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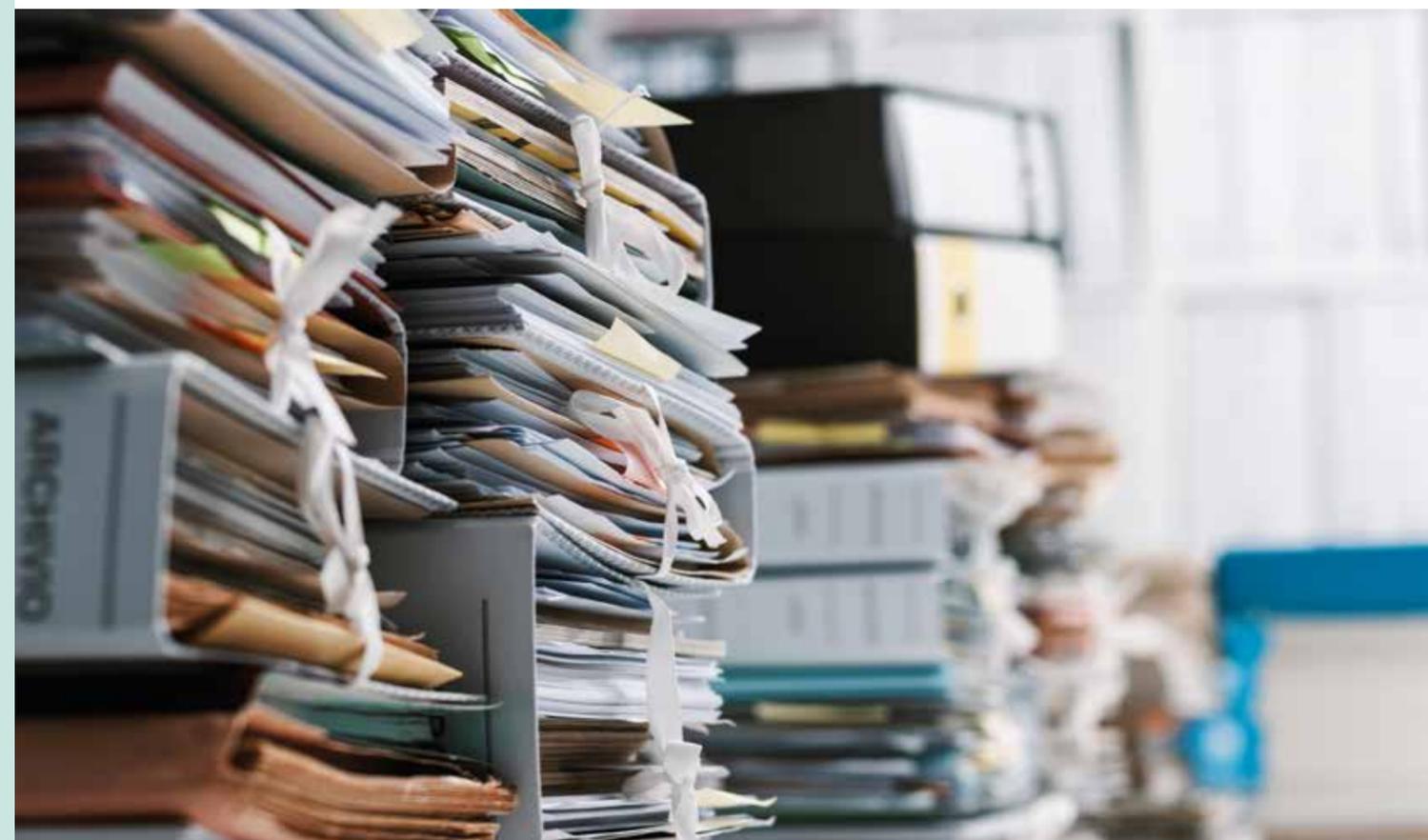
Reducing teacher workload: Part 1

Excessive and inappropriate workload is a key reason for teachers quitting the profession. In a two-part *SecEd* Best Practice Focus, *Matt Bromley* looks at how schools can keep workload in check. In part one, he touches upon the role of leadership, culture, student behaviour, school routines, email and more. He also offers tips to help teachers protect their own wellbeing

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Workload reduction – advice for teachers and schools

The teaching profession is a leaky sieve and the prevalence of unfulfilled teaching posts as well as a growth in the numbers of unqualified teachers in classrooms is proving costly and damaging.

