measure.

Bless us, your children, we pray.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You know what it is to give yourself to bring about reconciliation.

As we encounter argument and strife in our roles and in our lives,
May we know you mediating between us.

Help us to be drawn towards your common purpose

That we might lay aside our own desires, letting peace and harmony reign.

Bless us, your children, we pray.

Amen