

Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Evidence of the Association of School and College Leaders Cymru on the School Teachers' Workload Agreement.

Introduction.

1. The membership of ASCL Cymru comprises of the majority of the leaders of the secondary schools of Wales.
2. We welcome the well timed scrutiny of the Teacher Workload Agreement by the Enterprise and Learning Committee and are pleased to be able to contribute to the process.
3. ASCL was a member of the original group in London, which produced the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload, and has been heavily involved in the subsequent work of the Workload Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG), which has overseen and supported the implementation of the Agreement in England and Wales.
4. The core purposes of the Agreement were to:

reduce the working hours of teachers, which the Teachers Workload Diary Survey, in 2000, indicated as being 52 hours per week on average during term time;

enable the energy of the teacher members of the school workforce to be focused on the core tasks related to teaching and learning by divesting them of responsibilities which did not support their prime function.

5. The main elements of the Agreement related to:

September 2003: routine delegation of administrative and clerical tasks, introduction of work/life balance clauses, and introduction of leadership and management time for those with corresponding responsibilities.

September 2004: introduction of new limits on covering for absent colleagues (38 hours per year).

September 2005: introduction of guaranteed professional time for planning, preparation and assessment, introduction of dedicated headship time, and introduction of new invigilation arrangements.

September 2009: introduction of requirement that teachers should be required to rarely undertake cover duties.

6. The Workload Agreement applies to all teaching staff, including Heads and members of the Leadership Team.

7. The implementation of the Agreement involved

The employment of increased numbers of School Support Staff;

The establishment of a joint union WAMG (now renamed as the Social Partnership) in each LEA.

Implementation of PPA/Administration Tasks/Invigilation

8. The feedback from ASCL Cymru representatives indicates:

PPA has been relatively easy for secondary schools to implement as teaching staff were already allocated non- contact time;

The listed administrative tasks have been transferred to support staff, although, as some members have reported, some teaching staff are reluctant to cease their use of the photocopier!!

Arranging for adults other than teachers to invigilate all formal exams in all schools has been achieved relatively smoothly, although there are problems in recruiting suitably qualified invigilators for some Welsh medium schools.

9. The process of implementation of these aspects of the Agreement has not been smooth in every school but difficulties have generally been resolved with support from outside agencies, such as union representatives and, in the early years, the Remodelling Advisors that were appointed in each LEA.

10. Tensions did arise in some schools when, in the light of the Workload Agreement, teachers, who had been awarded a salary enhancement (a Management Allowance) for administrative duties, experienced a pay reduction (cash safeguarded to 31 December 2008) with the removal of the Allowance under a restructuring required by legislation.

11. The earmarked funding that was provided by the Welsh assembly Government did not cover the full costs of implementing these aspects of the Agreement.

Cover for Absent Teachers

12. The last stage of the formal aspect of the Agreement, namely the move to teachers being expected to rarely cover for absent colleagues from September 2009 is being implemented currently and schools have been expected to be working towards that target.

13. Reducing the cover burden is proving to be the most difficult aspect of the Agreement for many schools.

14. The annual survey of the average number of hours of cover undertaken by teachers in England and Wales has shown that, despite all the efforts of schools to find solutions and a trend downwards in previous years, the burden of cover actually rose in 2006-07 to 22.8 hours per annum from 19 in the previous year and has stayed at this level in 2007/08.

15. Some schools have already achieved the target but they are in the minority.

16. Some schools may have taken a policy decision to delay implementing the rarely cover requirement until it is formally required from September 2009.

17. The implementation of the rarely cover requirement is proving to be problematic in for a range of reasons:

Different interpretations of the requirement; the view of ASCL is that the target is that teachers should only be required to cover in rare or exceptional circumstances. The Rewards and Incentives Group are currently seeking to resolve the varying definitions of the term 'rarely cover'.

In the context of the tight budget settlements of 2008-09 and falling rolls, schools are struggling to meet the costs of additional staffing that will be generated.

The budget factor is exacerbated where schools have decided to use qualified teachers to cover for absent staff. This becomes particularly acute for Welsh medium schools seeking additional short-term contract staff.

The lack of the co-ordinated support programme which was in existence during the first years of the Agreement. A factor in this is that the majority of Remodelling Advisors, currently in place, are LEA personnel with no experience of school management.

18. Achieving the 'rarely cover' requirement requires schools to have good systems in place for managing staff absence. This requires schools to take key strategic decisions:

Based upon the average absence rate within the school, determine the staffing level required to meet the cover demands on the majority of occasions.

Determine whether to employ cover staff on short-term (daily) contracts or to employ cover staff on a permanent contract.

Determine the essential qualifications and training of staff employed for lesson cover and the costs involved.

Resolve the budget plan for the school in the light of any increased costs.

The Workload of Secondary School Leaders.

19. The 2008 Teacher Workload survey reports that:

whilst the total number of work hours reported by secondary classroom teachers has remained fairly steady, the number of hours reported by secondary heads and deputies has been volatile, currently lying just below the levels of 2000.

Secondary deputy heads have seen an increase in total hours worked between 2007 and 2008, from 53.6 hours per week to 58.0 hours. Headteacher average workloads have risen from 57.6 hours per week in 2007 to 59.5 hours in 2008.