There are myriad statistics to choose from. For example, 23 per cent of secondary schools reported an unfilled vacancy in 2017, up 15.9 per cent on 2010 (NAO, 2017).

In November 2016 there were 500 fewer qualified teachers in service than in the previous year and 1,400 more unqualified teachers (DfE, June 2017).

Furthermore, one in 10 teachers left the profession in 2016. Of these, an increasing proportion left for other sectors rather than retiring, suggesting that working conditions rather than age are driving them out (DfE, June 2017).

So, why are teachers quitting the profession in record numbers? Although there are many reasons, topping the table in seemingly every survey is one thing: workload.

According to a National Audit Office study (NAO, 2017), 67 per cent

of school leaders reported that workload is a barrier to teacher retention. Meanwhile, a report commissioned by the Department for Education – *Factors affecting teacher retention* (DfE, March 2018) – found that workload remained the most important factor influencing teachers' decisions to quit and most solutions to addressing retention were linked in some way to workload.

Data from the latest School Workforce Census (DfE, June 2019) show that drop-out rates of young graduate teachers are rising and each year's graduates are more likely to leave the profession than the previous year's – 85 per cent of 2017 graduates were still in the profession after one year, compared to 88 per cent of 2011 graduates.

Elsewhere, the *Teacher Workforce Dynamics* report, published by the National Foundation for Educational Research, found that teachers work around 50 hours a week on average – longer than nurses and police officers (NFER, 2018).

And of course we cannot ignore the DfE's Workload Challenge, which

highlighted specific workload threats – namely excessive workload around planning and teaching resources, marking and data management – and produced expert reports advising schools on how to tackle these issues (DfE, March 2016).

So, the theory is simple: reduce teacher workload and solve the teacher retention crisis, thus saving the taxpayer money and improving the quality of education we provide in our schools.

So far so simple – but how can we reduce teacher workload without adversely affecting pupil progress and outcomes? And is it just about cutting workload, or might it also be about changing the nature of the work that teachers are asked to do?

The general response from government is that teaching will be improved by reducing workload, removing unnecessary tasks and increasing pay. This may help, says the UCL, but its findings indicate that part of the problem lies within the culture of teaching, the constant scrutiny, the need to perform, and hyper-critical management. Reducing workload alone will not address these cultural issues.

The UCL findings illustrate the link between workload fears and the reality of working within what the

Workload: volume or type?

A recent UCL Institute of Education (2019) survey of around 1,200 current and former teachers found that it was the nature rather than the quantity of workload that was the crucial factor in driving teachers out of the classroom.

Underlying teachers' decisions to quit, the report concluded, was a

perceived contradiction between expectations and reality – in other words, the practice of being a teacher impeded their ability to actually be a teacher.

Many of those surveyed by UCL imagined, before they started, that they could cope with the workload, but once in the classroom a general lack of support from middle and senior leaders, together with the effects of high-stakes accountability, were far worse than they had thought and it was this that led to many leaving, with many more actively considering quitting.

report's authors call "the accountability performativity context". The report states: "Those who want to be teachers are committed to the profession and yet, somehow, that commitment is eroded in a very short space of time."

What are the solutions?

In this two-part Best Practice Focus, therefore, I will explore four areas of school life that senior leaders may wish to consider in order to improve both the nature and the amount of work that teachers have to do. By so doing, we should improve rates of retention and, with it, improve the quality of education we provide in our schools. These four areas are:
1 Leadership.
2 Scheduling.
3 Marking and data.
4 Planning and resources.

Before we tackle the first of these areas, though, here are some quick tips for teachers to help you manage your workload.

Workload tips for teachers

1, Keep lists

Prioritise tasks according to their importance and timescale. Make informed decisions about the relative impact of the actions that are asked of you upon pupils' learning and wellbeing. For example, use a one to three scale (or traffic lights) whereby 1 is urgent (usually to be completed within 24 hours), 2 is important (within two to three days) and 3 is neutral (ideally by the end of the week but often by the end of the month). There might be a fourth category: items to be passed on to someone else or cast aside.

2, Delegate

Knowing which tasks can be passed to someone else is important, as is keeping track of those tasks – striking the right balance between giving colleagues genuine ownership of the task and ensuring it is completed on time.

3, Keep meetings short and productive

Meetings can be kept short and productive by circulating a clear, agreed agenda prior to the meeting and doggedly sticking to it – ensuring that deviations are avoided. Minutes of meetings should also be short and should list the actions required and the people responsible.

