TEACHERS’ GUIDE

Building resilience

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www.hants.gov.uk/hampshirecountycouncil/schoolstaffresilience

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire Services
EDUCATION PERSONNEL SERVICES
Teaching is a challenging career and requires professionals with a constant desire to learn and a willingness to evolve. Whilst it gives the chance to work in a dynamic environment where no two days are the same, we also recognise that the challenge includes teaching new topic areas, employing different methods in order to support students’ needs and dealing with national changes in methodology and approaches.

This guide, which is based on views from within the profession, is intended to support teachers with practical advice on how to manage the challenges for them in key areas such as demand on time and managing change.

The guide has been produced following a survey undertaken by Hampshire County Council’s Education Personnel Services. Teachers in a number of Hampshire schools shared the techniques and approaches they use to help them to manage their resilience in their role.

The difficulty in sustaining a work-life balance was the main concern expressed by teachers. Taking work home and working long hours before and after the teaching day just to keep on-track, are often features seen in the profession. The demands of marking, assessment and lesson planning are the main drivers of long working hours.

This guide highlights how some Hampshire teachers approach these aspects of their work and parameters or principles that they have established for themselves to help them to manage their own resilience. It is important that teachers ensure that they make time for themselves and to spend quality time with family and friends. This guide is aimed at providing practical advice from colleagues in the profession who have found ways to manage the conflicting demands on them. The guide has also been supplemented with additional advice from relevant professionals, including Hampshire School Inspectors and Advisers, HR and Occupational Health Advisers.

This booklet is supplemented by wider tools and resources for school staff available at www.hants.gov.uk/hampshirecountycouncil/schoolstaffresilience

Resilience is about having the confidence and ability to handle the difficulties, demands and pressures of life without a negative impact on you as an individual. Teaching as a profession is demanding. Each person’s own life circumstances bring further individual factors which mean that overall demands and pressures of life are different for every individual. It is also recognised that these demands fluctuate and change depending on personal and work circumstances. This guide is aimed at practical advice, predominantly focused on the teacher’s professional role and exploring habits and principles that may be useful to develop resilience.
Planning: workload and lesson planning

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- Prioritise your workload based on importance and urgency.
- “Map out planning for the half term ahead.”
- “I look at work long term and plan it out week by week so that I can spread my workload.”
- “Well constructed ‘To Do’ list so jobs broken down into daily, achievable tasks rather than a continuous list where you don’t know where to start.”
- “Plan and list all you need to do that week so you know what the end goal is. Include the little things so that you are able to cross a few off quickly.”
- “Set yourself a time limit to do a task or have a cut-off point to finish working.”
- “Make use of wider resources including those on the internet; you do not have to reinvent the wheel.”
- “Don’t over plan lessons; from my experience this takes up a huge amount of time and often leads to inflexibility in lessons.”
- “I find that teaching without being over planned is more spontaneous and you are able to react to pupils’ needs better.”
- “I use some peer assessment to relieve the burden and also online resources can be a godsend when work is piling up.”
- “Be organised, make a timetable and stick to it.”
- “Time management is the most important skill you will have to develop. Try not waste time on aspects that may look nice but is not necessary.”
- “Prioritise the essential - in my opinion the most important part of teaching is always to have lessons prepared so that the children are learning.”
- “Learn when things are ‘good enough’ and don’t always strive for perfection.”

