Derby Diocesan Board of Education

Time to Rest and Recreate: for School Leaders and Staff

The covid pandemic has brought some of the most significant challenges that school leaders and staff have ever had to face. Finding some time during the school holiday weeks for restoration, recharging and recreation has never been more important. It is a very real risk though, that having this time will be tricky. Some travel plans are still unfortunately disrupted, family finances may have been hit by redundancy and tasks for the start of the autumn term are likely to be pressing and numerous. Many of us, including school staff, have at times worked from home and so the boundaries between home and work have become very blurred.

We urge you not to drift and 'hope' for a holiday, like some sort of birthday wish! Instead, we encourage you to plan actively for a period of leave during the weeks that schools are closed. This might mean not going away but may be a 'holiday at home' instead. The planning and preparation for both kinds of holiday are important if you are to experience the rest and recreation which you need. Doing this is not being frivolous or indulgent – it's a vital and necessary part of servant leadership. It is not a virtue to wear ourselves out or run ourselves down.

In Mark 6:31-32 we read that Jesus said this to his disciples:

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

Find a place and rest. Work through the prompts on the following pages which are designed to aid your thinking and planning. You may find it a useful exercise to do with your staff teams too.

Books on rest that might be of interest:
Adam Mabry 'The Art of Rest'

Claudia Hammond 'The Art of Rest: How to Find Respite in the Modern Age'

With thanks to the Rev'd Dr Canon Stuart Burns, Diocese of Leicester for providing the basis of this guidance.

Preparation

- Have you agreed with colleagues (including governors) how you are going to structure your time away from school? Have you been clear with others about when you are taking your time off?

- How much do you trust your colleagues? What do you need to hand over? When will you do this?

- How will you set boundaries and communicate them? How will you cope with electronic communication during your holiday? What messages will go on your email and answerphone? How might people around you (senior leaders and other colleagues) appropriately help to enforce the boundaries?

- Who else is affected by your holiday? What conversations do you need to have before you leave for a 'holiday away' or before a 'holiday at home'?

- If you live with others, what needs to be in place for your time off to be a positive experience for all?

- If you live alone, what needs to be different for your time off to be a positive experience both for you and those who are important to you?

- Do you have any guilt or fear of taking these days off? How can you lay that aside?

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Time 'off' / Away from work

- Holidays often start with a journey – what 'journey' can you create that helps you leave 'work / home' behind. Consider what physical objects you might leave at school such as your diary or work laptop.

- For many of us, browsing the web or looking through social media can be part of our relaxation – but boundaries can blur very quickly and we can start straying in to 'work' mode or clicking on the email app.

- Do you want a total digital detox? If you are not going to go for a total detox of electronic devices, can you think through very clearly how you will stop the blurring? Can you turn off the email app? Can you delete the social media apps and only browse on a desktop or laptop? Can you block incoming calls? Can you set an appropriate digital 'do not disturb'?

- How physical do you want your holiday to be?

- What spontaneity or surprises can you incorporate? What can you plan, what spaces can you make?

- If bad weather affects your plans, what 'reserve' plans can you have?

- How will you 'remember' your experience – anything you need to create?

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Returning 'home'

- When we return from 'holiday away' we often come back with washing to do, food shopping to buy, time to do the weekly tasks. What space do you need to make for a 'returning' phase of your holiday whether you are at home or away?

- How will you re-engage with 'work' on your return? What does your 'journey back' look like?

- What day do you plan to return for? How will this impact your return?

- We can sift and sort physical mail easily enough. When will you open your electronic post? Why then?

- When you look back on this time, what will you give thanks for?

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