Meetings are often important, unavoidable and the most effective way of making decisions, but knowing when a meeting is necessary and when meetings can be avoided is just as important. Ask yourself: can I achieve the same outcome without a meeting? Can the matter be resolved by email, telephone, or a "walk and talk"?

If a meeting is necessary, for example with a parent, pupil or agency, what is the best format? A formal, round the table meeting or a short, standing briefing? People will respond better to meetings if they know that they are only held if necessary.

4, Start a diary

Start a diary of your activities at school and at home, listing everything you do and how much time you spend on each thing. Include every activity, even those that you may not think of as big tasks: phone calls, photocopying, impromptu meetings, etc. You may find it useful to break your work down by structured (teaching time, PPA time, meetings, parent consultations, training) and unstructured work time.

Look back at the diary and ask yourself what patterns you might be able to change. Set yourself specific goals, making sure to write your goals up in a positive way.

Goals become easier to accomplish when you focus on the benefit. For example: "Set a time to finish each evening. Set free time on weekends and on some week nights."

5, Get a good night's sleep

Make sure that you make time for a good sleep. According to the Great British Sleep Survey (2012), long-term poor sleepers are seven times more likely to feel helpless than good sleepers and five times more likely to feel alone. Bad sleepers are also twice as likely to have relationship problems or suffer daytime fatigue and poor concentration. What can you do to improve your sleep?
● Don't work in your bedroom.
● Make sure you have some quiet relaxing time before bed.
● Try not to read late at night on a backlit device.

6, Colour-code your planner

To ensure an effective balance in life, teachers need to be expert planners. The best tips to making this happen revolve around the art of real and effective time-management.

In order to achieve this, you could buy a "page a day" planner and produce your own A4 week plan, broken into hours of the day.

Put your working and then personal commitments for the year into both the planner and your week plan. Use separate colours for different types of commitments at work and plan in when you will do marking and so on.

However, ensure that you also add the time slots when you are going to watch your favourite television programmes, go to the cinema, or go to the gym etc. You are ensuring that your personal life and wellbeing are given equal priority in your weekly plans.

Now look back at your workload. Check that the week is not dominated by one colour on the plan. Be realistic, but also hard-nosed about this. Move work onto next week's plan or even later if it can be. Put a copy of your plan up at work and at home. Hold yourself to account and encourage others to do

so too. Finally, learn how to say "no". When something is thrown at you that adds to your workload, look at your plan. Have you a slot free when it can be done? If not, say so. Offer to fit it in later, but do not take on what you cannot do.

7, Ask for help if you need it

No matter what you are going through, there is help out there for you. For example, the Education Support Partnership is always at the end of the telephone, day or night, all the time. Their trained counsellors will listen to you without judgement and will help you think through the problems you are facing to find a way forwards.

Their helpline is free and available to all teachers and staff in education in England, Wales and Scotland. All calls are free of charge (see further information). Depending on your needs they might:
● Deal with your call personally and offer emotional support straight away.
● Offer action plan support (coaching).
● Transfer you to one of their BACP-accredited counsellors.
● Connect you to one of their other services (such as grants or information).
● Assist with referral for longer term treatment.

Solution #1: Leadership

The government undoubtedly has a part to play in reducing teacher workload by reviewing the demands it places on schools through its high-stakes accountability system – as highlighted in a letter from the former secretary of state Damian Hinds in which he said the DfE wanted "to do more work to reduce the pressures on school leaders (and) build on (the DfE's) commitments to simplify accountability and provide stability in the curriculum and qualifications" (Hinds, 2018).

However, most of the workload demands that teachers face come from school leaders not policy-makers – even if they are seemingly driven by policy.

So, what can school leaders do to improve their teachers' health and wellbeing, reduce workload and improve work/life balance?

First, leaders need to create a culture that promotes healthy lifestyles and that supports those who feel stressed. This culture must also provide plentiful ➤

> ❝ *Most of the workload demands that teachers face come from school leaders not policy-makers – even if they are seemingly driven by policy* ❞

opportunities for teachers to engage in high-quality CPD that equips them with the skills they need to perform their duties and it must provide a safe space in which to take risks and make mistakes.

Second, leaders need to think carefully about the impact of their own behaviours and actions on teachers' wellbeing and workload, particularly about how they manage the process of change and communicate their expectations with consistency, clarity and fairness – thus avoiding the law of unintended consequences.