Advice from wider professionals

- Prioritise planning based on your expertise – if you know you are teaching something that you are less confident in, spend more time researching and planning.
- If you share planning with your year team members, ensure you adapt this for your own class or group. This will save you time in the longer term.
- Use PPA time wisely. Remember that it should be used for planning, preparation and assessment. Decide which you can do most efficiently in school and use the time for this.
- Use the expertise of other colleagues and be prepared to share your own planning – avoid replicating things that are already out there.
- For larger tasks, like reports, start early. Set up folders ready and add comments when you can. Plan in the task as early as you can and try to complete a report a night rather than leaving them all as one task or as a task for the holiday.
- When planning, make quick notes as you mark regarding the needs of the children. These will help form your future objectives.
- Initially plan by making notes on paper rather than on the planning format. Plan backwards, considering the outcome. Then plan in the small steps to get there, making this as simple as possible. This will help you and the children because you will see the outcome from the start.
- Keep lesson planning simple with key areas that you need to cover in the lesson. Make sure it can be understood by another professional but avoid writing a ‘script’.
- Use this broad model for lesson planning:
  - Hook in
  - Share the learning objective
  - Model the learning
  - Opportunities for assessment
  - Task with time for review
- Have a clear understanding of what pupils need to master before planning a sequence of lessons.
- Think of how pupils can play with the content they need to master so they learn during the lesson.
- Develop your subject knowledge and understanding so that you can be more creative.
- When using the internet to search for a video clip, lesson idea or resource, limit your search time to 1 minute as it probably doesn’t exist if it takes longer.
Marking and feedback

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- "Develop a timetable of marking to help ensure books are marked regularly."
- "Only mark 10 books then have a break, spread out the workload."
- "Marking is the most time consuming part of the job… Marking is far easier completed little and often. I am very specific about how work is set out so that books are easier to mark; rewards are given for well presented books… When things get too much I have a few activities designed which allow pupils to work independently with minimum teacher input - these create resilience in the pupils and allow breathing space for the teacher. I always have "pupil to pupil talk" planned into the lesson; this again creates independence but also leads to no subsequent marking because it is assessed in the lesson."
- "I ensure that I do not set myself unachievable targets in terms of getting pupils their marked work returned."

Advice from wider professionals

- Mark smartly. The most effective marking and feedback is done with the children in lessons. Try to get as many books marked as you go with an awareness of all in the class too.
- Plan how you will mark. Schools vary as to their expectation for marking and you will need to follow your school guidelines. However, you can plan ahead. Try to mark a group in the lesson and make appropriate use of other adults in the classroom where applicable. Then plan which groups of children will get a ‘deep mark’ each day.
- If you are required to get children to respond to marking, make life easier by using a few of the same comments for particular groups of children.
- Keep the marking comments simple and clear and mark against the learning objective and/or success criteria. Simple comments with how the children have achieved and then comments for how to improve are better than ‘essays’ which children will just not read.
- For larger pieces of work use a success criteria chart, created by the teacher at the start of the academic year, or by the children when more confident. This will be easy to tick against and gives a very clear checklist for the children showing next steps.
- If children are responding to marking then give them time and training to do this. This will make the marking most effective, will aid progress and will be more rewarding for you too!
- Vary the order in which you mark pupil’s work to keep it interesting. Start with the disadvantaged pupils or higher attaining as long as the ordering of the books doesn’t take a long time.
- Make every word meaningful and specific to the pupil. Avoid phrases such as ‘write in more detail’; ‘great work’; ‘good answer’ unless you develop it to explain why or how.
- Praise pupils for their effort in order to build positive teacher-pupil relationships which are vital for effective learning to take place.
- Give verbal feedback and note this where possible in a pupil’s book. Evidence indicates that purposeful feedback at the point of learning has a more significant impact than remote marking without the pupil being there.
- Balance your weekly timetable so that any heavier marking sessions are spaced through the week.
- Ensure you put the advice in this section into the context of the school’s policy on marking and feedback. Make sure you understand and follow the policy – don’t try to do more or less.
Advice from Hampshire teachers

