



Joint Statement to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB)

Invest in teachers and school leaders

The challenges facing our education service

- 1 We represent the majority of teachers and school leaders in England. This joint evidence to the STRB once again underlines the consensus in the profession on the challenges and key issues facing our education service.
- 2 Repairing the damage to teacher and school leader pay and conditions is vital to fixing the recruitment and retention crisis. This joint evidence focuses on the action needed to provide competitive pay and working conditions, in the context of the Secretary of State's remit letter of 30 September.
- 3 Notwithstanding the welcome above-inflation pay increase in September 2024, the period since 2010 has seen a significant deterioration in teacher and school leader pay and conditions. Over this period, the process including the constraint of the inadequate Government funding envelope contributed to the deterioration in the real value of pay.
- 4 The Secretary of State's remit letter asks the STRB to have regard to school cost pressures when making its recommendations. The increase in education funding announced in the Budget of 30 October fell short of the investment needed to reverse the pay cuts and tackle the workload problems.

- 5 As we have consistently said, the current inadequate funding envelope must not constrain the STRB. There is nothing to stop the STRB setting out the action needed to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis. In its latest report, the STRB itself made the connection between pay levels and recruitment/retention, stating that: “spending too little may also give rise to serious problems with subsequent costs which can represent poor value for money.”¹ Cuts to teacher and school leader pay are a false economy, because they damage our education service and in so doing damage the country’s economic future.
- 6 The STRB must make the recommendations needed to reverse the real terms pay cuts since 2010, restore pay competitiveness and tackle the excessive workload and working hours problems. It is then for Government to make, and be accountable for, the political choices on the investment needed to repair the damage to pay, conditions and supply. The evidence of that damage is clear and we set out details below.

Teacher and school leader pay

- 7 All of our organisations welcomed the Government’s decision to implement and provide additional funding for the STRB’s recommended 5.5% pay increase in September 2024. The Government’s recognition of the need for additional funding underlines the point we make above about the need for the STRB to not be constrained by current funding levels. The STRB’s decision to make a pay increase recommendation beyond the inadequate funding envelope provided a welcome precedent for prioritising the increases needed and leaving political choices on funding to the Government.
- 8 We were clear in our response to the Secretary of State that the September 2024 increase needs to be the first in a series of urgent steps to reverse the impact of the real terms pay cuts since 2010. The major real terms pay cuts since 2010 mean that a major pay correction is required.
- 9 Even after the 5.5% increase of September 2024, teacher and school leader pay is some 22% lower in real terms against Retail Prices Index (RPI) inflation than in 2010. The STRB must have this figure at the centre of its considerations and must accept that the need to reverse these huge real terms pay cuts sets the context for discussion and recommendations on teacher and school leader pay. This is something that all of our members feel very strongly about.
- 10 It is clear, for example, that the significant damage that has been done to the competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay is driven by real terms pay cuts that have been significantly greater for teachers and school leaders than for other comparable professions.

¹ STRB 34th Report, paragraph 2.50.

- 11 The STRB has itself highlighted the damage to the competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay, rightly describing this damage as a “structural deterioration” in its latest report. The STRB also stated in its report that: “On a range of comparisons, the competitiveness of teachers’ average pay has reduced markedly over a number of years.” The STRB report also highlighted the continuing post-pandemic recovery in the wider graduate market.²
- 12 The latest information on inflation and pay in the wider economy underlines our concerns. The latest inflation data at the time of writing³ showed RPI inflation bouncing back up to 3.4% in October 2024. The OBR’s October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook⁴ confirmed that inflation is expected to increase into 2025. Average earnings growth in the wider economy is close to 5% according to the latest ONS data available at the time of writing.⁵
- 13 The damage to the competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay cannot be repaired without reversing the real terms pay cuts. It makes no sense to attempt to separate these issues. Significant improvements in pay and conditions are needed if there is to be any prospect of resolving the recruitment and retention crisis. Pay increases in 2025 and for the remainder of this Parliament must be significantly above RPI inflation, to an extent that will fully reverse the real terms pay cuts against RPI inflation since 2010.

