

Rt Hon Bridget Philipson  
Secretary of State for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

8 July 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Community Union is privileged to engage, together with our sister unions, with the teacher pay review process and the School Teachers' Review Body. The collective body of evidence that we provide and has been amassed over the past years is essential in understanding the picture as seen by those quite literally at the chalkface and lays bare the issues faced by real people in their workplaces every day.

We are pleased to receive the 35<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body and to respond to its recommendations.

We are also pleased with the actions of the Department to bring forward the remit and to gather evidence much sooner in the academic year so that schools have much better chance of implementing the pay award from September. This is but a small step that demonstrates to the sector how much they are appreciated.

Therefore, following a survey of members, we are pleased to advise that a significant majority are satisfied with the proposed uplift to teachers' salaries.<sup>1</sup> Members have been telling us about the pay disparities for some time and the very real impact this has on the retention of staff as well as recruitment into the sector. However, we are somewhat disappointed that the full amount of the teacher pay award is not being met with additional funding.

## **Recruitment**

Like the Review Body, Community remains deeply concerned about the recruitment of Early Career Teachers and also the retention of experienced teachers. We have highlighted this issue for a number of years, qualified with census data and data from the *Working Lives of Teachers Leaders* survey as well as recruitment data, member survey data and testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> Community members voted 77% in favour of accepting the proffered pay award but we are aware that funding remains a major concern for members and that increased funding for schools will be necessary to support the long-term affordability of this and any future pay awards.



These shortages are endemic across many subjects and show no sign of abating with NFER's projection for ITT recruitment in 2025/26 indicating that 12 out of 17 secondary subjects are at risk of under-recruiting.<sup>2</sup>

And with headline leaving rates returning to pre-pandemic levels, fully reversing the downward trend from 2018/19, the number of teachers leaving for non-retirement reasons has increased markedly. In 2023/24 41,200 teachers left the profession, this represents 9.1% of all qualified teachers and we recommend that the remit for next year focus on retention in order to stem this exodus.

## **Pay Award**

Despite recent pay awards, teacher pay continues to fail to maintain parity with other graduate roles. The Review Body notes that *"on a range of comparisons, the competitiveness of teachers' average pay has reduced markedly over a number of years."*<sup>3</sup>

Indeed according to ONS data, pay growth in the private sector was 1.2% greater than public sector growth.<sup>4</sup> This widens the gap between schools and other graduate pay with teacher pay averaging 10.75% lower than it was in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

We are pleased that the Review Body has recognised this growing disparity, stating, *"salaries need to be sufficiently competitive to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and leaders, but there is strong empirical evidence that they are failing to achieve this. This is supported by data showing teacher pay has deteriorated in relative terms against economy-wide earnings and other professional occupations."*<sup>6</sup>

Specifically we note that salaries for those on the Main Pay Range become less competitive as teachers gain experience and progress on to the Upper Pay Range. Addressing this will be likely to have a positive impact on retention but will need significant increased funding to facilitate.

## **Affordability**

It is also important to reference the impact that this pay award will have on school budgets. We were pleased to note that last year's pay award was fully funded with additional capital from The Department, we note this was not the case with previous pay awards. Therefore we were pleased when The Department again increased funding to cover 75% of the uplift for 2025.<sup>7</sup> Whilst this falls short of the fully funded settlement we called for, we do acknowledge the difficult fiscal landscape. However, we note as before that this level of

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<sup>2</sup> NFER 2025. *Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2025*

<sup>3</sup> 35<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2025). Para.2:15, p8.

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. *Average weekly earnings in Great Britain* (December 2023)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/averageweeklyearningsingreatbritain/latest>

<sup>5</sup> Ashley Kirk in *The Guardian*. *How public sector pay has fallen in real terms* (2022)

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jul/19/how-public-sector-pay-has-fallen-in-real-terms-in-charts>

<sup>6</sup> 34<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2024). para.2.47, p16.

<sup>7</sup> The Education Hub. *Teacher pay: everything you need to know about the 2025 pay award* (2025)

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/05/teacher-pay-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-2025-pay-award/>

funding will need to be at least maintained going forward in order for schools to see any real benefit.

The Review Body has noted the sector's concerns about funding saying, *"Given the evidence on cost pressures for many schools, it will again be important for the implementation of the pay award to be supported financially."*<sup>8</sup>

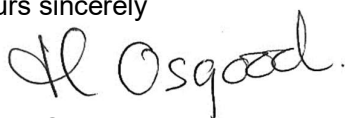
We firmly believe that pay must continue to be significantly lifted over the coming years in order to begin the restoration of the value of teacher pay, as the Review Body has noted previously *"the relative value of teachers' earnings fell throughout the early 2010s and has fallen further than earnings across the economy, the public sector and professional occupations"*.<sup>9</sup> Only through concerted effort to address pay, workload and wellbeing will teaching be restored as a viable graduate career.

Finally, we are dismayed to note that that yet again there has been little comment or consideration of our recommendation to increase Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time. Despite the evidence from trials by Teach First showing the positive impact on staff wellbeing and a reduction in the reliance on costly supply staff there has been no discussion around increasing PPA time since it was introduced in 2005, despite its potential to support flexible working. We reiterate our recommendation that doubling PPA time to 20% would hugely reduce stress and lessen teaching loads allowing staff to focus their efforts on the planning and feedback aspects of teaching – aspects which we know are burdensome, but which also have a significant impact on improving pupil outcomes.

## Summary

In summary, we feel that this 35<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body continues the positive changes seen in the last couple of years and members are content to accept the proposed pay award. Although it does not yet restore teachers' and school leaders' pay, it is a step towards the improvements so desperately needed by the sector. And we hope that together we can continue to address the wider issues facing the sector and safeguard the profession for the generations of teachers to come.

Yours sincerely



**Helen Osgood**

Director of Operations and National Officer for Education & Early Years

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<sup>8</sup> 35<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2025). para.2.53, p17.

<sup>9</sup> 33<sup>rd</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2023). para.3.16, p16.