

Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee on the Teacher Workload Agreement

Introduction

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills presents this evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee to provide an update on progress on the implementation of Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement.

The National Agreement

The National Agreement on Workforce Reform, 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' was signed in January 2003. The Agreement covers England and Wales and sets out a shared vision of a remodelled school workforce in which teachers, head teachers and school support staff work together as a whole school team to provide high standards of education for all pupils. The changes are designed to enable teachers and head teachers to focus their professional skills on facilitating teaching and learning with trained and qualified school support staff working in new and extended roles to support teachers and pupils.

The Agreement was developed through a unique social partnership of organisations representing employers, national governments and school workforce unions. It was signed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)), Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Secondary Heads Association (SHA) (now the Association of School and College Lecturers (ASCL)), Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), National Association of Head teachers (NAHT), National Association of School Masters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) (now VOICE), National Employers Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST), UNISON, GMB and Transport & General Workers (T&G) (now UNITE).

Main changes set out in the Agreement

The National Agreement has at its heart contractual changes to ensure that all teachers and head teachers:

do not routinely undertake administrative and clerical tasks;

enjoy a reasonable work/life balance;

have a reduced burden of providing cover for absent colleagues;

have guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time within the school day;

are assured of a reasonable allocation of time to carry out their leadership and management responsibilities; and

that head teachers should have dedicated time which recognises their significant responsibilities.

that school support staff roles are reformed and that their skills and experience are properly recognised and rewarded.

The Agreement also recognises that contractual and regulatory changes need to be supported by a change programme to deliver widespread structural and cultural changes to the way that schools work to deploy the whole school workforce. This process, known as remodelling, supports schools to make the best use of the professional skills and experience of all their people and secure effective use of resources.

Implementation of the Agreement

All signatories are responsible for communicating the vision and requirements of the Agreement and to support effective implementation through concerted joint action as well as specific actions within their own sphere of responsibilities.

The contractual changes set out in the Agreement were brought into effect through amendments to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and Pay Orders. Responsibility for these is not devolved but retained by the DCSF who implemented these changes in Wales and England.

DCSF and WAG were responsible for making regulatory changes to control the deployment of support staff in new roles and offering guidance on review of school staffing structures.

LEAs are responsible for providing support and advice for local schools on implementing the changes in line with WAMG guidance and legislative requirements.

Unions offer support and guidance for their own members as they work in partnership with others at local level to implement the Agreement within their own schools.

It is the duty of individual headteachers, working with their Governing Body and wider school team, to determine the best way to implement the Agreement in their schools. Each school has reviewed their school structure and will need to adopt strategies that suit its individual character and circumstances.

Monitoring implementation

At national level - The signing of the Agreement also saw the formation of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG). The membership of this group consists of representatives of all the signatories who work together to provide support and guidance to schools on implementation of the Agreement, monitor progress and to secure practical implementation of workforce reform.

At local education authority level - The WAMG model is mirrored in local social partnerships whose membership is drawn from local authorities and local representatives of school workforce unions. They are designed to support local implementation of the Agreement, offering advice and guidance at local level and providing feedback to WAMG about issues affecting implementation which cannot be resolved at local level.

WAG role in supporting implementation in Wales

WAG is an active social partner as a member of WAMG working with other signatories to deliver the Agreement in Wales.

WAG has invested a significant amount of funding to support schools as they implement the contractual changes arising from the National Agreement. Additional funding, totalling £70m, was made available over a period of three years to support phased contractual reform. This now forms an additional element of the annual revenue support grant. Therefore, this level of funding continues to be available to Local Authorities to distribute to schools according to locally determined needs and priorities.

Implementing the Agreement is not, however, about the Assembly or Local Authorities simply providing extra funding to employ more teachers or bring in additional supply teachers. The key is for schools to take the opportunity to look afresh at their work through a process of review and remodelling.

WAG has worked jointly with ADEW Consortia and LEAs to provide support and training for schools to enable them to review and remodel their workforce in line with the Agreement. A network of local authority Change Managers was established in 2004 and intensive initial training was provided to ensure that there was local capacity within each LEA to enable training to be made available to all schools in Wales. Training focussed on developing tools and skills in change management to support school remodelling.

Resources and materials developed by WAMG, the National Remodelling Team and the TDA have been contextualised and translated for use in Wales. The initial training has been supplemented with a range of additional resource materials, including school case studies, to assist schools as they review working practices and develop new ways of working.

Regional consortium arrangements have also been used by local authorities to share resources, work collaboratively to deliver training and share best practice. WAG officials also meet with local authority Change Managers on a regular basis to review progress, share successful practice and collaborate on planning and development.

WAG also established the School Workload Advisory Panel (SWAP) to monitor and advise on the externally imposed workload on schools and the Panel continues with its work at reducing such burdens. To this end it engages with local authorities and a range of external agencies as well as with WAG itself. SWAP publishes an Annual Report setting out details of its work each year and meets to discuss their progress with me, as the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, each year.

