

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

18th September 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Community Union is pleased to receive the 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body and to respond to its recommendations and the comments made by your predecessor following the publication of the report in July 2026. We are privileged to engage with the teacher pay review process to support the recruitment and retention of teaching staff in our schools and to ensure that the terms, conditions and pay that they labour under are fair, reasonable and fit-for-purpose in our modern world.

Although the remit for the 2026 pay award was issued July and evidence was collected in good time, Community is disappointed that the final report was not published according to the original schedule, meaning, once again that teachers will not be able to receive their pay uplift in September and school staff will have to work hard to ensure back-pay is calculated correctly. This is exacerbated by the changes to Teachers' Pension contributions.

Although we are very pleased with the performance of the Teachers' Pension and Local Government Pension schemes, and the resulting change to the contribution rates, there is disappointment that treasury is claiming back the employer's contributions for Teachers' Pension and yet using the underspend on the Local Government Pension to part-fund the teacher pay award. Community understand why this is happening but feel that this could be easily misconstrued and leave support staff feeling undervalued. We also feel that returning the Teacher Pension contributions to the Treasury is a missed opportunity to address some of the issues in school funding such as stabilising SEND support and investing in capital buildings projects and infrastructure as well as supporting teaching and learning.

Pay Award

Despite recent welcome pay awards, teacher pay does continue to fall to fall behind other graduate roles with the value of teachers' earnings reducing relative to average earnings since 2010. Actions taken by the Review Body and the Department seem to have begun to arrest this trend, however, recent improvements in teacher pay have been modest and there is much more to be done before we can conclude that teachers are paid competitively

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compared to other graduate professions. This is confirmed in data used by the Review Body which shows the *“median pay for all teachers remains some 14% adrift of the economy in England.”*¹

Therefore, although we accept the 3.5% uplift for 2026 and 3% for 2027, and the 5% award for those on the unqualified scale, we note that a pay award that merely prevents salaries falling further behind is not the same as restoring the value of teachers' pay and that further work must be done to address this. Work also needs to be done to address the comparative salary position of leadership roles in primary schools which have now fallen below the market salary in all regions.²

And we do not believe that the recommendation to enable schools to offer non-consolidated payments/bonuses to teachers by extending the flexibilities that academies have to reward staff³ is the right approach. EEF rate performance-pay (including bonus-style / non-consolidated payments) as having very limited evidence of positive effects⁴ and TES note that even where non-consolidated payments are used, they often fail to reach those who need it most.⁵ Therefore, we feel that this is a retrograde step and risks causing confusion and diluting the national pay agreement which academies will soon be expected to 'have regard for'.

Affordability

As with 2025, the Department has allocated funding to cover some of the uplift for 2026⁶ and whilst we do appreciate this and acknowledge the difficult fiscal landscape, this part-funding situation is becoming increasingly problematic for schools. The Review Body notes that *“while it is right to seek efficiency savings ... it a practical reality that some additional funding will be necessary to avoid material adverse impacts on educational delivery.”*⁷ It is vital that this level of funding must be at least maintained going forward in order for schools to see any real benefit.

The emerging action against excessive executive pay is very welcome, and we are pleased that new rules will bring the sector in line with other public sector workforces including the NHS.⁸ Community would like to see the rule go further and for all executive pay to be capped. We do note that annual increases for executives will be brought in line with the wider school workforce, meaning executives will not be able to receive pay rises higher than those set for classroom teachers, however the use of percentage increases does mean that executive pay will remain, in our view, excessive.⁹

As noted in our submission, Community firmly believe that pay must continue to be significantly lifted over the coming years in order to restore of the value of teacher pay, as

¹ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.2.17, p.9

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a4623ac732d8e7ce5f53afb/STRB_36th_Report_2026.pdf

