komodo

Navigating unsettled times
A guide for senior leadership teams

Recent regional developments have created increased uncertainty for many members of our community. Even when schools remain operational and physically safe, perceived changes in external safety can influence the nervous system. Students, staff and families may be carrying heightened alertness, distraction, or emotional fatigue into the school day. This is not a sign of fragility. It is how human biology responds to uncertainty.

When the environment feels less predictable, the brain shifts into protection mode. The thinking, planning and learning parts of the brain become slightly less accessible. Emotional reactions may increase. Concentration may dip. Windows of tolerance narrow. In these moments, the role of leadership is not to amplify information; it is to amplify steadiness.

Schools are uniquely equipped to provide 3 powerful signals of stability: Predictability, connection and calm authority.

Reinforcing psychological safety

Clear, measured communication matters. Families and staff benefit from knowing:

- The school remains operational and prepared.
- Safety procedures are established and monitored.
- Leadership is responding thoughtfully rather than reactively.

Language should be factual and composed. Avoid speculation or dramatic framing. Calm communication regulates collective nervous systems.

Protecting predictability

Where possible, maintain routine structures. Avoid unnecessary change or additional initiatives during periods of heightened uncertainty. Predictability is reassurance. A predictable school rhythm sends a powerful biological message: “We are steady. You are safe here.”

Supporting staff regulation

Staff members are also part of the community experiencing uncertainty. Leadership can support staff regulation by:

- Reducing non-essential workload where possible
- Encouraging boundaries around continuous news exposure
- Creating brief staff check-in spaces
- Normalising emotional responses

At times like this, stability is the intervention.