20. There is no reason to believe that these findings are not applicable in Wales.

21. The pressure on Heads and their Leadership Teams in Wales arises from a number of issues. These include:

The increased number adults other than teachers employed in schools has resulted in a greater amount of time being spent on personnel issues;

The diverse range of policy initiatives from the WAG which need to be strategically managed. Currently these include:

Revised National Curriculum;

Revised Assessment for KS3;

KS2-3 Transition Plans

The 14-19 Learning Pathways curriculum

The 14-19 Learning Networks;

Single Status Agreement for Support Staff

LEA-School Partnership Agreements

School Support Staff;

22 A recently published NFER research report, (Aug. 2008) sponsored by the WAG, revealed that for secondary schools:

In the 'other' support staff category, examination invigilators were by far the commonest group with an average of eight per school and almost all part-time; cover supervisors and language assistants were also reported widely.

Bursars and office managers were common and mainly full-time, while data managers, examination and finance officers were fairly equally full-time or part-time. A majority (56 per cent) of the secretaries were full-time.

More than four fifths of schools said that their LEAs had issued guidance about the scales which should be used to calculate the pay and conditions of different categories of support staff.

However, there was a feeling in some areas that schools needed more support, especially those seeking to recruit staff who could work through the medium of Welsh.

23. In the context of the Workload Agreement, the research found that:

" the importance of support staff to the success of schools is widely recognised by teaching staff and by many of the staff themselves. Although difficult to quantify, their impact can be seen in improved academic results as their support improves pupils' basic skills and teachers are released by contractual changes arising from the workforce agreement from more mundane tasks to focus on raising pupil performance. Their potential impact is also considerable in terms of pupil behaviour and attitudes around the school where support staff have contact with them. In Welsh-medium schools, support staff can increase contact time with the language for pupils from non Welsh-speaking homes and offer more informal linguistic models than teachers."

Conclusions

24 The Workload Agreement has been an evolving process since the start in 2003;

25 The final element within the Agreement, namely the introduction of management systems to ensure that from September 2009, teachers are rarely expected to cover is proving to be a significant hurdle.

26. The inadequate funding of the Agreement in Wales has complicated matters for school leaders and governing bodies. This is particularly relevant to the move to 'rarely cover'.

27 At this point in time, no additional funding has been allocated for this specific element of the Agreement. In the absence of additional funding, governing bodies will have to amend their budget priorities which may result in:

fewer teaching staff and larger class sizes;

a reduced capacity to engage fully in the development of the Skills Curriculum at KS3 and the 14-19 Learning Pathways curriculum and the roll out of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

A drive to minimise the amount of absence cover required which has already impacted upon the ability of schools to release staff;

to accompany students on out of school educational visits;

to attend unfunded staff development activities;

to attend planning and co-ordination meetings with other schools and with the LEA;

28. An additional concern is the failure of too many LEAs to maintain the momentum of the Workload Agreement; in many cases the local WAMG has been allowed to cease and/or has failed to evolve into a Social Partnership. Thus Remodelling Advisors seem to have ceased to have an active role in supporting schools through the change processes that are required if the full purposes of the Agreement are to be achieved

Comments from ASCL Cymru representatives on the Workload Agreement

Most secondary schools have implemented the agreement, despite only receiving 30% funding from the additional money allocated. It has been a very expensive change to implement and any further changes / improvements to be made would have to be fully funded. Finding cover staff and Welsh Medium examination invigilators has been problematic, but has been achieved

(Head of a Welsh medium Comprehensive School)

All schools have done as much as they could with the money they had. Most of us have greatly reduced cover, but further progress is the cause of some angst because our budgets are overstretched

.(Headteacher of English Medium Comprehensive School in SE Wales)).

The claim that schools have failed to implement the Agreement is NOT valid for any High School in this LEA in N Wales. We still are using supply teachers to cover in most cases. This has the effect that supply teachers in general for occasional days' employment are in short supply, especially so in Welsh Medium schools. So far, invigilating examinations is going well in all schools. Costs have risen due to the

fact that more Support Staff and Supply teachers have been taken on board

(Head of Comprehensive School in North Wales).

This needs to be clearly understood: the extra funding allocated for the WA does not stretch nearly far enough. Schools are redirecting resources away from supporting their core business. What might be gained by teachers having more time to plan, prepare and assess is potentially being lost because of cuts elsewhere: we have had to reduce departmental capitations and our ICT development/refurbishment plan is inching forward and is nowhere near the planned timeline.

(Headteacher of Comprehensive School in East Wales)

We are a designated bilingual school and have had no problems recruiting supply cover assistants or exam invigilators or the other support staff that we have had enough finance to appoint! We needed more funding to move further with this agenda to shift even more admin out of teachers and SMT's way. Also, I do not see us reaching rarely cover for teachers unless more funding is provided. We have two cover assistants, exam invigilators, an ICT manager and an additional senior admin officer due to the agreement. Even so, we seem to be in a steady state and the increased pressure that was felt by SMT initially has reduced somewhat by now. SMT workload has increased but this has been caused more by WAG initiative fatigue than by the Workload agreement.

(Headteacher of a bilingual school in West Wales.)

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