² 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.2.25, p.11

³ Written Statement (HCWS171) – Department for Education (July 2026). p.4

<https://commonsbusiness.parliament.uk/Document/106492/Pdf?subType=Standard>

⁴ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/performance-pay>

⁵ <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/teacher-retention-payments-miss-schools-worst-hit-areas>

⁶ Written Statement (HCWS171) – Department for Education (July 2026). p.2

<https://commonsbusiness.parliament.uk/Document/106492/Pdf?subType=Standard>

⁷ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). Executive Summary

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teachers-to-benefit-from-multi-year-pay-deal>

⁹ An executive on £150,000 receiving a 5% pay award would see their salary rise by £7,500. In comparison a teacher on the median salary of £47,185 would see a rise of £2,360 and a TA on £20,000, just £1,000 extra per year.

the Review Body noted the median pay for all teachers remains some 14% adrift of the economy in England.

Workload

But it is not only about pay, workload and wellbeing must also be addressed before teaching will be restored as an attractive graduate career. There was some nervousness around the questions of working time contained within the remit letter. This is especially the case when the Department's own *Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders* research shows teacher consistently working 50 hours each week and so we are pleased to see some action being taken to better define 'directed time'.

Community agree with The Review Body's recommendation to *"require schools to share an annual directed time plan (including meetings, parents' evenings and training)." And for "governing bodies [to] monitor and report annually."*¹⁰ We also agree with the recommendation to *"Issue practical examples of typical non-directed activities and clearly articulate the boundaries and expectations around reasonable additional duties; restate that additional hours are self-managed, and that Working Time Regulations must be adhered to."*¹¹

The recommendation to codify the accepted local practices around twilight INSET sessions and split-day training¹² is a practical and sensible way to reflect already existing practices and to reinforce protections for part-time staff but Community would like more to be done to give individuals more control over their professional development.

Similarly clarifying the protections for leaders' working time, including the right to *"uninterrupted breaks and expectations that weekends and, public holiday should ordinarily be preserved as non-working time"*¹³ is essential to ensure that all staff have a work/life balance. Again, Community would like to see this further reinforced with the right to disconnect in evenings, and at weekends and during school closure periods. The 'always on' culture is not helpful and contributes to the unreasonable additional hours worked in the evenings. We agree with the Review Body that the 'reasonable additional hours' clause within the STPCD is *"vague, fostering inconsistency, perceptions of excessive demands and an 'always on' culture"*¹⁴ and that this is perhaps more to blame for teacher workload than directed time.

We note that the Review Body did look at workload and acknowledged some of the difficulties that exist, but Community is again dismayed that there is no action on increasing 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 formal 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.

¹⁰ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.3.60, p.33

¹¹ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.3.60, p.33

¹² 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.3.60, p.34

¹³ <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2026/07/teacher-pay-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-latest-multi-year-pay-award/>

¹⁴ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.3.52, p.32

Conclusion

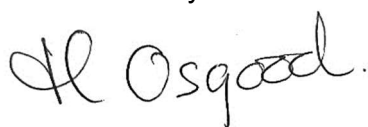
Community feel that whilst this 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body does maintain the positive changes seen in the last couple of years, the addition of conversations around bonuses, safeguarding periods and the difficulty in securing a fully-funded settlement continue to give cause for concern.

The Review Body is clear, "salaries must be competitive to attract strong graduates and mid-career professionals, and to retain experienced teachers."¹⁵ Community has repeatedly stressed the importance of retention in addressing the issue of staff shortages and the Review Body concur stating, "*There is an opportunity to materially improve the teacher supply (and the average years of experience) in a highly cost-effective manner by reducing the rate of these leavers.*"¹⁶

Put simply, pay must be improved and workload must be addressed if we are to stem the flow of teachers leaving the profession each year.

This will take concerted efforts by all stakeholders, but 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "H Osgood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Osgood

Director of Operations and National Officer for Education & Early Years

¹⁵ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.2.56, p.18

¹⁶ 36th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (2026). para.2.37, p.15