

# Teacher and pupil well-being



**Teacher, ATL rep and educational speaker and trainer Emma Gleadhill offers tips on improving well-being for both staff and students**

Our job as teachers is stressful. Many teachers, especially new

teachers, suffer from varying degrees

of burnout. We all need emotional intelligence and insight to manage fraught situations well, but typical teacher training and professional development does not offer anything in this area.

The well-being of education staff and pupils is closely linked. If we understand the social, emotional and neuroscientific development of children, we can offer better help, and it will be less stressful for them and for us. Understanding these elements means we can reframe challenging situations in less adversarial ways.

If we tune into the impact changing family and peer dynamics can have on a child and their parents, we can be more effective, more open and more collaborative. Child and adolescent development is a topic still largely untouched in teacher training, but it plays a pivotal role in teacher-learner relationships.

Children need a secure emotional base to have the capacity to learn. The mental health challenges facing young people, their families and our schools are well publicised. We can help young people face these mental health and well-being challenges. We can help them, and their parents and carers, develop a wider range of healthy coping strategies.

If we do this, we will be far better positioned to respond to students' academic and emotional needs, and we will be able to offer these improvements with less stress to ourselves. But we can only do this if we develop our own skills first.

In the meantime, here are my positive, protective tips for personal and professional resilience:

1. Keep to regular sleep patterns. Seven-to-eight hours is the benchmark for adults. Take sleep seriously – it naturally helps process anxiety and boosts your immune system.
2. Make sure you get quality time with friends and family. This is one of the most protective factors for mental health. Don't compromise it for work.
3. Have some positive strategies for 'coming up for air' – eg start a lunch-time walking group, get exercise and daylight, join a book club, do the crossword.
4. Build self-esteem through altruism. Make time for acts of kindness. Helping others is proven to provide a more lasting and authentic happiness than instant gratification. It's easier on your wallet and liver too!
5. Set limits on your time: it is not a blank cheque. Talk to colleagues about approaches to marking, planning and reporting that add value but take up less time and energy. Learn from your efficient colleague who has time to read the paper over lunch.
6. Set boundaries on care-giving – ensure you know and use the structures in your school to have supportive discussions about pupils, groups, situations of concern.
7. Have constructive ways of saying 'no', or talking about prioritisation if 'no' is not an option.



## LEEDS RECOGNITION

ATL has achieved union recognition at the prestigious Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL). This latest collective agreement was signed in July 2017, meaning all teaching staff employed by GSAL will now enjoy the benefits of having collective union representation.

GSAL, which can trace its lineage back to 1552, agreed with ATL, NUT and NASUWT to negotiate on teachers' pay, hours and holidays and to consult on all other terms and conditions of employment. A teachers' Joint Negotiating and Consultation Committee will meet half-terminally to discuss any relevant issues.

ATL led the joint union campaign as the largest and most influential union, ably assisted by Andrew Greenwood, ATL section regional official. We hope that at some point in the future we will be able to reach agreement to extend the agreement to cover support staff, once support staff membership has been increased.

"We are very happy to have reached this new accord with our employer," said ATL school rep Nigel Day. "We are confident strengthened staff involvement in decisions that directly affect our daily working lives will bring benefits for us and the school."