- “Plan an evening(s) and/or day of the weekend where you will not do any work.”
- “Allocate certain times for work and others for relaxation.”
- “Do all my work on a designated half day at the weekend, rather than in lots of short bursts throughout the whole weekend.”
- “On evenings when I have my sporting activity interest, I don’t take any work home with me and do not read any emails.”
- “If you can, plan when you leave home or work to avoid peak traffic periods”.
- “Try to achieve a ‘one-touch’ system: get a job, deal with it straight away, resolve it, tidy-up paperwork, move on to next task.”
- “I choose to bring certain work home as I prefer for it to be done in a quiet environment - this way I work quickly and therefore smartly.”
- “Leave your laptop and work at school at least one day a week.”
- “Makes plans outside of school, so on certain days you need to leave at a set time and not work late. I always attempt to leave school by a certain time so that I can go to the gym and exercise classes daily.”
- “Have planned weekends away - with NO computer.”

Advice from wider professionals

- Make leaving work worth your while. Schedule an activity right after work or plan activities over the weekend to give yourself an incentive to stop working and do something else.
- Set an alarm – if you’re the type who just gets lost in their work and forgets to check to see when it’s time to go home, let the clock come to you.
- Know when you’re done. Stop spending your evenings or weekends reworking things until they’re perfect. It’s easy to waste countless hours working on something that’s already complete. Establish a clear definition of the end result. When you’ve reached it, call it a day.
- Turn off your technology - When you leave school, switch off and do not check your work emails unless absolutely necessary.
- Understand it takes time to change habits - like any behaviour change, learning to stop working late or at the weekends is something that takes time, start with small gradual changes and reward yourself as you progress.
- Accept that you work in a profession that requires long working hours during term time and make sure that you are efficient with planning your time to ensure that this is manageable.
- Although it is vital to keep contact with your colleagues, be aware that the time after school goes very quickly. Get yourself a quick drink, have a chat and then move on with your work.
- If possible, try to set up the classroom for the following day before you leave at night. This may not always be achievable but helps in the morning when time is tighter.
- Schools tend to be quieter in the morning so arriving at work early can often be more productive than staying late.
Support networks

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- "I ensure that I talk to my family and friends about my school life, however trivial. I feel it is important to share so things don’t become a burden."
- "Talk it through. Don’t sit on a problem, find someone who has experience or the expertise to help you. This may not just be a person, could be a website or someone external to school."
- "Ask for help/advice before it all piles up. Helping others out when you can so that colleagues are more able/willing to help you when you need it."
- "Be honest with people and accept help/support that is given even if accepting this is hard."
- "You are never able to do everything - prioritise, and accept that sometimes you will have to say no. Don’t be afraid to tell your line manager that you are struggling."

- Take time to go to the staffroom – make sure you don’t become isolated in your classroom.
- If you have a particular responsibility, ask your Headteacher about accessing any networks offered across local schools or those that are facilitated by Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service.
- Make use of support networks on offer from your professional association. Many offer opportunities to make connections with fellow professionals. Visit the Hampshire Teachers’ Liaison Panel website for your local key contact: www.hants.gov.uk/education/teachers-info/tlp.htm.
- Many Hampshire schools purchase support through Hampshire County Council’s Employee Assistance Programme. If your school has purchased this service, you and your partner/spouse and children in full time education (aged 18-24 years old and living at the same address) have access to free, confidential and impartial Employee Support, provided by Health Assured. They can be contacted 24 hours a day on 0800 030 5182. They provide advice on:
  - Family
  - Drug and alcohol
  - Gambling
  - Financial
  - Relationships
  - Domestic abuse
  - Insurance claims
  - Consumer issues
  - Debt
  - Legal
  - Stress
  - Childcare
  - Work
  - Housing
  - GP call back

Advice from wider colleagues

- Work out the optimal amount of time to spend with family and siblings and plan that into your life.
- If you can, have a short period of down time which may include exercise between work and home to clear the stresses of the day, before engaging with your family after work.
- Create time in your day to really listen to how your loved one’s days were and to share how yours was.
- Spend time sharing the positive, enjoyable and interesting parts of the job with your family as well as the parts that you find challenging.
- Don’t become a school bore – make sure your conversation with friends and families extends beyond school life. Don’t allow the job to become all consuming.
- If you have a young family, make sure you spend time with them during the early evening and leave any work until later.
- Give yourself time limits for home working and stick to them.