Local social partnerships continue to have an important part to play in building on gains already made and working closely at local level to assist and support schools in further remodelling in order to align resources to best effect. WAG recently worked with WAMG to arrange a national event to review and support the working of local social partnerships. This provided an opportunity to monitor the effectiveness and reinvigorate the role of these networks in Wales.

Effectiveness of implementation in Wales

There is evidence that since the implementation of the Agreement the number of support staff in schools has increased.

Table 1: Support staff in maintained schools, as at January each year (Source: Welsh Assembly Government Schools Census).

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Teaching Assistants					
Teaching Assistants (a)	6,065	6,791	7,815	8,718	9,583
Special needs support staff (b)	2,219	2,610	2,410	2,287	2,356

Total	8,284	9,399	10,225	11,005	11,938
Administrative staff (c)					
Total	2,774	3,088	3,186	3,256	3,416
Technicians (d)					
Total	1,034	1,084	1,111	1,142	1,139
Other support staff					
Nurses / matrons	70	61	62	55	46
Nursing / childcare staff	555	327	444	377	407
Total	625	388	506	432	453
Total	12,717	13,962	15,027	15,834	16,946

(a) Includes nursery assistants and foreign language assistants and other assistants or aides employed in the classroom.

(b) Includes ancillary staff who assist in the classroom in special schools.

(c) Office and clerical staff, including library assistants.

(d) Resource and laboratory technicians.

Many tasks traditionally carried out by teachers, but not requiring the professional skills of a teacher, are now undertaken by support staff working in new and extended roles. This enables teachers to have more time to spend directly on learning and teaching activities.

WAG has periodically monitored the implementation of the Agreement through local Change Managers who are in close touch with schools. A number of surveys have shown a high percentage of compliance with the main elements of the Agreement. There is, however, evidence to suggest that not all members of the workforce have experienced the same level of benefit. Members of the school leadership group continue to report they have an excessive workload

The 2008 annual Teachers' Workloads Diary survey carried out on behalf of the School Teachers' Review Body on an England and Wales basis shows some reduction in working hours. More needs to be done by all stakeholders to achieve further reductions and to ensure that the work of teachers and headteachers is focussed on teaching and learning.

In March 2007 ESTYN published its report 'The impact of workforce remodelling on pupils learning and raising standards'. The report highlighted that:

All teachers receive at least 10% PPA time and, as a result, have more time available in which to undertake planning, preparation and assessment activities. This has generally resulted in an improvement in the quality of these activities and also, in a few schools, in the quality of teaching.

A combination of factors, including the limits on cover, the removal of the requirement for teachers to invigilate examinations and the introduction of guaranteed PPA time have together had a very positive impact on all teachers, particularly those in secondary schools.

In a third of schools, pupils benefit from having a range of other adults in the classroom, including specialist input for specified work for a part of each week.

In a small number of primary schools, the curriculum for pupils during PPA time has been enriched through the inclusion of a broader range of appropriate activities.

Whilst the findings of the report provide assurance that progress is being made on implementing the National Agreement the report also highlights a number of areas where further work is required. The Welsh Assembly Government shares these concerns and is working with partners to ensure these areas are addressed.

Priorities for further action

Headteachers - Evidence about implementation shows that more work is required before the benefits of the Agreement are fully realised by all Headteachers. It is likely that there are a number of reasons for the less effective impact of the Agreement on Headteachers' work life balance and so a range of actions will be required to drive improvements.

Some burdens on Heads are a result of external factors. The SWAP will continue its work to identify the causes of these external pressures and to identify ways that these may be minimised. In support of this I have said that no new initiatives will be announced this year to allow time for schools to consolidate their work on existing developments.

Some burdens may be managed more effectively with schools. We will encourage Head teachers to continue to apply remodelling principles by regularly reviewing the nature of their work (and that of others) to ensure they are not carrying out tasks that could more appropriately be done by others - including delegation of tasks to support staff. A systematic approach to remodelling can positively impact on reducing head teachers' workload as well as that of others in the school workforce.

Head teachers will also need to work closely with governors on workload issues as governors have a particular responsibility for overseeing the headteachers' work/life balance. WAG will continue to work with Governors Wales to explore ways of raising governors' awareness of their responsibilities in this respect.

As school leadership development programmes are reviewed we will continue to focus on enhancing the skills and capacity of leaders to develop and explore models of distributed leadership in line with remodelling principles.

School support staff - One Wales commits us to deliver a career structure for school support staff. This will build on progress already made to provide more structured job roles and structures for pay and conditions of support staff.

Measuring impact on standards - In tackling workload and promoting workforce reform the Agreement seeks to raise standards by freeing up teachers to focus more on teaching and learning and to free up headteachers to spend more time on strategic leadership activities.

Monitoring activities have so far found it difficult to isolate individual remodelling strategies and make a conclusive link with improved standards. Estyn has been commissioned by WAG to investigate this in greater depth and, whilst initial reports found similar difficulty, evidence was observed where schools reported improved standards as a result of remodelling strategies. This is an area on which WAG will continue to focus so that the effects of workforce reform are translated into improved outcomes for learners.

Remodelling forms an integral part of school development planning and school improvement strategies and so will be embedded within the School Effectiveness Framework.