Teacher and school leader workload

- 14 Excessive workload among teachers and school leaders in England has reached a crisis point, contributing significantly to burnout, high attrition rates, and recruitment challenges. The STRB must immediately recommend action to reduce teacher and school leader workload and working hours, foster a better work/life balance, improve wellbeing, and increase flexible working opportunities. These changes are essential to enhance professional satisfaction, boost morale, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the education workforce.
- 15 Results from phase two of the Department for Education's (DfE) Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL) survey reveal that full-time teachers now work an average of 52.4 hours per week, and leaders 58.2 hours per week, both of which have increased from 2022. Alarming, 22% of teachers report working over 60 hours per week, a rise from the previous year.
- 16 The recently published Wave 3 summary report⁶ shows some slight improvements on wave two which although are welcome, but they are by no means an indication of these issues being resolved or even any indication of a pattern of improvement.

² STRB 34th Report

³ RPI All Items: Percentage change over 12 months: Jan 1987=100 - Office for National Statistics

⁴ Economic and fiscal outlook – CP 1169

⁵ Labour market overview, UK - Office for National Statistics

⁶ Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3 - GOV.UK

- 17 The DfE survey, which included over 10,000 respondents, also highlighted significant dissatisfaction with workload. Only 46% reported being satisfied "most of the time," a decline from 58% the previous year, while 36% expressed intentions to leave the profession within the next year, up from 25% in 2022. The most prevalent reason for departure was high workload, with 94% citing it as a critical factor.
- 18 Further backing these findings, this year's report on the teacher labour market in England by the NFER⁷ highlights the challenges faced by the government in recruiting and retaining teachers. The report concludes that more needs to be done to reduce working hours and workload if retention levels are to improve during a resurgent labour market.
- 19 In response to recent workforce surveys, members' comments reflect the severe impact of workload on mental health and work/life balance within the profession. Teachers and school leaders feel undervalued and overwhelmed and cannot provide the necessary support for students, affecting overall teaching quality. This impacts schools in deprived areas disproportionately. The high-stakes accountability regime places increased pressure on all staff and exacerbates stress levels, contributing to negative wellbeing, low morale, and a lack of work/life balance.
- 20 The current strain on teachers and school leaders is linked to the significant recruitment and retention crisis, compounded by the need to support more pupils with SEND, increased instances and reporting of pupil behaviour, increased communication with parents and insufficient staff to maintain manageable class sizes. This imbalance increases workload intensity and heightens demands on existing staff, limiting their capacity to offer personalized attention to the students who need additional support.
- 21 Recent research⁸ has found that teachers are more likely than other professional workers to be working at high speed and to tight deadlines; and, similarly, that teachers have less flexible working hours than other professional workers, both before and after the pandemic. In contrast, since the pandemic, other professional workers have experienced improvements in job quality: both a significant reduction in their work intensity and a significant increase in the flexibility of their working hours, most likely due to the availability of hybrid working for many other professional workers. So in terms of job quality, the gap between teachers and their professional comparators has widened in recent years.
- 22 Without urgent measures to alleviate workload pressures, the profession will continue to face high levels of burnout. The remaining teachers and leaders will continue struggling under increased workload and working hours, leading to a vicious cycle that will see more experienced educators leave the profession, further endangering the quality of education.

⁷ <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2024/>

⁸ NEU3043 Job quality research report v7.pdf

- 23 The urgent need for systemic changes to reduce teacher and leader workload and working hours and improve work/life balance is evident. Without adequate and fully funded solutions from the STRB, the current situation poses substantial risks to teacher and leader wellbeing and student outcomes. Until the workload crisis is resolved, the government will continue to miss its recruitment and retention targets, which only adds to the problem. Significant reductions in workload and work intensity are vital to ensure the necessary supply of teachers and school leaders the education service needs.