Let us start with culture…

Creating the culture

In *Rule Makers, Rule Breakers* (2018), psychologist Michele Gelfand asks what ultimately drives human behaviour. Do ideals, symbols and beliefs lead people to act as they do? Or are our motivators less ethereal: money, fear, thirst for power, circumstance and opportunity, with culture only an afterthought?

Gelfand comes down firmly on the side on the culturalists: "Culture is a stubborn mystery of our experience and one of the last uncharted frontiers."

And the most important ingredients of culture, she argues, are the social norms, the often-informal rules of conduct, the dos and don'ts that emerge whenever people band together.

And it is this notion of "people banding together" that is so crucial to the staff culture in our schools because the kind of workplace environment that protects teacher wellbeing and keeps workload low is one of collaboration not competition, one in which teachers can share and thus halve their workload and seek support when needed.

In the best schools I have visited, the ones where a teacher's workload is manageable and staff stay for the long-term, the staffroom remains a hub of the school – it is busy with staff sharing and listening, offloading and laughing.

In the least successful schools I have seen, the staffroom is either non-existent or deserted; instead, staff work in departmental silos or, worse, alone in their classrooms. Not only does this lead to greater levels of stress and anxiety, it means that teachers have to do everything alone and cannot share and thus cut their workload.

In the best schools, the canteen

and corridors are calm, friendly places – respected and kept clean by everyone. People are polite, greeting you with a smile, and they are purposeful and focused on learning and teaching.

In the least successful schools, there is a threatening atmosphere of chaos and confusion. There are no-go areas, behaviour is not tackled because there is no leadership from the top: rather, behaviour is regarded as each teacher's responsibility and if they cannot manage it, they alone are to blame. Again, this causes stress and adds to the burden of workload because teachers have to tackle and follow-up on behavioural issues by themselves.

Once school leaders have built the positive staff culture I describe above, they and all their staff need to foster a positive pupil culture too, because inconsistent or unclear expectations of pupils leads to poor behaviour and poor behaviour is stressful and time-consuming for teachers to deal with. One of the best ways to create a positive pupil culture is to define a set of social norms for what constitutes good behaviour, and this is much more than just the reduction or elimination of poor behaviour…

Social norms

In *Promoting the Conditions for Positive Behaviour* (2012), Phillip Garner writes: "It remains clear that successful outcomes for pupils in school, including the promotion of good behaviour and learning, can be firmly linked to effective leadership."

The senior leadership team therefore has a crucial role to play in terms of consulting on, agreeing and articulating their school's social norms for behaviour and then ensuring that these are established and enforced by every adult working in the school – thus taking responsibility away from individual teachers and freeing up their time and energy to focus on teaching.

Tom Bennett in *Creating a culture*, his report for the DfE (2017), says that an effective culture occurs when there is:
- Committed, highly visible school leaders with ambitious goals.
- Effectively communicated, realistic, detailed expectations understood clearly by all.
- Highly consistent working practices throughout the school.
- A clear understanding of what the school culture is.
- High levels of staff and parental

commitment to the school vision and strategies.
- High levels of support between leadership and staff.
- Attention to detail and thoroughness in the execution of school policies and strategies.
- High expectations of all pupils and staff and a belief that all pupils matter equally.

When the culture fails, it is likely because there is:
- A lack of clarity of vision, or poor communication of that vision to staff or pupils.
- A lack of sufficient in-school classroom management skills.
- Poorly calibrated or low expectations.
- Inadequate orientation for new staff or pupils.
- A burdensome workload for staff, who are therefore unable to direct behaviour effectively.
- Unsuitably skilled staff in charge of pivotal behaviour roles.
- Remote, unavailable or over-occupied leadership.
- Inconsistency between staff and departments.

Four stages

I think the kind of school culture that both Garner and Bennett define is best created in four stages:
1. Creating the culture.
2. Communicating the culture.
3. Making the culture concrete.
4. Making the culture continuous.

1, Creating the culture

A key role of school leaders is to agree a detailed vision of what the culture should look like for their school, focusing on pupils' social and academic conduct. Expectations must be high for all. Creating the culture is about agreeing a set of social norms that should be reproduced throughout the school community. Ask: what would I like all pupils to do as a matter of routine? What do I want them to believe about themselves, their achievements, each other, and the school as a whole? School leaders can then translate these aspirations into expectations.

