

**Diocese of Carlisle Board of Education**

**Heads Huddle Notes**

**Tuesday 29th September: Self Evaluation**

**Reflection:**

*‘STAY CONNECTED* Jesus says “I am the vine, you are the branches.” You are not blessed in any endeavour because of your performance, you’re blessed because of your connection to the vine.’

*John 15:5*

**Feedback from Headteachers: themes of the week**

**Testing/illness/absence:** this remains a common problem – pupils with coughs that are very unlikely to be COVID symptoms but with no guarantee; lack of testing available; delayed receipt of test results. We agreed that safety must come first and, if in doubt, pupils should stay away from school. If this impacts on attendance, it is important that the DfE is aware (via attendance returns) so that the extent of the problem is visible.

**External support:** notwithstanding reassurances about specialist support for pupils with special and/or additional needs, schools are frustrated by external specialists refusing to make face to face visits to schools. It was agreed that all schools and the Diocese would escalate this ongoing issue.

**Staff wellbeing:** concerns regarding potential resignations or long periods of absence for staff members who are struggling to cope were raised. We discussed the difficult balance between keeping school fully open, staying positive for the pupils and trying to keep things as ‘normal’ as possible and the toll this is taking on staff.

**Financial impact:** lack of DfE funding for schools which are not running a deficit was agreed to be frustrating and difficult to respond to. Several life and experience enhancing opportunities and resources for pupils are having to be curtailed or cut to fund COVID related costs (staffing and hygiene).

**Feedback from Headteachers: Self evaluation**

**Change in role:** important for governors and external observers/inspectors to recognise and acknowledge the change in role for Headteachers and that the usual planning and review cycle is not appropriate at this time.

**Fine balancing act:** Headteachers reported the difficulty of balancing the complex emotional and learning needs of pupils with staff wellbeing – not wanting to ‘push staff over the edge’ was a common theme. Some staff really wanted to move their subject area forwards. Others do not have the ‘head space’ or capacity to do so.

**In our heads and thoughts but not on paper:** Headteachers reported how much thinking had gone into what needed to happen but that they did not have the time available to turn their thinking and planning into a written document.

**Information sharing from the Diocese: Self evaluation**

**Creativity:** like with reviewing performance appraisal (see attached guidance paper) this year, more than ever, creative thinking is needed in relation to self-evaluation. Usual meetings/reviews/document writing may not be able to take place (mostly due to capacity). However, many schools are evaluating their provision and meeting the needs of pupils more rigorously than ever before this year and it would be a shame not to ‘get the credit’ for the wonderful work taking place.

**Evidencing:** it is always hard to remember everything that takes place in a school term and this year has heightened that feeling. Consider **easy** ways to keep a record of what’s working well, what you’ve tried that hasn’t worked and has been replaced with an alternative and **all** the amazing work that is taking place.

* **Communal whiteboard:** a whiteboard in the staffroom, a corridor or an office with some whole school themes (inclusion/SEN/well-being/any given subject etc) under which all staff can record successes or approaches taken – what’s working well/where are the difficulties?
* **Themed staff meetings:** when you have a staff meeting on a given theme is someone taking notes? Collect these as evidence of whole school planning/reflection/next steps.
* **Parent/family surveys:** have you asked your families for feedback about measures in place during school closure? Have you changed school practice as a result of positives ways of working during school closure? All these things contribute to your self-evaluation evidence.
* **Whole school/group experiences:** what have you put in place for pupils since September to give them a positive experience?
* **Staff support:** what are you doing/have you changed to enable your colleagues to flourish or just to get through a difficult time?

So much fantastic work is taking place in our schools. Just keep a note of it all!

**Information sharing from the Diocese: general**

**Governor Peer Support Network** letters have been circulated. Do encourage your governors to join Ruth Houston for one of these sessions.

**NISCU Collective Worship:** another set of online collective worship videos you may wish to make use of can be found at [www.niscu.org.uk/media](http://www.niscu.org.uk/media)

**Free teacher vacancy job-listing services:** can be found at <https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/>