The recruitment and retention crisis

- 24 The Secretary of State's remit letter states the Government's commitment to "supporting teachers to stay in the profession and thrive" and highlights the need to raise the status of the profession. The extent of the recruitment and retention crisis demands an equally significant response on pay and conditions. Urgent and major improvements in teacher and school leader pay and workload are absolutely essential to repairing recruitment and retention, and to raising the status of the profession.
- 25 There are no signs of any significant improvement to the recruitment and retention crisis. Indeed, recent data show that the crisis continues to deepen. The latest School Workforce Survey⁹ shows that the number of newly qualified entrants in 2023-24 was down by 24% compared with the pre-pandemic period. Primary recruitment was the lowest since 2010, with the target missed for the ninth year in the last fourteen. Secondary recruitment targets were missed by 50%, with targets missed across the secondary curriculum.
- 26 The Government's pledge to deliver an additional 6,500 teachers is welcome, but we are clear that this will be nowhere near enough. Significant additional recruitment is needed to reduce class sizes and workload – and that is before taking account of the need to offset the loss of existing teachers and school leaders from the profession. Increased recruitment will not solve the problems if it is offset by continued loss of high numbers of teachers and school leaders, currently particularly high in the first five years after entry.
- 27 Retention presents an equally alarming picture. The latest School Workforce Survey¹⁰ shows that one in four teachers left the profession within three years, and one in three within five years. More teachers left the profession for reasons other than retirement between November 2022 and November 2023 than at any other time on record. Retention rates worsened for every yearly cohort bar one. Vacancies were six times higher than in 2010. Almost one in three (31%) school leaders appointed aged under 50 leave their post within five years of appointment, more than half (53%) of whom quit teaching in state-funded schools entirely.

⁹ School workforce in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

¹⁰ School workforce in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

- 28 The DfE's Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Survey conducted in spring 2023 showed that 36% of teachers and leaders (up from the already concerning 25% reported in the 2022 survey) said they were considering leaving the state school sector in the next year for reasons other than retirement.¹¹

Pay structure reform

- 29 The problems caused by the damaging changes to the teacher and school leader pay structure imposed without justification in the 2010s contribute to the recruitment and retention problems.
- 30 Dismantling the national pay structure and imposing PRP significantly reduced transparency, fairness and the ability of the profession to offer clear career development pathways to potential and serving teachers. Unfair PRP added hugely to workload and excessive accountability.
- 31 To enable the profession to compete effectively with other graduate professions, we need to ensure that pay progression is the norm. Teachers and school leaders must not see their career development and pay progression blocked due to factors beyond their control such as decisions on the school budget.
- 32 We welcomed the removal of the obligation on schools to operate PRP. We now need to see removal of PRP on a mandatory basis. We need a fair and transparent national pay structure based on the key principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which offers portability and fair pay progression. National pay arrangements should be put in place, with minimum mandatory pay points for all teachers and school leaders. These reforms would support recruitment, retention, mobility and clear career pathways across the school system.
- 33 We welcome the inclusion in the remit letter of the issue of pro rating of TLR payments. Where a part-time teacher undertakes the full additional responsibilities of a promoted post, it would be unfair, unethical and potentially unlawful, if they did not receive the full value of the TLR payment for those responsibilities simply because they are employed on a part-time contract.
- 34 We believe that the STPCD should be amended to allow TLR 1 and 2 allowances to be paid at a different proportion to the contract where this is appropriate and mutually agreed between the employer and the teacher. This should include allowing a full-time TLR to be awarded to a part-time teacher where they are carrying out the full responsibilities of the allowance.

¹¹ Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 2 summary report - GOV.UK

Conclusion

- 35 This evidence has set out the united position of the unions on the key challenges facing our education service.
- 36 The policy mistakes of the 2010s and early 2020s have caused major damage to our schools and to the working lives of the teachers and school leaders who deliver our vital education service. We hope that the new Government will support us in turning the page on the failed policies of its predecessors.
- 37 The evidence is clear. Teacher and school leader pay has been hammered, causing huge damage to the ability of teaching to compete with other graduate professions. Workload is a huge problem, creating major supply and wellbeing issues. Recruitment and retention problems are at critical levels, driven by pay that is too low and workload that is too high. We urge the STRB to make the recommendations demanded by the evidence: a major pay correction and significant improvements to workload, with the Government taking the political responsibility on the funding needed for these urgent improvements.