

CAPH Pastoral Support

Feedback Summary (January 2026)

Purpose: To provide headteachers with a safe and supportive space for reflection, decision making and wellbeing.

1. Overall Impact

- Pastoral support is highly valued and considered invaluable by headteachers.
- Provides a safe, confidential and non-judgmental space to offload, reflect and problem solve.
- Reduces isolation, particularly for small-school heads or heads with multiple responsibilities.
- Supports wellbeing, professional confidence and decision making.

“It’s so important to have someone outside of my staff to talk to and run ideas past.”
Headteacher

2. Key Themes from Headteachers

What works well:

- Mentoring without a set agenda, tailored to each headteacher.
- Experienced mentors providing validation, practical advice and reassurance.
- Flexibility with in-person or online meetings. Webinars have been used successfully for staff development.
- Positive impact on decision making, staff support and professional wellbeing.

Emerging needs:

- Small-school head isolation, as many are handling multiple roles.
- Desire for structured peer networks or forums to share strategies and resources.
- Workload and capacity constraints can make regular engagement challenging.

“Knowing support is available at all times gives real reassurance.” Executive Headteacher

“The friendly, encouraging phone calls have been much appreciated, offering not just practical advice but emotional support.” Headteacher

3. Key Themes from Mentors

What works well:

- Building trust and strong relationships with headteachers.
- Tailored support that takes account of each school’s context.
- Mentors benefit from collaborating with peers and sharing solutions.

Challenges:

- Scheduling meetings with busy heads can require persistence.

- Non-responsiveness from some heads can limit impact.
- Structural pressures on heads managing multiple schools.

“Talking through challenges with someone not connected to management, CEOs or governors is very helpful.” Associate

“I frequently find I need to be persistent arranging a meeting or phone call, but I am always mindful not to add pressure.” Associate

4. Most Impactful Elements

- Matching mentors and headteachers appropriately.
- Relational, confidential and flexible support.
- Opportunities for collaboration with peers.
- Availability for follow-up via phone or email.

“It’s essential to find the right colleague for these conversations. That connection makes the support meaningful.” Executive Headteacher

5. Next Steps

1. **Peer networking:** Regular forums for small-school heads to share strategies and resources (Small Schools Network).
2. **Associate collaboration:** Continue online and occasional in-person mentor meetings.
3. **Streamlined engagement:** Ensure accurate contacts, gentle reminders and simple communication.
4. **Routine feedback:** Short surveys or termly reflections from mentees.
5. **Maintain strengths:** Mentoring without a set agenda, webinars for staff development, and personalised mentor-headteacher matching.