

Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Teacher Workload Agreement

Evidence Submitted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru)

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

Background

ATL, alongside the Welsh Assembly Government, Westminster Government and most other teaching unions, signed the National Workforce Agreement in 2003. ATL welcomed the Agreement's acknowledgement of the pressures schools and teachers face to raise standards and the introduction of contractual changes to tackle the unacceptable level of teachers' workloads.

ATL Cymru welcomes this opportunity to submit oral and written evidence highlighting the impact that the Teacher Workload Agreement has had on our members.

Summary

The School Teachers' Review Board (STRB's) Teachers' Workloads Diary Survey 2008 shows that the number of hours worked by teachers has now returned to levels before the National Workload Agreement was signed in 2003. A recent survey of ATL members highlighted a number of concerns including the amount of actual Planning, Preparation and Assessment Time (PPA) available, cover for absence, observation, etc.

PPA Time

72.5% of members stated they almost always received their PPA time but for the remaining 27.5% there was no guarantee as they reported they usually, seldom or never received their time.

Our survey also highlighted that the five non-pupil days allocated would be more effectively used for a mixture of curriculum planning within departments, across the school as well as whole-school and individual CPD. The provision of CPD is difficult in some schools as they do not have sufficient resources.

Members commented that some schools claim they cannot afford to fully fund the quota of 10% PPA time and so give what they can afford. Teachers are aware that they are not receiving the full allocation of time that they are entitled to but tolerate this as they know there are insufficient funds to do otherwise. ATL Cymru is concerned that, in effect, this means that shortfalls in funding are thus being 'paid' for at the expense of members' statutory entitlements. One member commented that many primary school headteachers in their area attempt to include assembly and break times in PPA time.

Estyn research highlights that in a few schools, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are being employed to provide specified work during PPA sessions. Often, these posts are not suitable for their period of induction and therefore this is not effective use of NQTs' time or of school resources.

Recommendations:

ATL Cymru would like to see PPA time adequately funded and headteachers allowing teachers their full entitlement to PPA.

ATL Cymru believes that every teacher should be given an entitlement to CPD and that it should be included in the roles and responsibilities element of the STPCD.

Cover

The Teachers Workload Agreement sets a 38 hour maximum cover limit for teachers. Over a school year this equates to roughly one

hour per week.

Comments from ATL Cymru members suggest that while teachers are covering fewer lessons than the upper limit of 38 hours, the downward pressure towards zero cover does not seem to be happening. Schools are finding it increasingly difficult to get supply staff to cover for subject specialists.

One member stated that in their area at peak times the amount of cover required can double or triple. When this is the case, some teachers are refused access to courses.

Recommendation:

ATL Cymru would like schools to plan now how to reduce cover so teachers should only be required to cover in exceptional circumstances.

Work/life Balance

This issue seems to be addressed more successfully for teachers than headteachers. It is difficult for governors to address this issue for headteachers' as they plan the majority of their own work and may not take account of their own work-life balance needs.

The changeover to TLR (Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments) has occurred at the same time as the introduction of the Teachers Workload Agreement. Estyn reports that in half of schools, the negative impact of designating TLR posts has diluted the positive effects of workforce remodelling. Also, the process of introducing the TLR system has generated a significant amount of extra work and has had a detrimental impact on the work/life balance of about a third of headteachers. This is at the same time as the introduction of dedicated headship time under the Teachers Workload Arrangement was designed to improve the work/life balance for those leaders.

Recommendation:

WAG should provide schools with specific guidance on work/life balance and how this might be achieved (for headteachers in particular) and monitor the impact workforce remodelling has on the workload of teachers and senior teachers.

Dedicated Leadership and Management Time

The Teachers' Workload Agreement seems to have increased the workload of senior teachers and headteacher. Insufficient headship time is being provided, especially in primary schools, and as a result the initiative is having little/ no impact on the work/life balance of many school leaders.

Estyn has found that half of schools now make some provisions for dedicated leadership and management time but in 20% of schools this provision is no greater than what headteachers received before.

One member commented:

"In my school the head regularly teachers classes in order to give leadership time to his SMT. It is the only way he can 'afford' financially to give that dedicated leadership time".