> ❝ *School leaders need to make the culture concrete by building it into their physical practices* ❞
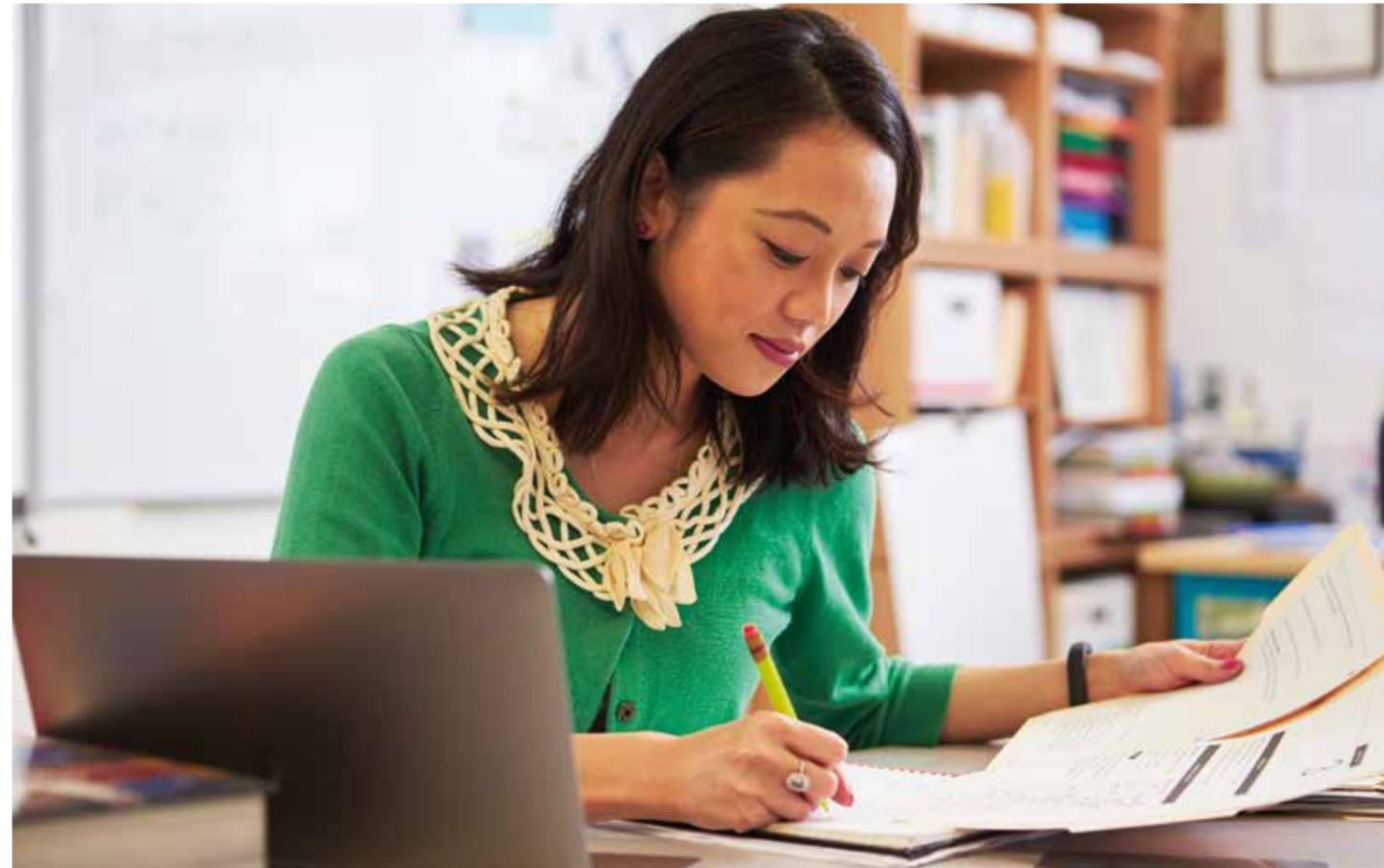
2, Communicating the culture

Social norms are found most clearly in a school's regular routines. Any aspect of school behaviour that can be standardised because it is expected from all pupils at all times should indeed be standardised. For example, walking on the left or right down the corridor, entering the class in single file and silence, clearing canteen tables after lunch – these routines should be communicated to, and practised by, all staff and pupils until they become automatic. This then frees up time, mental effort and energy and reduces workload.

3, Making the culture concrete

School leaders need to make the culture concrete by building it into their physical practices. Staff and pupils need to know how to achieve this and what the culture looks like in practice, from behaviour on buses, to corridor and canteen conduct. This means demonstrating it, communicating it thoroughly and repeatedly, and ensuring that every aspect of school life feeds into and reinforces that culture.