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- "I spend time with my parents at the weekend; I will either go round and talk to them or phone them."
- "I always leave at a specific time on Tuesdays and Thursdays to spend time with my family."
- "I want to be able to pick up my children from school once a fortnight. So an early Friday finish means this is possible so I never plan enrichment opportunities or meetings on a Friday."
- "I leave school at a certain time to collect my children and take them to their dance class on a Thursday."
- "It is important to make time for you, friends and family. I often go for a drink with colleagues on a Friday after school."

Advice from wider professionals

- Build your own informal networks within school and beyond. This informal support can be just as effective as more formal networks.
- Use the performance management process to identify areas of strength and those for development. Make sure your line manager knows how you are feeling about your role.

To Take Time to Go to the Staffroom – Make Sure You Don’t Become Isolated in Your Classroom.
Advice on wellbeing and resilience

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- “Join a gym, go to an exercise class or play a sport.”
- “I leave at a specific time to attend Pilates class on Thursdays.”
- “I leave at a specific time twice a week to attend gym classes and once a week to volunteer at a youth club.”
- “I sing in a band and rehearse once a fortnight.”
- “Volunteer - I go to a dance class and run a weekly Brownie session so I don’t spend all the time working.”
- “Make a commitment to one activity a week on an evening that you never cancel (great if you can go with a friend or other work colleague so you hold each other to that commitment).”
- “When I start to feel tired, I look to leave at a specific time to go out for a run / walk and get some fresh air.”
- “Do some extra curriculum things. You will enjoy your job more.”

Advice from wider professionals

- Make sure your work still reflects your interests and passion.
- Create workplace activities before or after school e.g. Monday morning yoga or Friday afternoon running club.
- Create 15-20 minute slot in every work day for non-work related activities.
- Be sociable outside of school and ensure you spend time with friends.
- Make time for your own extra-curricular activities!
- Get involved in the wider life of the school. Spending time with pupils and families in activities that are beyond the classroom can be immensely rewarding.
- Make sure you talk to colleagues about things other than school.

Advice from wider professionals

- Ensure you include fats, proteins and carbohydrates in all meals and snacks.
- Learn to cook a new recipe each month.
- Limit processed foods to a maximum of 20% of your diet.
- Buy good quality fresh foods and make shopping for quality fresh foods a social time to spend with friends or family.
- Eat a good breakfast. The day moves at a pace once you are in school and energy levels can soon diminish.
- Avoid eating too many of the staffroom cakes – tempting for a quick sugar kick but not good for sustaining energy levels across the day. Take healthy snacks in so you don’t get tempted.
- Eat lunch – but not whilst marking or doing other activity!
- Continue with, and start, activities that get you out and about during the week and weekends.
Maintain a good work-life balance

Advice from Hampshire teachers

- “Eat lunch!! Too many teachers work through their lunch and fail to take any break.”
- “Use any breaks to eat and converse with colleagues about non school related things.”
- “Say ‘no’ to extra work that is too much.”
- “Build in some ‘me’ time.”
- “Take time each week for you where you do not think about work.”
- “Set aside at least one evening a week where (you) take no work home and do something (you) enjoy even if it just relaxing with a good book or taking a long bath!”
- “Ensure your work balance, is possible, that has not always been possible at times eg exams for one year, books to still keep up to date with. So ensure that in the next holiday you have catch up time. Or one weekend at the end of that period is given to ‘you’ time.”
- “Have a very clear divide between work and home life.”
- “Don’t spend the whole weekend working. Talk to colleagues and family members. Let people know what is going well and not going well…remember why you teach - the children!”
- “Leave at 4pm on Friday and have planned down time.”