Recommendations:

A contractual limit should be placed on the amount of time the school leader should be expected to work. ATL considered whether the setting of an annual limit of the number of hours worked by leaders would compromise their professionalism. ATL feels that school leaders would not 'work to rule' but would use such a limit as a benchmark against which to gauge their own workload. Many other professionals, including local authority (LA) chief executives, have time-limited contracts, which include contractual holiday entitlements, and are seen as a benefit and an important recruitment tool. ATL does not believe that any contractual limit would damage the professionalism of school leaders.

ATL believes that every school should have a deputy headteacher with whom the headteacher can share their workload. There are statutory duties which can only be carried out by the headteacher of a school. In some schools the headteacher must remain constantly 'on-call' to respond to issues at the school. ATL reasserts its position that every school should have a deputy headteacher who may legally be delegated the responsibilities of the headteacher. Only by sharing the burden of headship can we be sure that the workload of headteachers can be driven down.

Every school should audit the size of its leadership group to ensure that there are sufficient school leaders to manage the school effectively, thus retaining each individual's work-life balance. The audit should consider the number and roles of those teachers paid on the leadership group, and those who hold TLR and Special Education Needs allowances.

Administrative/Clerical Tasks

Our member survey found that many teachers still carry out routine administrative tasks as there are not enough support/ clerical staff to carry these out. The money allocated to some larger schools does not adequately fund enough support staff to cover all the tasks required. Many teachers continue to carry out routine administrative tasks by choice. In small schools there is little evidence of workload

reduction. There are still schools without clerical and administrative support for lengthy periods during each week.

Many teachers state that the extra non-teaching time created is negligible. Sometimes teachers use any extra time created for general day-to-day classroom activities and perceive little improvement in their overall workload. However, a few teachers have specifically used the extra time in order to plan and mark pupils' work more effectively.

Very few schools have investigated the link between the removal of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers and improvements in standards.

Recommendation:

Schools need help to monitor and evaluate the impact changes associated with workforce remodelling have had on pupils standards of achievement.

Support Staff

The Teachers Workload Agreement has had a significant impact on the role of support staff, namely increasing their responsibilities and the breadth of their role. Although there are now many more support staff employed in schools across Wales, ATL Cymru members express concern that in some cases the burden of workload has been shifted from teachers to support staff.

Over 70% of ATL members surveyed thought that a dedicated classroom assistant would make a significant contribution to more effective teaching and reducing workload. These assistants should not be taken from other duties at short notice.

Recommendations:

The status and professional development of support staff needs to be elevated to ensure their continued recruitment and retention.

A National Agreement on Terms and Conditions should be established.

Resources

Estyn has identified evidence of different funding formulae for work associated with the National Agreement across Wales. This has affected the distribution of resources between primary and secondary phases and between similar schools in different LEAs.

Estyn also highlight the fact that 50% of schools perceive the long-term sustainability of the Teacher Workload Agreement as unclear as at present there is uncertainty over the allocation of funding. This is a view shared by ATL Cymru.

Recommendation:

Funding for the Teachers Workload Agreement needs to be more transparent and evenly distributed to primary and secondary schools across LEA's.

Observation

Members feel that monitoring and observation is increasing. Members express concern that at present classroom observation impinges on PPA time.

One member commented that in the case of internal departmental reviews the burden of observation can be excessive, for example, when a person is seen 3 times in one week even six months after a full inspection. Another reported that a primary school headteacher wanted to observe each teacher for a whole day.

In England, the recent introduction of new Performance Management Arrangements saw a limit of 3 hours placed on the amount of time allowed for classroom observation. ATL Cymru would like to ensure that when the new Performance Management arrangements are introduced in Wales the limit set for classroom observation is reduced.

Recommendation:

When new Performance Management arrangements are introduced in Wales, there is a need to set parameters that will limit excessive classroom observations. ATL Cymru believes that classroom observations should be limited to one hour per term.

Sources

School Teachers' Review Board (STRB), Teachers' Workloads Diary Survey, March 2008, <http://www.ome.uk.com/downloads/2008%20Teachers%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

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Estyn, Raising Standards and Tackling Workload in Schools in Wales, 2005 http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Remit_20_0506.pdf

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