The school must have well-established and universally known and understood systems of

behaviour – such as for removing pupils from class, corridor and classroom expectations, and behaviour on school buses and trips.

4, Making culture continuous

Once built, school systems require regular maintenance – school leaders must not assume that, once they have been created, communicated and made concrete, cultures will simply flourish. Rather, school leaders need to continuously cultivate the culture – it requires their constant focus and attention.

This might include staff training, the effective use of rewards and sanctions, data collection and analysis (e.g, when and where and why pupils misbehave, when and why pupils are absent or late, etc), as well as staff and pupil surveys.

In order to make the culture continuous, school leaders need to establish the right environment within which that culture can flourish and – among other means – this can be done through the use of regular assemblies, wall displays, routinely challenging appearance, and what happens if pupils do not come to class with the right equipment.

Government advice

The DfE advises (DfE, July 2018) that schools do the following in order to reduce the teacher workload created by behaviour management:
- Review and where appropriate streamline the behaviour policy and practices alongside the principles in *Creating a culture* (Bennett, 2017) and consider using the managing behaviour workshop (DfE, March 2019).
- Provide highly consistent behaviour management practices throughout the school. Communicate these effectively to all staff, pupils and parents. Ensure all staff in the school fully understand them and their role in implementing them. Provide regular training to help embed a consistent approach.
- Focus support at an early stage. Workload can increase if issues escalate. Behaviour can be addressed more effectively when support is given early. Consider when in the year, where and with whom behaviour might be more challenging and focus support on these areas.
- Consider whether a central point in the school could be

responsible for out-of-class behaviour management, or tracking and understanding behaviour data. This can allow patterns to be spotted and reduce the burden on teachers. Consider, for example, running centralised detentions to free up teachers and to allow data to be managed from a single point.
- Review or implement simple systems to log behaviour incidents, detentions and other pastoral information during the normal working day. Use appropriate technology to support straightforward data entry, issuing detentions and reporting behaviour incidents to parents to avoid duplication.
- Consider the amount of text that is logged when recording incidents. Consider who and what the text will be used for while ensuring key information is still recorded, and ask whether it will make a difference. Decide the amount of text needed for more serious and complex incidents to ensure there is a proportionate amount of detail.
- Behaviour codes should be aligned with the behaviour

policy and limited in number. Use as few codes as possible to streamline data entry – use simple systems like Red-Amber-Gold or C1-C2-C3.
- Manage expectations of parents and carers (through the behaviour policy or other communications) about the level of detail to expect when reporting behaviour incidents.
- Consider how pupils, rather than the teacher, can be responsible for their behaviour – for example, by informing their parents and carers themselves or writing reports about their behaviour.

Managing change

A teacher's workload is often heaviest at times of change, for example when new school policies and procedures come into effect. So, what can school leaders do to help staff cope with and respond to change?

First, consider why people can be resistant to change:
- They are anxious of the impact it will have on their jobs.
- They feel they have tried it before and it did not work.
- They fear it will mean more work for them.
- They do not understand the need for change/they like the status quo.
- They fear failure.
- They are scared by the pace of change and by being out of their comfort zone.
- They fear change will prove too costly or a waste of time/money.

Once you understand people's resistance, you should begin to engage them in the process of change. As a starting point, it is important to:
- Be open and honest about the need for change. Involve your staff as early as possible, ideally involve them in the process of identifying the need for change in the first place.
- Explain the rationale behind change. On what evidence have you based your decision to change? What do you hope this change will achieve? Why is that important?
- Outline the benefits of change for all. What is in it for staff, pupils, parents and governors? How will change make their working lives easier and more rewarding?

School leaders need a range of skills when managing change: ➤

Patience and self-control: Stay calm and considered at all times. Think and behave rationally.

Balance: Balance the needs of pupils with the needs of staff. Balance, too, the need to improve teaching and learning with the school's financial needs.

Communication: Keep others informed and involved at all times and ensure genuine two-way communication.

Problem-solving: Think through the options and find appropriate solutions.

Personal ownership: Show initiative and be conscientious; take responsibility for your decisions and actions and for the consequences.

In summary, effective change requires leadership that is democratic, acts as a role model, and supports and encourages others. Why? Because effective leadership leads to people feeling involved and valued, provides broader, richer insights and ideas, and helps improve staff morale.