Advice from wider professionals

- Don’t spend all day in your classroom – ensure you come out and take a break and socialise with colleagues.
- Ensure you understand how you are spending your time. Either write down or visualise what each day consists of, e.g. how much time is given to work; how much time is given to life or use the time tool available on the Resilience website.
- Ensure you are giving adequate time to sleep and exercise as well as building in time for socialising, chores and hobbies.
- Know yourself and try to ensure that the time you plan with your family and friends is when you have sufficient energy.
- Make time, no matter how short, every day to recover from the physical, emotional and mental output of your working day.
- Realise that you are being the best version of you that you can be in any moment.
- Accept that there are always times when any balance is out of kilter, but recognise this and work towards bringing your work-life balance back to what is right for you.

Have some techniques for your resilience

Advice from Hampshire Teachers

- “Ensure you retain a positive mental attitude.”
- “We have a wellbeing Friday Club for all staff - we get together at 4pm to relax and off-load before going home.”
- “I always think of two things that have gone well every day (during my drive home). I record the positive things that parents/children say to me in a special mentions book and use this to counter balance complaints/moans that I sometimes feel”
- “I practise mindfulness.”
- “I accept that I am doing the best I can and ensure I enjoy life.”
- “Be kind to yourself - value all the good moments and let go of the bad.”
- “Share thoughts and feelings with a trusted colleague who can help you regain perspective and can help you celebrate your successes.”
- “Set boundaries and try and stick to them. Find a wind-down strategy that works for you; let go of the things you haven’t done and stand by your decision not to do them.”
- “I walk for 30 minutes to an hour after school – I find it calms me down!”
- “I try and make sure that I have a good nights’ sleep.”
- “Take time to do things that make you happy.”
- “Be nice to yourself. I always keep nice notes or thank you cards so when things are tough it keeps you focused on the important things.”

Advice from wider professionals

- Limit over use of and reliance on caffeine.
- Make sure you bedroom is conducive to quality sleep (dark, quiet, no screens).
- Use mindfulness techniques to relax.
- Find some time to exercise in a way you enjoy 3-5 times a week – remember 20 minutes at a time is enough.
- Make time to cook from scratch – over prepare food to eat the following day.
- If you are finding life tough, write down some of the things that have gone well at the end of the day. This will serve as a useful reflection tool in the future. Visit the ‘habits’ section of the resilience website for easy to use tools to support.
- Do not waste time and energy worrying about issues that are beyond your control – you need to focus your time and energy on the challenges that are within your control.
Guiding principles

It’s essential to have resilience in the workplace as it allows us to mitigate the effects of stress and to grow and develop in our careers. Here are our top six strategies to help you build and develop your resilience within the workplace.

1. Think about your physical wellbeing
   Health professionals advise us to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. Choose activities you actually enjoy, as you’re much more likely to follow through and do them regularly.

2. Problem solve
   Use lists to identify and prioritise problems. If a task seems daunting, divide it into smaller, bite size chunks and focus on what you can achieve in the short term rather than what seems out of reach. If you can’t solve the problem now, take a break and do something different – a fresh outlook can often lead to an unexpected answer.

3. Be assertive
   Be prepared to express your thoughts and feelings even where this risks disagreement from others. Use ‘I’ statements to acknowledge ownership of what you are saying and maintain appropriate eye contact with people.

4. Organise yourself
   Use a planner to schedule in larger pieces of work over a period of time. Ensure you’ve built in time to prepare for meetings by listing the key items you want to discuss, and do difficult tasks first rather than procrastinate. Don’t give yourself large ‘jobs’ that can’t be achieved in the time that you have given them.

5. Believe in yourself
   Write down the negative thoughts that are getting in your way and what action you are going to take to challenge them. A perfectionist belief is rigid and demanding and makes change and growth difficult.

6. Find a work-life balance
   Plan your time carefully to schedule your work activities so that you can avoid taking too much work home and aim to build in at least two leisure activities to each week.