Effective leadership also shares responsibility, leads to less stress, higher standards of teaching, effective collaboration and more honest relationships in which problems are aired and resolved more quickly.

Government advice
The DfE offers the following advice to help schools reduce the workload caused by change (DfE, July 2018):
- Plan ahead, identify and eradicate "pinch points".
- Time the calendar production in advance of the new school year. Ask a range of staff to review and provide feedback from their perspectives before finalising the calendar. Consider running a "planning a yearly calendar" workshop.
- Use assessment and examination calendars to support the school calendar and cross-reference against these. Include assessment points and data collection cycles for the year, and check that data will be collected and processed in time for use. Review these points regularly to ensure that all data drops are necessary and that data is collected when it will be used most efficiently.
- Share monitoring events, CPD and meeting schedules well in advance.
- Give regular updates and advance notice of evening and after-school events.
- Implement changes in a structured and staged manner. Ensure there is adequate time at the planning stage when preparing to make changes and collaborate with staff on plans.
- Make fewer, more strategic decisions. Decide if other existing practices can be stopped or streamlined.
- No change for the sake of change. Ensure that changes have a specific focus linked to improvement priorities and have a clear, logical implementation plan.
- Adopt a one-in, one-out rule for new tasks, encouraging consistency and sustainability.
- Consider how the governing board can support change management. Consult with the board to agree its involvement. Suggest a workshop for the board to review and streamline workload and support workload reduction across the school(s).
- Create a shared understanding of the process. Introduce new skills, knowledge and structures with explicit up-front training, structured collaboration and complementary coaching and mentoring.
- Build leadership capacity by developing teams. Encourage staff to collaborate with other colleagues in school teams and with colleagues from other schools and external agencies to share and distribute workload.
- Communicate your changes. Work with governors, parents and carers, and pupils to make sure that the school community understands the reasons for change.
- Ask if you do not understand why a process or practice is carried out. Be clear about how a process or practice is leading to a positive impact on pupils.

Communication
One of the quickest wins in the quest to reduce teacher workload is to review the way in which, how often and why you communicate with staff, and indeed expect staff to communicate with others. Let us consider, by way of example, email...

Not only do staff emails take time to read and respond to, they often lead to additional workload. And, what is more, emails can invade a teacher's privacy, pinging at all times

> *Emails can invade a teacher's privacy, pinging at all times of day and night and even at weekends*

of day and night and even at weekends or during school holidays.

Although I would not necessarily advocate a blanket policy such as turning the school servers off at certain times (such as happens at car manufacturer Volkswagen) – because this can cause more stress for people if poorly timed – consideration must be given to how often emails are sent, how long those emails are, and what response is expected and when.

Another German car-maker, Daimler, has a "Mail on Holiday" policy which auto-deletes an employee's emails when they are on vacation. People who do send emails are presented with three options in the auto-response: email someone else if it is urgent, email the same person once they have returned, or choose no further action.

Whatever your approach, it may be wise to audit your school's current email usage and investigate the unintended consequences of any current practices. When I used to commute a long distance to work, I would use my time on the train to read and send emails. This worked for me as it meant I could use my time on-site to be visible and meet colleagues and students. However, the unintended consequence was that my senior team received emails late at night and very early in the morning (these often pinged on their bedside tables) and they felt compelled to respond.

Therefore, in reviewing your current practice, ask yourself how many emails are sent to an average teacher each day/week and why? Could another method of communication be used instead, such as one-to-one chats in the corridor or staff briefings?

Could one email be sent each week containing a list of items rather than lots of separate emails? Could the email, if it is essential, make clear that either no response is required, or that a response is not urgent?

Email is just one example. Schools communicate through many other means, too. And so you may also want to consider the use of memos

or briefing papers, meeting agendas and minutes, reports to parents, parents' evenings and other after-school events, phone calls, and so on.

In each case, try to assess the impact of the communication versus the amount of a teacher's time it takes to send or respond to and ask yourself: is it really worth it? What would be the adverse effect if we simply stopped doing this? Would anyone even notice?

Of course, you could easily argue that every communication you send or receive has a positive impact on pupil progress, but you should always think of the opportunity cost. Sometimes we have to bravely stop doing some good things in order to focus on fewer, better things – or simply to help improve our staff's work/life balance.

Solution #2: Scheduling
As well as improving their own leadership practices, school leaders may wish to consider the impact that their scheduling decisions have.

The school calendar
It is helpful to ask yourself how the school calendar might add to a busy teacher's burden. Is there an avoidable congestion of parents' evenings and other late-night events such as open evenings, awards nights, drama productions, and so on? Are meetings and CPD events similarly congested, or do they all fall on the same night of the week which may cause difficulty for some staff?

Often, calendar congestion is the result of unintended consequences. Senior leaders I am sure put together what they think is a sensible, logical plan for the year but, perhaps because they do not themselves teach a full timetable, they do not always consider the impact of their decisions on the full-time classroom teacher.

This can be solved – to some extent – by either consulting on the calendar before it is finalised, by forming a working party of staff from a wide variety of job roles to co-produce the calendar, or by simply talking to teachers and staff.

Combing charts are useful analysis tools and can be helpful as a way of getting staff to set out their preferences before the school calendar and timetable are written. It is impossible to please everyone all the time, of course, but without consultation, it is likely that many staff will be inconvenienced.

When I was a headteacher I followed a simple maxim: before I took any decision, I asked myself: what will this feel like for a teacher with 23 lessons a week, teaching across the year and ability groups? Often the best teacher to have in mind is the one who teaches a minority subject to almost every child in the school.

This maxim proves particularly useful when writing the school timetable or scheduling reports and parents' evenings. What looks sensible on paper may be unworkable for the teacher who teaches several groups in the same year or every year group from 7 to 11.

Assessment schedule
What about the collection of data and the writing of reports? Is there a bottleneck at certain points of the year? More importantly, as we will explore in part two of this Best Practice Focus, are the processes and systems used for data collection and reporting onerous and convoluted? Or do teachers lack the training to be able to use these systems quickly and fluently? Again, what are the implications of our scheduling decisions on the teacher who teaches right across the age and ability spectrum? Are we expecting a teacher to write hundreds of reports and meet hundreds of parents within a very short space of time?

School timetable
As well as looking again with fresh eyes at the annual calendar and assessment schedule, school leaders may wish to consider the shape of the working week, both for staff as a whole and for individual classroom teachers.

For example, when timetabling, are we seeking to – wherever possible – provide a spread of PPA time and other non-teaching time or do some teachers teach several full days and then have an entire morning, afternoon or full day off-timetable?

When timetabling, have we considered the impact of the groups we have assigned to teachers? Are teachers being given too many different classes, perhaps because they teach split-classes or only one group in any year?

Could we cut their planning load by giving them two or more classes from the same year group? Or could we do more to avoid split classes which in itself adds to a teacher's workload because they have to find time to liaise with their opposite number to discuss their planning and marking, and to compare notes on the progress being made by pupils.

How are exam classes assigned? Do some teachers teach only exam classes and therefore have a much higher marking load not to mention the pressure applied through accountability?

How are we assigning teaching assistants? Could more be done to utilise teaching assistants to support teachers?

For those teachers teaching a full day, have we also inadvertently scheduled their bus, break or lunch duties on the same day, meaning they have no downtime at all? How many duties do we expect staff to undertake and is this fair?

Often it is middle leaders who suffer most because they are weighed down by duties and meetings – as a perverse reward for being a member of the extended school leadership team – but commonly, unlike senior leaders, they continue to teach a heavy timetable. **SecEd**

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▶ Workload Challenge Working Group Reports, DfE, March 2016: Marking: **http://bit.ly/2OSOfJk** Planning: **http://bit.ly/1r2C1S7** Data: **http://bit.ly/1TXdDeU**
▶ For help or advice on any issue facing those working in education, contact the Education Support Partnership's free 24-hour helpline on 08000 562 561 or visit **www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk**
▶ *Supporting school leaders to reduce workload*, Hinds, 2018: **http://bit.ly/2zUG1LV**
▶ *Creating a culture: How school leaders can optimise behaviour*, Bennett, DfE, March 2017: **http://bit.ly/2muol5R**
▶ *Ways to reduce workload in your school(s)*, DfE, July 2018: **http://bit.ly/2kiA9aU**
▶ Behaviour management: Reducing teacher workload (workshop), DfE, March 2019: **http://bit.ly/2lK7USS**
▶ The DfE's workload reduction toolkit contains practical tools and materials to support schools (July 2018). Visit: **www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-workload-in-your-school** and **www.gov.uk/government/collections/workload-reduction-toolkit**
▶ In November 2018, the DfE's Workload Advisory Group published *Making Data Work*, offering advice on managing data and workload in schools: **http://bit.ly/2QGbZCd**